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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
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Executive Chef—I. Gabay, MBE

Personnel Administrator—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

Catering Manager, House of Commons—P. Gale, MHCIMA

Catering Manager, Bellamy's—Ms. S. Hovells, LHCIMA

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Assistant Banqueting Manager—P. D. Heywood

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Assistant Catering Accountant—Mrs. B. A. Langley

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Shorthand Writer to the House—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

Head of Security—Chief Superintendent A. E. F. Longhurst, LVO

Deputy Head of Security—Superintendent R. J. Warne

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2 November 1992

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 213

SEVENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 2 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

1. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to increase the social fund budget to take account of levels of unemployment.

3. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next expects to review the allocation of social fund money to local DSS offices.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): With permission, Madam Speaker, I will answer this and Question 3 together.

Mr. Corbyn: We were not informed of that.

Mr. Lilley: I apologise for the fact that the hon. Gentleman was not informed.

I am pleased to announce that I have authorised the allocation of an additional £8 million to discretionary social fund budgets for this financial year. The extra money allocated to districts takes full account of their individual income support caseloads, which in turn reflect local unemployment levels. All districts will receive budget increases. Details will be placed in the Library in due course.

Mr. Mandelson: In view of what the Secretary of State just said and the Conservatives' clear election pledge that the whole of the social security budget, including money allocated to the social fund and benefits for the unemployed, would not be cut, will he confirm that the Government will honour every one of their election promises to recipients of money from the social fund, the unemployed and the poorest sections of society so that the promises made in April do not become the betrayals of autumn?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that I am not going to give advance details of the outcome of the public expenditure round or comment on any speculation about it. None the less, I should have expected the hon. Gentleman to be more forthcoming in his appreciation of the increase, especially as it was made possible by our introduction of the loans system and by the better repayment rates—even better than we had expected—that resulted. If we had stuck with grants, as Opposition Members wished, we would have had to cut the support within the social fund by 60 per cent.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Secretary of State concede that the cash-limiting of the social fund to local offices—I am thinking particularly of the Euston district office—has caused appalling problems for many people? That is especially the case with women who have been victims of domestic violence and who have subsequently been placed in hostels and then housed by a local authority or housing association and approved under direction 4aIII as being victims of violence and therefore vulnerable and in need of assistance. Those people are now being refused social fund payments because of cash-limiting. Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that £8 million is an improvement, but it is crucial to end the obscenity of cash-limiting for people who are desperately in need of help?

Mr. Lilley: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about the case about which he has been in correspondence with the Benefits Agency. I believe that there was some dispute about whether an appeal was lodged. I hope that the matter has been carried forward and that progress has been made with an appeal, if that is what the lady concerned wishes.

I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not welcome the 25 per cent. increase in his district's budget relative to what it was last year, before the increase that I am announcing, which will ensure an increase for his district as for everywhere else. I am also sorry that he does not recognise the considerable help provided by the social fund and the officers in his area following the local floods. In that regard, I want to quote from a letter from Islington borough council which states:

> "The instant response for assistance and the flexibility of the staff involved played a major part in alleviating what was a major crisis for many people . . . I would be grateful if the Borough's heartfelt thanks for a job well done could be passed on to the staff involved."

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be equally appreciative.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that more than 5 million interest-free loans have been made since the establishment of the social fund, amounting to £700 million over that period? Does that not clearly demonstrate the Government's commitment to social policies?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Because the loans are made, repaid and then recycled, we are able to help far more people than we would be able to help if we had only a grant system. In addition to the point made by my hon. Friend, we have helped 1 million people through grants costing a further £300 million. The House should welcome the support provided through the fund.

Mr. Ward: Does my right hon. Friend accept that Opposition Members welcome the increase in the social fund? It is a pity that there could not be a little more grace from the Opposition—grace shown by Islington council, if not by some of its members. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the social fund gives us much better control to ensure that the sums available get to those most in need?

Mr. Lilley: That is, of course, correct. The Opposition are not enthusiastic about the improvement because they know that it would not have been possible if we had not introduced the principle of repayable loans. We have been able to help in a way that was not possible under the old rigid single-payment system, which was unfair, uncontrollable and utterly discredited.

Mr. Bradley: Although any increase in the social fund must be welcomed, I fear that it is far too little, too late. Has the Secretary of State read the report, "Evaluating the Social Fund", which was commissioned by the Government, and the report by the Social Security Advisory Committee, both of which stated that the system was absolutely appalling, unjust and inequitable? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that until the social fund system is scrapped and there is a proper system to give support to those in greatest need, people in abject poverty will continue to suffer? Will the right hon. Gentleman agree to a debate on the social fund, so that every hon. Member who has constituents who have suffered because they cannot get loans or grants can debate the matter and so that there is proper consideration of the fund?

Mr. Lilley: I shall continue to give full consideration to the various reports on the social fund and its operation which have been published in recent months. None of them has undermined the basic principle of the system that we established—reliance on loans, as well as grants, and the belief that there must be a discretionary element on top of the rules-based system which covers the bulk of the £70 billion that we allocate to social security. I am not tempted to return to the discredited single-payment system which Opposition Members apparently hanker after.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that interest-free loans from the social fund have become widely accepted, that recycling of loans means that more people get more help and that the position is far more credible than the Opposition's empty promises? That would have become apparent the day after the election, had the Labour party been elected, when it would have emptied the coffers.

Mr. Lilley: That is absolutely right. The York university study stated that the loan principle had become widely established and accepted. Surely it is better for people to have access to zero interest loans, rather than being reliant on loan sharks.

Unemployment

2. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the increase of costs for his Department which arises from an increase in unemployment of 100,000.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): My Department's second annual report shows the costs of an increase in unemployment of 100,000 to be £330 million.

Mr. McFall: Given that £330 million, given that with 2·7 million people on the dole, the cost will amount to £8 billion next year and given the debilitating cost to the economy in lost taxes and national insurance, would it not make better sense to keep people off the dole so that there was economic recovery and a boost to the public purse? When will a shaft of sanity penetrate the Government's bodged actions and muddled thinking?

Mr. Burt: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that about 50 per cent. of people who become unemployed are taken off the register after three months and about 65 per cent. of those remaining are taken off after six months. The Employment Service has made a considerable effort to ensure that people come off benefit as quickly as possible to get back to work. The hon. Gentleman must also be aware that this country's employment problems are shared by many other countries on the continent and from Australia to America. One of the Opposition's biggest mistakes is to ignore world trade.

Mr. Willetts: Does my hon. Friend accept that the Government's proposals for one-stop shopping represent an important improvement in the potential service to the unemployed, who will no longer be caught in an administrative muddle between unemployment benefit and social security offices?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend is right. The Department is putting considerable efforts into finding the best ways possible to ensure that those who are caught up in unemployment have the best opportunities to seek advice and have to go through fewer administrative hurdles to claim that to which they are entitled.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the Prince of Wales's humane initiative to help the unemployed and others in dire need by distributing free food parcels in Manchester and other regional centres across the country? Is not the Prince's action a stark reminder that benefits for the unemployed, as for all poor people, must be protected in real terms at this evening's special meeting of the Cabinet about public expenditure?

Mr. Burt: The right hon. Gentleman is too wily in these matters not to know that I cannot possibly discuss public expenditure questions at this stage. The degree of concern that he expressed about the unemployed is shared by those on the Conservative Benches. He will know that the best help given to the unemployed is not benefits but efforts to get those people back into work. All the efforts of the Government and those of my colleagues who are involved in economic regeneration are designed to ensure that interest rates stay low, inflation comes down and the country has the best prospects for recovery and a return to proper jobs.

Mr. Fabricant: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that, sad though it is that unemployment has gone up, Britain has the lowest proportion of unemployed anywhere in the European Community, apart from Denmark, and that 2 million more people are employed than in 1983?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend is right. There is a higher proportion of people in work in this country than in any other European country, other than Denmark, but that statistic is often missed. There is no doubt that the trade recession which has swept through Europe and the rest of the world has affected us as well. To ignore that problem and to see this country as totally isolated from that difficulty is unrealistic, but unrealism seems to be a permanent characteristic of the Opposition.

Benefits (Value)

4. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to ensure that in the next upgrading of social security benefits their real value will be maintained.

Mr. Lilley: The annual statement on those benefits will be made in due course.

Mr. Wareing: The Government were not so coy last April about explaining their public expenditure plans when the Tory manifesto stated that the real value of state pensions against price rises would be maintained. How can any civilised Government seek to sacrifice the aged and the disabled on the altar of their own economic incompetence? Can the Secretary of State explain to the House how the under-indexation and taxation of invalidity benefits can stimulate or help to stimulate economic activity?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman will recall my telling the House some Question Times ago that although there would doubtless be speculation about every conceivable benefit during the course of the expenditure round, I did not propose to comment on such speculation until the round was over, when the House would be told, in full, the details of what we propose.

I shall not take lessons from the Labour party on the treatment of the elderly—a party which wiped out the savings of pensioners by a quarter in a single year, broke its pledges on uprating benefits, cut the real value of pensions by 6 per cent. and is now proposing to means-test pensions.

Mr. Hendry: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that since 1979 the Government's expenditure on social security has gone up by 50 per cent. in real terms and expenditure on the long-term sick and disabled has gone up by 170 per cent? Is that not a cast-iron demonstration of the Government's determination to look after those in most need?

Mr. Lilley: I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend. I am often not recognised, but at least I am not mistaken for a socialist. Of course, my hon. Friend is right. The Government have increased spending on the poor, the sick and the elderly by more than a half. We have also helped disabled people. We have spent almost three times as much as the Labour Government and are helping four times as many people with mobility allowances and six times as many with attendance care—so we do not take lectures from the Labour party.

Mr. Frank Field: As people on benefits are generally poorer and as poorer people have gained the smallest increase in their living standards since 1979, will the Secretary of State tell us what support he will have for defending their living standards when he raises their needs around the Cabinet table?

Mr. Lilley: Very considerable support. As the hon. Gentleman will see from our record, it is obvious that we have endeavoured to channel money to those in greatest need—I am thinking of the extra £600 million a year that goes to families in need, the introduction of family credit and the help given to older and poorer pensioners in a variety of ways. We believe that we should try increasingly, as we improve the benefit system over the years, to focus help on the most needy.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my right hon. Friend agree that since 1979 an extra £700 million has been given to help the poorer pensioners? Is that not a splendid example of the Government's commitment to help those pensioners most in need?

Mr. Lilley: That is absolutely right. One reason why we have had to help those who retired before 1979 is that they saw their savings wiped out under the Labour Government's inflation. Any party that is a friend of inflation is an enemy of the poor.

Mr. Kirkwood *rose*——

Hon. Members: The hon. Gentleman is on the wrong side of the House.

Madam Speaker: Order. I know precisely which side of the House he is on.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am on the right side. I take up the question raised by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). Will the Secretary of State say what cognisance he will take of the household below average income statistics from 1979 to 1989, which show that people in the lowest tenth of income distribution saw their real income, excluding housing costs, fall by 6 per cent., whereas the national average in that period was an increase of some 30 per cent? Surely, that must have some bearing on the annual uprating statement, which we anticipate in the next few days. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Lilley: I am of course grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his ongoing support. The figures require careful examination. In the lowest tenth of the income distribution, for example—the figures come from the family expenditure survey—half a million people are recorded as having zero or negative income. However, when their expenditure is examined, it is found to be greater than that of the average person. That is why we are producing some revised and improved figures, which were originally prompted by the Select Committee. Those figures will be published in future. They will give a much better guide to incomes, rather than the expenditure of lower-income families.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the greatest threat to those who receive unemployment benefits would be the introduction of a national minimum wage and the imposition of the social chapter, both of which would drastically increase unemployment?

Mr. Lilley: That is correct. There is no doubt that in a particularly tough world economic climate the consequences of such steps would be even graver. I recall that when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister rightly said "non" to the social chapter, he was criticised by Mr. Delors, who said that we were thereby making this country a paradise for investors. So we are. That is the best source of future jobs and the best kind of help for those who are unemployed and who want to get back to work, as the vast majority of them do.

Mr. Dewar: I recognise the reasons for the right hon. Gentleman's caution about the prospects, given the bitter infighting in the Cabinet over the public expenditure round, but does he not think that manifesto promises deserve some respect? Would it not be wise to end the speculation by confirming now that the specific promises on child benefit and retirement pension will survive the present shambles? If the right hon. Gentleman wants to maintain his cherished reputation for anonymity, he would do well to dismiss the suggestion in *The Times* leader today that income support, invalidity benefit and other benefits are to be uprated by 2 per cent. only. Will he note that a sense of outrage will be felt far beyond Opposition Benches if those on benefit are put in the firing line in order to save the Chancellor from the consequences of his own incompetence?

Mr. Lilley: Taunts about anonymity come rich from someone whose only claim to fame is that he is less well-known than I am. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that I will not spell out the position on any of the items on which there has been speculation until the round is over and the results are announced. When it comes to election pledges and promises, I recall that before the election the Labour party was keen on universal benefits and said that it would upgrade pensions immediately by £5 for a single person and £8 for a couple. Suddenly, after the election, during the leadership contest, the leader of the Labour party realised that he could no longer get by by raising taxes and he decided to recycle benefits. The leader of the Labour party wanted the hon. Gentleman to consider means-testing every single universal benefit—some changes in pledges!

Disability Living Allowance

5. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the administration of claims for disability living allowance.

12. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how long a claim for the disability living allowance usually takes to process; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I have previously expressed, and I reiterate today, my regret that unacceptable delays have occurred in the processing of claims for disability living allowance and that, as a result, many disabled customers were not receiving a standard of service to which they are entitled.

The chief executive of the Benefits Agency wrote to all hon. Members on 19 October outlining the positive actions that the agency has taken to remedy the position. Substantial progress has been made and the chief executive of the agency tells me that it is now within sight of achieving a stable state of work outstanding.

I intend to have further discussions with the chief executive to see what lessons should be learnt from the experience, which has led to considerable distress for many disabled customers and their families.

Mr. O'Hara: Does the Minister accept that, in common with Opposition Members, he should be appalled that, after drafting in the necessary resources—a move which, presumably, has merely displaced the problems and moved them to elsewhere in the benefits system—250,000 claimants of disability living allowance and attendance allowance were still awaiting payment at the end of September? Does he agree he should also be appalled that, according to statistics for the end of August, only 25 per cent. of disability living allowance claims were turned around in 60 days and only 3 per cent. of attendance allowance claims were turned around in 35 days? When will the Benefits Agency achieve the targets of a 60 per cent. turnaround in 30 days for disability living allowance and a 60 per cent. turnaround in 35 days for attendance allowance?

Mr. Scott: As from today, the agency is confident that it can achieve the targets of 60 per cent. within 30 days and 90 per cent. within 90 days for the outstanding caseload.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for his encouraging reply on a difficult issue. Is he aware that my constituents have been disappointed in the delays involved in processing cases? Will he confirm that all DLA payments will be backdated, no one will lose out because of delay and all claimants will ultimately obtain their money?

Mr. Scott: I have acknowledged on more than one occasion how disappointed I was with some of the delays that occurred in the early days of the introduction of DLA and other benefits associated with it, but the agency is now clearing twice as many claims as it was in June and many times the number of claims that it was clearing in February and March. I am confident that it is within sight of meeting its targets.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that thousands of people are being denied their statutory rights? Can he ensure that if ever this sort of thing happens again there will be some mechanism to make certain that people get the money to which they are entitled, and that they can argue afterwards if it is the Government's machinery which is holding them back from their entitlement?

Mr. Scott: Nobody will be denied his statutory rights. If a claim is allowed, albeit delayed, it will be backdated to the date of the claim. That reassures all who have been waiting for their claims to be settled—admittedly for too long—that they will receive their money.

Mr. Thurnham: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that 300,000 people are benefiting from this excellent new allowance, and that, if anything, the Benefits Agency is suffering from the problem of success after its wide promotion on television?

Mr. Scott: It is worth comparing the introduction of DLA, about which we hear so much criticism from the Opposition, with the introduction of the mobility allowance which, in the first year, was limited to 5,000 recipients and by the fourth year was reaching just 95,000. We have delivered this benefit to 250,000 people within seven months.

Mr. Rooney: The Minister will recall making similar statements last April, May, June and July, when he said that progress was being made. I am sure that the whole House will agree with me when I compliment the staff on the way in which they are dealing with an intolerable burden.

When a decision is made to refuse disability living allowance it takes between eight and 12 weeks for that decision to be issued and it can take another six months before an appeal is heard. So it may be 18 months after applying before the money is paid after a successful appeal. Does not the Minister think that disgraceful?

Mr. Scott: I can well understand that the agency has been concentrating on dealing with initial claims. It will turn its attention to reviews of decisions and appeals now that it is in prospect of achieving its targets for new claims.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the large increase in the number of new staff—800 of them—dealing with disability living allowance is a clear sign of the Government's commitment to improving the system? Does he also accept that constituents of mine have been suffering from delays in the allocation of disability living allowance, and that other constituents who work in the system believe that, while great progress has been made, more could be done to train telephone answerers?

Mr. Scott: There was a time, I believe, when misunderstandings arose during the use of the inquiry line, but I believe that successful efforts have been made to resolve that problem, and it should not be recurring now. We should recognise that, in part at least, DLA has suffered from its own success. Our efforts and those of the many organisations of and for disabled people which helped in the launch of the allownace led to a tremendous surge of claims in the early days. That caused a problem in the administration of the Benefits Agency, but I am confident that it is tackling the problem and that success is in immediate prospect.

Mrs. Golding: Is the Minister aware that his remarks will give small comfort to thousands of disabled people, many of whom will have to wait until after Christmas to have their claims dealt with? Does he not realise that many of the staff at benefit offices are appalled by the failure to provide an efficient service? They think that it is due to the continued lack of permanent, full-time trained staff. Does the Minister realise the hardship and distress that he is causing by his incompetence?

Mr. Scott: I welcome the hon. Lady to her new responsibilities—no doubt we shall regularly cross swords. I ask her to acknowledge that the Government were right—most fair-minded people recognise that we were—to go ahead with launching DLA at a stroke rather than adopting the tentative approach of the Labour Government when they introduced the mobility allowance.

The hon. Lady should also bear it in mind that, for the first time in this area, we are relying not on medical examination but overwhelmingly on self-assessment by disabled people of the effect of disability on their lives. That has been a notable success. Some 80 per cent. of cases are now being decided without the need for medical examination. The Government are to be congratulated on that, not criticised.

Mr. Duncan: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the setting up of a special telephone hot line specifically for hon. Members to bring to the attention of DLA offices cases of urgent need among their constituents. Will the Minister join me in condemning the irresponsible action of some Labour Members who have distributed that telephone number willy nilly to the severe detriment of genuine cases of urgent need?

Mr. Scott: There have been some examples of that sort, but, to be fair, they were fairly limited and not many people went down that route. I deplore the fact that some did because they could have set a pattern that might have been followed elsewhere. The establishment of a hot line for hon. Members should be seen against the background of a considerable number of additional lines and operators for the general public. The combination of those two initiatives has been a significant advance in advising people about the state of their claims.

Disability Living Allowance

6. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the total number of applications received for disability living allowance; how many have been *(a)* processed and *(b)* successful; and what is the average time for a ruling to be reached.

11. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of disability living allowance applications received by the Benefits Agency at the latest available date; and what was his Department's forecast.

Mr. Scott: By the end of September, 498,000 claims for disability living allowance had been received and 351,000 had been cleared. These resulted in 126,000 new awards of

DLA and 98,000 top-up awards to existing mobility and attendance allowance beneficiaries. The corresponding forecast was for 494,000 claims.

Mrs. Ewing: I recognise the importance of those statistics, but the Minister claims that the allowance has been a victim of its own success. Does he not realise that many thousands of families have been the victims of pious hopes and complacency by his Department in dealing with applications? Many thousands of families have gone through a great deal of misery waiting to hear whether DLA would be awarded because upon that depends the award of invalidity care allowance and possibly housing benefit. Many people have been subjected to a huge reduction in income. Will the Minister accept the buck for the failure of administration of this allowance in the past six months and will he assure the House that there will be effective monitoring and that this will never happen again?

Mr. Scott: It is certainly my intention that it never should. Nobody who read with care the letter by the chief executive that was sent out on 19 October outlining the steps that he had taken through the deployment of extra staff, the working of overtime and the setting up of an additional claims unit to deal with these claims could believe that there is any proof whatever of complacency. There has been a clear determination to overcome a problem which, perhaps, might have been perceived. Once it was established we tackled it with enthusiasm.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that the whole thing has been bungled? From February this year until April there were 116,000 DLA claims, 148,000 top-up claims and 183,000 other claims. It is now November and I am led to believe that there is still a backlog of 93,000 DLA claims, 57,000 top-claims and 92,000 other claims. It is obvious that the Minister is not dealing with the problem but is only creating misery for those who are in need.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman, for whom I have considerable respect, usually goes over the top towards the end of his remarks. I have given the figures for where we are at the moment and have assured the House that from now on the agency is determined to meet the targets.

Mr. Brazier: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on having the courage to set clear and easily measurable targets. Next week I am to meet a delegation from my constituency about the processing of these claims. May I ask the Minister to pass my thanks to those manning his telephone hot line? They have assisted me in processing 15 constituency cases in the past few weeks, and the problem involved in one of them was solved in a day.

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I believe that his experience reflects that of many hon. Members, including many Labour Members, who have had similar experience of the helpful nature of the telephone service. Considerable advance has been made in enabling the benefits inquiry line to assist customers with the completion of their forms when they find that difficult. That has contributed to the success of the benefit.

Mr. Raynsford: Is the Minister aware that page 9 of the recently published Benefits Agency annual report stated that the agency anticipated claims of these benefits at the rate of 63,000 a week? If that was the case, does not the Minister recognise that the number of claims that have so far been processed should have been processed within six or seven weeks? Is not a delay of 26 weeks or more incompetence? Are the figures in the report false, and if not, what has gone wrong?

Mr. Scott: Perhaps I can try to explain, although it is difficulty to convey this precisely at the Dispatch Box. Two things happened in the very early days of the benefit. First, there was an unexpected surge in claims for attendance allowance and mobility allowance. We did not want to detract from the right of people to claim those benefits right up to the time that they were replaced by disability living allowance. There was a considerable surge in advance claims in the weeks preceding the introduction of DLA, and of disability working allowance at the same time. That was the genisis of the problem that the Benefits Agency has been tackling and has now succeeded in conquering.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Charter Marks

29. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will announce the number of organisations short listed for charter mark awards.

33. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many public service organisations have been awarded a charter mark; and if he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): Thirty-six charter marks were awarded. Winners were chosen from 296 applicants. They included schools, hospitals, police services, public utilities, Government agencies and local authority service departments.

The awards announced last month were only the first. I am certain that the contest will go from strength to strength next year.

Mr. Milburn: What conclusion does the Chancellor draw from the fact that, of the thousands of public bodies eligible to apply for a charter mark award, only 296 did so? Does he agree that the standards of public service and competence displayed by his Government in recent weeks should mean that the Government will never qualify to receive a charter mark award?

Mr. Waldegrave: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, this was the first year of the award and earlier this year, as he will remember—perhaps without much pleasure—there was a general election, which took people's eyes off this contest. We have every reason to believe that there will be many more applicants next year. The winners, and those involved with the winners this year, all say that it is good for morale in their services, and they welcome the competition.

Mr. Spring: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating Anglian Water, a charter mark winner, on the improved levels of service, efficiency and investment that it and its consumers have enjoyed since privatisation?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in congratulating Anglian Water and I am also happy that my regional water company, Wessex Water, was a winner as well. When I visited the company recently, it was clear that the award had been widely welcomed by those working in the company. The low levels of complaint that Anglian Water has received in the past year, together with its high standards and the way in which it has achieved its targets, is widely perceived in the region.

Mr. Skinner: What happens if, after receiving a charter mark, a company goes bankrupt? Does it have to hand the award back? Does it bring it to the right hon. Gentleman? Is he aware that there is a danger, this year, that 10 or 15 per cent. of charter marks could be handed back to the Government from bankrupt firms? He will be swamped by them. What will he do when these firms tell him that they will have to throw 3,000 people out of work? Instead of playing about with charter marks, the Government should be ensuring that we have full employment. Instead of playing these kids' games, the Government should be getting people off the dole.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member has found a good hook for the speech that perhaps he wanted to make at some stage this afternoon. Charter marks are for the public service. Whatever accusation may be made by Labour Members about the water companies, they are not very likely to go bankrupt.

Science and Technology

30. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he hopes to publish a White Paper on science and technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: We hope to publish our White Paper on science and technology in the early part of next year. I am delighted to say that there has been an excellent response from the public to the White Paper consultation exercise, which ends on 30 November.

Mr. Marshall: May I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer and join him in welcoming the news that the White Paper will be published shortly, in 1993? May I have an assurance from my right hon. Friend that the White Paper will place substantial emphasis on the role of engineering?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. Many believe that if there is criticism to be made of the skills that have been invested over the years in this area, it is perhaps that we have not been strong enough in application. In comparison with some other countries, we do not, for example, give a high enough status to engineers. If we can find ways of rectifying that, we shall do so.

Dr. Bray: Is the Minister aware that there are very few scientists who would expect him to go into a policy purdah for a year while he mulls over the questions of organisation? Is he aware that if he does not establish his own leadership and that of his office on science policy before the White Paper is published, he will have great difficulty in doing so afterwards?

Mr. Waldegrave: I certainly do not intend to go into any sort of purdah. The new Select Committee, of which the hon. Gentleman is a distinguished member, had a good discussion on these matters, to which I hope I contributed something, only recently. We are deliberately flying several kites, some of which he and his colleagues have been examining. Before we set down policy in the White Paper, we must discuss widely the various options. I shall not come down on any of the great issues before we come to final conclusions, partly because it would be discourteous to the Select Committee so to do.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important that account is taken in the White Paper of the pure and applied research that was previously carried out by the Ministry of Defence, which in future is unlikely to be undertaken by that Ministry?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is set policy now—the policy was set some years ago—that the extent of defence-related research and development should decline somewhat over the next years. The figures overall on Government spending on R and D are good. Recent work undertaken by my Department shows that we are in the middle of the pack of comparable countries. As resources come to be released from defence-related expenditure there will be those—especially good young scientists—who will be taken up as they are needed by the civil defence effort.

Mr. Cryer: Is not the assurance that the Minister gives about his concern for engineering negated by the fact that because of Government policy 70,000 people will be made redundant—largely in the engineering industry—as a result of the Government's disgraceful decision to sack 30,000 miners at 31 pits? Is it not true that many of the 70,000 will be from the engineering sector, and that this is a body-blow to the industry from which it will not recover, no matter how lengthy and how learned the White Paper on science and technology?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman knows well that the Government are reviewing the decisions to which he has referred. I do not believe that any of the countries that are gaining a world trading share in engineering products are increasing the size of their coal mining industries.

Dr. Moonie: May I focus the attention of the Minister on a particular kite by asking him, when he is considering what to include in the White Paper, to accept the advice of the Royal Society that some changes must be made to the methods of paying international subscriptions, given that the Government's incompetence in the recent devaluation led to an increase of many millions of pounds in the cost of subscriptions which will have to be borne by domestic research?

Mr. Waldegrave: I welcome the hon. Gentleman and the other members of the Opposition Front Bench team on their first outing.

The argument put by the Royal Society and others is that the foreign exchange element of foreign subscriptions should be taken out of the research councils' budget and put in some central budget. We will consider that. However, there is a strong counter argument that if the research councils wish to conduct some part of their research abroad, the risk of exchange movements is one matter which they must take into account.

On a party political point, it ill becomes the Opposition to criticise devaluation. If the hon. Gentleman looks back over the years, he will find that the Opposition's share of devaluations goes against his argument.

Charters

31. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is being made under *(a)* the patients charter and *(b)* other charters.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): We have made considerable progress through legislation and through the publication of 26 follow-up charters. For example, in relation to the patients charter to which my hon. Friend referred, patients now have maximum waiting times for operations and individual out-patient appointments. From April 1993, we will reduce waiting times for hip and knee joint replacements and cataract operations to 18 months; publish reports on individual hospitals and ambulance services, and extend patients charter provisions to primary health care.

Much more is being done. We will shortly be publishing a White Paper describing progress to date and plans for future development.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that 900,000 people have asked for copies of the patients charter shows the great interest in and support for it? Is he aware that my constituents want him to consider powers of redress for them where the patients and other charters are not fulfilled? What additional powers can be given to people to deal strongly with British Rail when trains are late or with the ambulance service when ambulances do not arrive?

Mr. Jackson: One of the consequences of the citizens charter targets is that it is possible to establish more effective means of redress and access to compensation in certain circumstances, especially in the case of British Rail. The most important benefit of the charter approach and the institution of targets and standards of performance indicators is that it enables those concerned with delivering the services to identify more clearly the areas of failure and do something about them.

Mr. Enright: To date, to what extent has the charter decreased the waiting time for those on disability living allowance?

Mr. Jackson: I sat through the end of questions earlier when the matter was very fully exercised. I was struck by what my right hon. Friend said about the use of targets by the authorities administering that allowance to ensure improvements in the management of the service.

Mr. Jenkin: On the patients charter and the objectives being set by the "The Health of the Nation" White Paper, is there consultation between my hon. Friend's Department and the Department of Health to ensure that we do not empower patients to rush around the country for unnecessary treatments such as tattoo removals and breast enlargement, to the detriment of those whose rights are being affected by the use of cash for such unnecessary treatments?

Mr. Jackson: The relationship between the citizens charter unit in my Department and the front-line Department responsible for the service is that they are in the lead and we are supporting them, in ensuring consistency of treatment in charter principles across the whole range of public services. I shall certainly draw my right hon. Friend's attention to my hon. Friend's remarks.

Ms. Mowlam: Does the Minister agreed that an important ingredient for local authorities and health authorities in delivering a quality service is not just charters but, as he implied earlier, the morale of staff? If so, will he tell the House now whether he agrees or disagrees with a freeze on public sector pay?

Mr. Jackson: That matter will be dealt with in the context of the autumn statement. The hon. Lady must wait for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to make his statement.

Disabled People

32. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to include in the citizens charter protection for disabled people against discrimination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Public services should be available equally to everyone who uses them. The citizens charter calls on public sector organisations to take account of the needs of all their customers—including, where appropriate, those with disabilities—when they are setting service standards.

Mr. Wareing: Nine years ago this very month, I introduced a Bill to outlaw discrimination against disabled people. Almost every Tory Member voted against it. At the time, I was assured that all that was required to overcome the difficulties of disabled people was education and persuasion.

Can the Minister name a single disabled people's organisation that opposes the introduction of statutory legislation to prevent discrimination against disabled people? Does he realise that disabled people are still being treated as second-class citizens, especially in regard to employment? If the citizens charter is to mean anything, should it not include a protection against discrimination of this kind?

Mr. Jackson: As I said in my answer, the charters include reference to people with disabilities where that is appropriate, and they are based on standards that the hon. Gentleman would support.

We need no lectures from the hon. Gentleman about support for people with disabilities, which has featured largely in the Government's activity. Since 1978-79, expenditure on people with disabilities—support for the long-term sick and disabled—has risen by 173 per cent. in real terms.

Miss Emma Nicholson: About a year ago, I particpated in a programme called "Positive Action" for the civil service. Can the Minister tell me what has happened as a result of that programme? Has the civil service changed any of its training methods? Is it employing more disabled people, or fewer?

Mr. Jackson: The civil service has an extremely good record of support for people with disabilities. We employ twice as many disabled people, in proportion to our total work force, as the private sector. Our training, and the course in which my hon. Friend was involved, are part of our support. I have seen one of the Civil Service college courses in operation, and I know that those courses are very successful.

Dr. Reid: How can the Minister expect us to believe that the citizens charter, and his Department, are acting positively to counter disability discrimination? This afternoon, we heard that the basic benefit paid in the form of disability living allowance has been withheld, in a discriminatory fashion, from many thousands of people with disabilities.

This morning, carrying out a check, I discovered that, in the last 25 cases that I have taken up—three reminders were sent in respect of eight of them—24 have not even been acknowledged. Does the Minister accept that he would not wait six months for his salary? It is discriminating against people with disabilities to expect them to wait six, 12 or 18 months for their small amount of disability benefit.

Mr. Jackson: I heard what my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People had to say about that, and I thought that he adopted the right approach according to charter principles—which is to set clear targets and to ensure that they are met.

Open Government

35. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what meetings he has held with the Consumers Association to discuss the subject of open government.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Along with Maurice Frankel, I addressed a meeting organised by the Consumers Association, on the subject of open government during last month's Conservative party conference in Brighton. It was constructive and very well attended.

Mr. Evans: Will my hon. Friend confirm that his responsibilities for open government go hand in hand with the requirements of the citizens charter? The citizens charter has caught the imagination and the support of many people; so would any further progress towards open government.

Mr. Jackson: I agree that the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for open government are an important aspect of his overall responsibility. Early next year the Department will produce another White Paper on the subject, and the House will have an opportunity to consider it then.

Mr. Winnick: Would it not be a positive sign of open government if Tory Members were allowed to vote on Wednesday's motion without any further arm-twisting or threats of deselection? Will the Minister recommend that to the Prime Minister?

Mr. Jackson: It would be a great help to us all if the Labour party stayed on a consistent course on the European question.

Pensioners' Rights

36. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the application of the citizens charter for the rights of pensioners.

Mr. Waldegrave: As my hon. Friend has just told the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), public services should be available equally to everyone who uses them. The citizens charter calls on public sector organisations to take account of the needs of all their customers—including, where appropriate, pensioners—when setting service standards.

Mrs. Jackson: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is a great omission not to include specific rights for pensioners in the citizens charter? I refer particularly to pensioners in residential care. In both private and public nursing homes they have great difficulty in maintaining such basic rights as their ability to correspond with the press, to make complaints, to use their own money, and so on. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would be appropriate to include those rights within his citizens charter?

Mr. Waldegrave: Pensioners, as is the case with every other citizen, should have their needs addressed in the specific charter that deals with their service. It would not be helpful to try to produce a megacharter that runs across all the services for pensioners. That is the point that my hon. Friend made, and I should like to reinforce it. There may well be strength in what the hon. Lady says when it comes to a particular charter.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the huge exodus of refugees now taking place into a narrow corridor in central Bosnia and a war that is increasingly turning into the near genocide of the Muslim population, and in view of the fact that British Government policy for safe havens inside Bosnia is now totally discredited, I rise to ask whether you have received a request from Ministers to make a statement on this issue.

A dreadful and brutal civil war, in which we are irrevocably involved after our recognition of Bosnia as a sovereign state, is now reaching a terrible climax. Two million refugees have now been driven out by the odious and dreadful practice of ethnic cleansing. In view of the prospect that this army of the dispossessed will form a focus of unrest and violence for decades to come at the heart of Europe, may I ask you to use your good offices to secure a full ministerial statement at the earliest opportunity?

Madam Speaker: I have not been informed by the Government that any Minister is seeking to make a statement on this issue.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On the appropriate day I submitted a question to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster regarding the tenants charter. The following day it finished up, as we call it, in the frame. It was the third or fourth on the list. The day after that it suddenly disappeared. That is done at the whim of a Minister. He or she can decide whether the question should appear on the Order Paper. I finished up with a written question to the Secretary of State for the Environment, and yet—I do not grumble about this—on the Order Paper today the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has a question relating to the patients charter. His question strayed into matters relating to British Rail. Again, there is no problem at all about that. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) asked a question about the disabled—again, there is no problem at all about that—and my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) asked about the rights of pensioners.

There are two issues. First, why do Ministers have the power to take something off the Order Paper, thus depriving hon. Members of the opportunity to ask an oral question? Secondly, what is so different about the tenants charter? Does it have a lower status than other charters?

Madam Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's frustrations. No doubt they have been heard by those who sit on the Treasury Bench. However, I must draw to the hon. Gentleman's attention what is said by "Erskine May,' the bible of our parliamentary proceedings—on page 286, if my memory serves me correctly. It is a long-established principle that decisions about the transfer of questions —the point of order that is raised with me—rest with Ministers. It is not a matter on which the Chair seeks to intervene. Nevertheless, I draw the attention of Ministers to the frustrations of hon. Members who believe that they are doing the right thing in tabling questions.

BILLS PRESENTED

NATIONAL SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICE

Mr. Terry Davis, supported by Mr. Robert Ainsworth, Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. Jim Cunningham, Mr. Derek Fatchett, Mr. Sam Galbraith, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Dr. Lewis Moonie, Mr. Jeff Rooker, Mr. Robert N. Wareing and Mr. Mike Watson, presented a Bill to provide for the establishment of a national school health service; to lay down guidelines for such a service; to provide for regular health reviews for children at school; to require the annual publication of health profiles of schoolchildren in an area; to provide parents or guardians with a record of their child's health; to ensure that every child of school age has access to a named qualified nurse; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 74].

SEXUAL OFFENCES (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Harry Cohen, supported by Ms. Diane Abbott, Mr. Tony Benn, Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, Ms. Jean Corston, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Ms. Mildred Gordon, Mr. Ken Livingstone, Mr. Eddie Loyden, Ms. Marjorie Mowlam, Ms. Dawn Primarolo and Ms. Joyce Quin, presented a Bill to amend the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976; to make further provision in respect of offences of rape and sexual assault; to provide protection for women and children at risk of rape: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 75].

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Private Streets (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries (Repeals) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State, may I inform the House that I have had to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 pm and 8 pm.

3.35 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

We all willingly accept in this country the obligations laid on us by the 1951 Geneva convention. We have a long and honourable tradition in the United Kingdom of offering political asylum to those who flee to this country from their country where they face individual persecution because of their political opinions, religious beliefs or ethnic origins. The Government intend to uphold that fine tradition.

We live in a multiracial and multicultural society——

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I propose to give way in due course—I am sure that that is what the House would wish—but I should like to speak for two or three minutes without doing so.

We live in a multiracial and multicultural society, which I accept and welcome. We must continue to accept for settlement in this country all those permitted by our immigration rules to take up residence here to be reunited with their families. We must continue to strive to improve race relations and to create full equality of opportunity for people living here of every racial and ethnic background.

We want to be a country that is open to bona fide visitors—business men, tourists, students, relatives or whoever—from every part of the globe. We welcome visitors to our shores. Britain will never be a closed or cut-off society.

Those are the civilised values on which I base my presentation of the Bill. I believe that it is necessary for the maintenance of those civilised values that we now strengthen our system of immigration control. If we are successfully to maintain our ability to receive everyone genuinely entitled to come, we must strengthen our system of controlling entry and excluding people not entitled to be here.

Good race relations are heavily dependent on strict immigration control. Race relations in Britain are not perfect—they could be better—but they are better than they are almost anywhere else in western Europe or north America. One reason for that is that our host population feels comfortable with a system that restricts to manageable numbers the influx of people from overseas.

Enormous potential movements of people could take place across the globe in the next decade from eastern Europe, Africa and Asia into western Europe. Every person of good will and common sense knows that there is a strict limit on the number of people who can be allowed to migrate for settlement in this country.

We do not always face up to the logical consequences of that when I, as Home Secretary, face campaigning in some distressing case on behalf of someone who prefers to live here contrary to our immigration rules rather than to return to the country from which he or she came. Common sense has to tell us, sadly, that we cannot allow people to stay here simply because they would be financially better off than in the poverty-stricken country from which they came. Common sense should tell us that we cannot allow anyone to settle here simply because they come from a country in part of whose territorty there is civil war or political strife.

Open entry to anyone who managed to get to our frontier or into our territory from a third-world, troubled country would lead to terrible pressures on our employment, on our housing, on our social services, on our health service and on our education service. If we are too generous, it is the population of our inner cities, our urban poor and our homeless who will be the main sufferers from misguided liberalism. If we do not control entry, we shall not be able to deal promptly with the claims of the genuinely persecuted and of the stricken families whom the British public most want to help.

People who are not genuine refugees or who are not entitled to live here under our rules must be returned to whichever country they are from unless there are some exceptional or compelling humanitarian reasons to the contrary in the particular case, or unless there would be real physical danger to the individual in returning him or her to that country.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): When the Home Secretary's predecessor introduced the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill in 1987, he said that its introduction would result in a better customer service. What actually happened was that the number of applications increased and that the delays at Lunar house increased. Is the Home Secretary telling the House that the Bill will result in the housing, social services and education problems affecting inner-city areas improving?

Mr. Clarke: The Bill will achieve a better system for making prompt and fair decisions when we receive applications to settle in this country. It will lead to giving quicker security to those who are entitled to seek refuge here or to settle here permanently. It will enable us to turn away more promptly and fairly those who are not entitled to be here. That in itself will ease the pressures on all our public services. It will mean that our public services will have to face the demands that come from those whom the British public want to be here as our contribution to those suffering in international troubles. That is not the case at present, and we need the system to provide a better service to would-be settlers and to the general public.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend now that he is in a giving-way mood——

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The hon. Gentleman tried to intervene before the debate had started.

Mr. Marlow: Yes, at the apposite time. My right hon. and learned Friend—*[Interruption.]* When hon. Members are ready, I shall continue. My right hon. and learned Friend said that we have always abided by the 1951 convention. The 1951 convention is now ensconsed within the legislation and it takes primacy over anything else in the legislation. Does it take primacy over anything else

[Mr. Marlow]

that Parliament might do in the future? Has any convention such as this been written into legislation in the way that has been done this time?

Mr. Clarke: It is certainly the first time that the 1951 convention has been put into legislation in this way. That is an innovation in the Bill. Off the cuff, I cannot recall such an international convention being written into legislation. I will check and I shall write to my hon. Friend if someone can find a precedent. There is no question—the one point on which all parties agree—but that the 1951 Geneva convention imposes obligations that we are happy to accept. One obligation is to receive those who genuinely fear being persecuted in the country from which they have arrived on the basis of their political beliefs, their religion, their ethnic origin or their family.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will give way a little later. This is an important matter, and Madam Speaker has said that she is restricting speeches in a debate in which many want to speak.

Our immigration system has already been subjected to enormous pressures as more and more people attempted to get around our policies and our controls at the ports. About five years ago, many people suddenly discovered that it was possible to get through our port controls simply by asserting a claim to political asylum. Even when people were already resident and had been required to leave, the ordinary controls could be avoided by making a claim to asylum at that stage.

Many of those arriving here began to destroy their travel documents during travel because they mistakenly believed that creating confusion about their background supported their claim to refugee status.

Ms. Short: How many?

Mr. Clarke: About two thirds of those applying at the ports for asylum have destroyed their passports or their travel documents or have somehow disposed of them during the journey. The result was that genuine claimants for asylum found themselves in a system that was seeking to cope with a queue of bogus applicants. That problem lay behind the introduction of the Asylum Bill before the general election.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that two thirds of applicants had destroyed their documents. Will he revise that answer and give the accurate account, which is that two thirds arrive here with inadequate travel documents? That is quite different from what he just said.

Mr. Clarke: Two thirds arrive here, presumably having got on at the far end with passports or travel documents, having destroyed the documents, mutilated them or handed them on to someone else so that they no longer have them.

Given that most right hon. and hon. Members are content with the obligations on us towards asylum seekers, it is important that we do not misdescribe the present situation. The Bill is designed to improve the method of dealing quickly with genuine applicants and turning away more promptly those who are not. Those who defend the status quo must not be allowed to remain in ignorance of how the status quo is working. That background, in part, led to the introduction of the Asylum Bill last Session. The Bill that we are debating today modifies last Session's Bill in some respects and contains the addition of new changes to the general immigration appeals system.

The rules setting out who can or cannot come must be applied firmly and fairly. That means that we must decide cases without delay. We cause great problems for genuine and deserving applicants if we keep them in uncertainty for long periods. If we let those who cannot stay put down roots here while unnecessarily complicated procedures run their course, their eventual refusal will be more traumatic and difficult than it needs to be.

We must also decide cases on their merits. It is unfair to people in this country and those who wish to come here if inefficiencies in our systems—or the skilful exploitation of those inefficiencies—result in undeserving applicants managing to stay while others who play by the book are turned down.

We must concentrate our resources on the questions that really matter. Therefore, we cannot run an entirely demand-led immigration system which allows every case to run on and on through labyrinthine procedures with scant regard for events in the real world.

We must filter our caseload more effectively and say "No" more finally in the cases where there is no real scope for argument and "Yes" more quickly when "Yes" is the right answer.

Mr. Madden: I draw the Secretary of State' attention to the plight of nationals of the former states of Yugoslavia. Four hundred such nationals were removed from this country between January and August of this year, including more than 40 who were seeking political asylum. There are now 900 such nationals seeking political asylum here, of whom a number have already had their applications decided. Will the Home Secretary give a categoric assurance that no one seeking political asylum here from a former Yugoslav state will be removed until and unless mass genocide has ceased in the former states of Yugoslavia?

Mr. Clarke: We quite rightly receive large numbers of people from Yugoslavia. No one has been returned to a war zone and no one will be. My recollection is that, of the 30,000 or so who have come here already this year, we have returned about 40 who came from third countries. They had not come from Yugoslavia. We returned them to the countries in which they had previously been living.

Mr. Madden: We have returned 429.

Mr. Clarke: I will check that figure, but I believe that we have returned just over 40. We are returning people who have come here from other countries. To give a random example, if a Yugoslav has been living in Paris for some years, he is not entitled to come here and claim asylum from a war in which he has not been engaged. That is the kind of person we are returning. Such people are known as third-country returns.

People coming here from Yugoslavia are being admitted as visitors. Many of them in increasing numbers are applying for asylum. Only a quarter of those seeking asylum come from Bosnia. Some people are seeking asylum and they come from parts of Yugoslavia where there is no violence and where there has been no violence.

However, the applications of all those asylum seekers are being examined and obviously at the moment there is no question of our returning from this country people who would be at risk.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, a distinction must be made between everyone who has a passport from the former Yugoslavia—wherever they may come from—and those people fleeing from warfare, whom I am sure this country wants to help, and whom the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) so graphically described.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that everyone in Ealing shares the compassionate attitude that he has described to people who are suffering in their country of origin? Is he aware that one week ago 150 people from Bosnia were brought to Ealing and that, as the London borough's sharing scheme has broken down completely, no other borough was prepared to help Ealing to house them? It is not possible for Ealing to do it. Something has to be done.

Mr. Clarke: Those matters are being anxiously studied and my hon. Friend has a valid point. There is a strong and compassionate feeling that we must help people who have been driven from their homes by warfare and when, for example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has said that they must find refuge outside their former country. We wish to help those people. We must consider how to manage that help when they arrive. We are not sending anyone back to the war zones at the moment.

The number of Yugoslav applications is increasing—a quarter are from Bosnia, large numbers from Croatia and Serbia, and a few from Slovenia and Macedonia. Authorities which contain airports, where refugees present themselves, find it difficult. A large number of Albanians from Kosovo arrived in one Essex authority a week ago. There is no fighting in Kosovo, but they are being looked after near Stansted.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: May I be allowed to resume, as there will be other opportunities to discuss Yugoslavia, which is a graphic and current illustration of how this country wants to respond to its humanitarian obligations? Our legal and humanitarian obligations must be directed at people who are properly the object of public concern.

Returning to the question of asylum and immigration, it is important to establish systems which target our hospitality and our help on people who are entitled to be here.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: May I be allowed to press on?

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend has a constituency interest.

Mr. Shersby: I share the views expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). How does my right hon. and learned Friend foresee that London boroughs such as Hillingdon, which has Heathrow within its boundaries, Ealing, which is next door, and others will accommodate refugees and pay for the cost of their accommodation? Does he accept and understand that that places an enormous burden on the local authorities concerned? Is there to be a national scheme to pay for the costs of housing such people?

Mr. Clarke: I hope that I and the Government will be able to respond to my hon. Friend shortly. At this stage I can only concede to my hon. Friends the Members for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that they have mentioned a valid problem which the Government are examining urgently.

If I may return to the Bill——

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for giving way because it is important to continue the line pursued by my hon. Friends. In the City of Westminster there has been a tenfold increase in the number of asylum seekers wanting homeless person's accommodation in the past three years. My authority is no longer able to house those people, nor is it able to rehouse people living in the city who have a long-standing connection with it, so something has to be done.

Mr. Clarke: I gave way to my hon. Friend because I know that there is a big problem in the City of Westminster. When I left the Home Office earlier today I saw people carrying placards which said, "Asylum For All". Most of our critics are defending a system which allows large numbers of people in, and has great consequences for public services in certain boroughs. The inhabitants of Westminster, Hillingdon and Ealing have no objection to this country upholding its obligations to allow people in for asylum, but people who regard claims for asylum as a way to open up the ending of ordinary immigration controls must accept that we cannot take on such obligations. That is why we need a system to identify genuine applicants for asylum and to consider how local authorities which are near an airport or in a capital city are to cope.

Asylum is not just another immigration category. We all know from what we see and hear daily throughout the world what the scale of human misery is at the moment and therefore we know that asylum is not just an ordinary immigration category. That is why we have confirmed our obligations under the 1951 convention. However, we must recognise that the growth in asylum applications is in part linked to the fact that anyone who asks for asylum is allowed past the normal immigration controls at our ports. As migratory pressures have increased, the possibility of getting past the ordinary immigration controls becomes a prize that has drawn increasing numbers to seek asylum here and in other western countries. That swell of numbers is now surrounding the genuine seekers for asylum whom we are trying to help.

The numbers seeking asylum in the European Community are enormous—half a million last year, and this year it is likely to be three quarters of a million. Obviously, the events in the former Yugoslavia have had a major impact—we have just talked about that—and I can assure hon. Members that nothing in the Bill affects our ability to make an effective response to the Bosnian and Yugoslavian problem. Even leaving Yugoslavia aside, however, the trend in applications has been steeply upward over recent years. At the same time, there has been a marked reduction in the proportion of refugees found to be genuine refugees under the criteria of the 1951 convention.

[Mr. Clarke]

Ten years ago, more than half the decisions were to recognise asylum seekers as refugees. Last year just one in 10 claims could be upheld and this year the number has fallen even further. Nine out of 10 asylum seekers turn out eventually to have unfounded claims, but it has usually taken so long to decide that that six out of 10 are then allowed to stay permanently. The pattern has been similar elsewhere in Europe.

We have not been narrowing our criteria in order to keep out genuine refugees. That is not the case—we continue to apply the 1951 convention definition. What has happened is that in an increasing number of cases applicants fail to meet the convention criteria. The applicants may well want to come to this country, but asylum is about refugees and other reasons for wishing to migrate must be addressed under the normal immigration rules.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman concede that the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 has made it extremely difficult for many people to get on a plane to seek asylum and that it has been a charter for all kinds of spivs to sell airline tickets at grossly inflated prices, because they know that, at the end of the day, they have to pay the fine? Does he agree that the 1987 Act has been a deterrent to people who are seeking legitimate asylum?

Mr. Clarke: I do not accept that it has had any effect on people seeking legitimate asylum. That Act provides an important protection for us because it stops airline companies simply taking on to aircraft people who palpably have no documents for that journey. Given the weaknesses that I have just described in our present ability to deal with those people when they arrive at our airports or ports, I would not contemplate easing the provisions of the 1987 Act.

One out of 10 asylum seekers are successful because they turn out to have a genuine, well-founded claim, but, in the end, far larger numbers are allowed to stay here and take up permanent residence because it has taken so long to determine their cases—that is at the nub of the Bill.

Let me explain carefully this absolutely critical point. Although in recent years we have granted full asylum in only a relatively small number of cases, we have felt obliged, because of the delays, to grant exceptional leave to remain in others. The practice has been to grant such leave in cases where the applicants do not qualify for asylum but where it has been judged that, in all the circumstances—including the circumstances through the years while they have waited for a decision—it would be unreasonable or impracticable to seek to enforce their return to their country of origin. In recent years, as many as 60 per cent. of those who applied for asylum have had that application refused, but have then been granted exceptional leave to remain instead. That is not acceptable and it encourages people to make groundless claims because that will delay the process for so long—or the decisions will be delayed by the inadequacies of the system—to such an extent that they will not eventually be required to leave. I want to reduce that number significantly.

The Bill is an important step in that direction because of the accelerated procedures that will enable us to turn away, promptly, manifestly unfounded claims. As things currently stand, people are let in because no attempt or an inadequate attempt has been made to sieve them out at the port of entry. They are granted exceptional leave and are then entitled to work or claim benefit. In certain circumstances, local authorities are obliged to house them.

I am taking an urgent look at our practice in such cases because the current demands on our public services, in not only Hillingdon, Westminster and Ealing but elsewhere, go far beyond those which arise as a direct result of granting refugee status in genuine cases. Many thousands of people who do not qualify for refugee status remain here for many months, and sometimes years, while their applications are considered. Many remain here permanently even after their applications have been refused.

Ms. Short: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way, but I wish to finish the point.

That is the status quo which opponents of the Bill seek to defend. If they thought the matter through, they would not accept that they should defend it.

Ms. Short: I realise that the Home Secretary is new to his Department, but he has misled the House about what has been the practice of the Home Office for many years. The practice has never been to grant temporary stay to people who have no case for political asylum. There are two grades. The tiny minority are overwhelming cases and are given political asylum. Other cases are kept waiting for ages as a result of the inefficiency of his Department. Where peole have a case for political asylum but the circumstances in the country from which they come may change, they are given one year. That is the position. What the Home Secretary told the House is false. He pretends that those who are given a short time are given it because of delays in the system. That is simply wrong.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Lady has experience of the Home Office, but rather longer ago than mine. She has great experience of such cases. I hate to tell her that what she just said is not correct. Currently only one in 10 of those who apply for asylum—it is rather fewer this year—eventually are found to have well-founded claims. While the others wait, they are first given temporary leave to enter, and that temporary leave can be extended. Of those who have their applications refused, 60 per cent. are given exceptional leave to remain. The greatest part of the burden on Britain from asylum seekers is from people who have at no stage established a well-founded claim for refugee status under the Geneva convention.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The Home Secretary is wrong on this point. Both now and earlier today he claimed that the accelerated procedure applies only to bogus claims. Indeed, the accelerated procedure and the 48-hour rule on appeals will apply only to those cases where people make an application for asylum at the port of entry. It will not apply to those who wait longer to make an application.

Mr. Clarke: That is not correct, although I had no opportunity to correct the hon. Gentleman this morning. In all those cases where the officer certifies that there is a manifestly unfounded claim, there will be 48 hours in which to challenge that decision.

Mr. Blair: Perhaps I should take the Home Secretary through it. Presumably he has the Bill and the rules in front of him. Paragraph 5 of the asylum procedure rules, which the Home Secretary is presenting to the House, state clearly:

> "The time limit for giving notice of appeal shall be 2 days in a case where the appeal is made under section 7(1) of the Act"—

that is at the time of entry—

> "and there has been personal service on the appellant of the notice of the decision."

Apparently, the present practice is to serve notice personally on all those who make a claim of asylum at the time of entry. The rule does not apply only to bogus claims; it applies to all claims made at that time.

Mr. Clarke: The first stage will be the initial decision by the official involved. Where an officer gives a refusal to admit at a port, two days will be given to appeal. In all other cases 10 days will be given to appeal. The only people who will be caught by the 48-hour rule will be those who go before the adjudicator and it is held that there is a manifestly unfounded claim. They will be returned to their country. That is the streamlined procedure. At present, any application for asylum or for full refugee status goes through the ordinary process. We are introducing a streamlined procedure which will enable us to turn away more promptly those who have manifestly unfounded cases. All other countries that receive asylum applicants must go through the same process.

Mr. Blair: I do not mind that the Home Secretary has not read the Maastricht treaty, but it is a bit much that he has not read his Bill. Clearly the procedure applies to anyone who is personally served with a notice, not only to claims that are later found to be groundless. Anyone who is personally served has only 48 hours in which to appeal.

The Home Secretary is referring to claims without foundation, which come under a different part of the Bill —schedule 2, paragraph 4. As he has constantly misrepresented the position, if he is to challenge it any further I would be obliged if he would show how he can make his case from the Bill and the rules.

Mr. Clarke: The only people who can have the notice served on them personally are those in detention at the time—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes—at the port. I am glad that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) concedes that he is wrong to say that all asylum applications are subject to that procedure. The hon. Gentleman is completely wrong. We shall have to return to the matter, but the hon. Gentleman is wrong.

Mr. Blair: It is exactly as I said: it applies at the time of entry at the port, but not all people who apply on entry make bogus claims. The Home Secretary's case is—as he said on the radio this morning—that the 48-hour rule applies only to false applications. However, it does not —it applies to all applications made at the time of entry, of which there have been 5,000 this year.

Mr. Clarke: They are not all the applicants. There were 45,000 applications last year, and they are running at a lower rate this year. Those who are given a decision against them at the ports constitute a comparatively small number—5,000. They are not all the applicants. The only people subject to the 48-hour rule are those who have been given a notice at the port and are held in detention there or those whose application is turned down on the basis that the claim is manifestly unfounded. They then have 48 hours in which to satisfy an adjudicator that there are some grounds for their admission.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield makes a thoroughly bad argument in seeking to claim that every asylum application is subject to the 48-hour rule. I am grateful to him for giving me the opportunity to dispel the misapprehension.

Mr. Blair: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I shall not give way to pedantic nitpicking from someone who has misread the rules. We shall be able to sort out the matter during the course of the debate. A moment or two ago the hon. Gentleman accepted that the rule did not apply to every asylum application.

Mr. Blair: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I shall not give way. I shall return to the rate of applications and justification of the Bill, including the streamlined procedure.

When my predecessor introduced the original Asylum Bill 12 months ago, the rate of applications was running at 10 times the level of that in 1988. Backlogs were spiralling out of control. The time taken to decide applications stretched into years. Since then, we have done all that we can to seek improvements through administrative changes without changing the law. We have recruited and trained additional staff and now have nearly 500 civil servants doing asylum work in the Home Office. New procedures enable us to undertake closer initial scrutiny of new applications. Those changes have clearly had beneficial effects. But the present system does not work properly even with those additional resources, and it will not until we legislate.

Some commentators have suggested that the Bill is unnecessary because the trend in asylum applications is now downward. Numbers of new applications inevitably fluctuate, but we seem to be heading for well over 20,000 principal applications this year, although the rate is speeding up. That is half last year's total, but still five times higher than only four years ago. There were 2,500 applications in September alone—50 per cent. more than in August.

There was a reduction in asylum applications following the introduction last November of new screening procedures to combat multiple applications and abuse. Again, there was a denial at that time that there were many bogus combat multiple applications and abuse. Again, there was a denial at that time that there were many bogus claims, but it must be significant that when the new procedures were introduced, in about 5,000 cases, postal applicants failed to respond to two separate invitations to attend interviews. Of course, all those applications have now been refused because the applicants did not turn up. I am not suggesting that all who did not attend interviews had necessarily made fraudulent applications. Doubtless, they had not all applied in several different names—there may be all manner of other possible explanations. But those sorts of numbers, coupled with the virtual halving of the rate of new applications since last November, suggest strongly that there were serious abuses of our procedures, and at last we are beginning to check them.

The problem has not been solved. We have no reliable way of ensuring that multiple applications are still not

[Mr. Clarke]

happening. There have been attempts to forge our security printed acknowledgement letters; and while decision times remain long as we await the Bill's completion, that acknowledgement letter will inevitably be seen by some as an attractive passport giving trouble-free access to the benefits system.

We have made some impact through the increase in staff. We have cleared off 20,000 cases so far this year, more than four times the total for the whole of 1991. The backlog is falling for the first time in a decade, but, leaving aside refusals for failure to attend interviews or to provide information, we are still failing to keep pace with new applications. The backlog now stands at more than 60,000 cases awaiting decision and the need for reform remains as pressing as ever.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: We cannot continue with the complexity of the procedures that we operate. The courts have intervened——

Mr. Maclennan *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: As the hon. Gentleman usually votes consistently with his genuine opinions, not opportunistically like the Opposition, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Maclennan: To put the British problem in perspective, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledge that in Germany applications for asylum are running at 60,000 a month? What does he propose to do in the Council of Ministers? Has he dropped the proposal, published by Mr. Edward Mortimer in the *Financial Times* and broadcast on Radio 4 last week, to deal with this matter in a clandestine way?

Mr. Clarke: I accept that the pressures in Germany are much greater than our own, as are the difficulties. I do not, however, believe that we should wait for the problem to assume German dimensions here before we take action to get rid of the manifest inefficiencies in our system.

As for the document given to the newspapers—it was described as leaked, but there was nothing frightfully sinister about it—it is certainly true that we have a working party of officials in the Community looking at ways of harmonising our approach to this important problem: how to have a streamlined procedure for dealing with manifestly unfounded claims. That will be on the agenda at the Council of immigration Ministers which I will chair in a few weeks' time. We are presiding over the preparations for that, but this is not a particularly British document. The same problem is being faced in every European country, and it plainly makes sense to deal with it.

I do not think that Governments in other European countries are facing the sort of challenge that we face from the Opposition here—opposition to a quicker way of sifting out unfounded cases of those who come here seeking asylum from countries where there is no trouble, or without being able to give a reason, or giving reasons which are plainly untrue. We can give a better service to genuine applicants with arguable cases if we sift out the others. That is one of the benefits that the Bill and the rules that accompany it will provide.

We cannot continue with the complexity of the procedures that we operate. The courts have intervened on the ground of lack of appeal rights in many cases. Their decisions have added yet more increasingly ornate procedural requirements to our decision making. This Bill cuts through all that.

The new appeal rights will be the key to procedural simplicity and decision-making finality. Strict time limits, together with a streamlined channel for clearly groundless cases, will prevent abuse. We have improved on the previous Bill. A key change is a different approach to this vital filter for groundless cases. The Government have responded to the doubts that were raised about the streamlined procedure when it was going through Parliament before. In particular, we responded to the doubts raised about the provision requiring applicants to obtain leave to appeal from an adjudicator, who would consider the case on the papers. We have now provided that all rejected asylum applicants will have access to an oral hearing before an independent adjudicator, but we have preserved our ability to move quickly in clearly unfounded cases.

In future, if the Home Office certifies that an application is without foundation, an accelerated timetable will apply. If the adjudicator agrees that there is no foundation to the claim, there is no further avenue of appeal. We will be looking to resolve clearly groundless cases, such as safe third country arrivals from other European countries, in a week or 10 days. In other cases, we aim for an initial decision and appeal to an adjudicator where necessary within three months.

The other important change from last Session's Bill —a new subject in the Bill—is the addition of restrictions on certain appeal rights in ordinary immigration cases. That is part of the process of concentrating on what really matters. It is inefficient and ineffective to push all cases into the same procedures.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I should like to explain the provisions before giving way. With a backlog of 23,000 undecided cases in the immigration appeal system—well over a year's work—it cannot be sensible to continue to treat all immigration decisions as if the issues that they raise are of the same importance. The remedies available need to be in proportion to the potential grievance. Some decisions are undoubtedly of central significance to people's lives and their futures. Such people are those abroad who want to settle in this country with a husband or wife and people here who may be liable to deportation.

We recognise that a proper appeal opportunity is essential to confidence in the fairness of decisions of this sort, but big issues are not necessarily at stake in all immigration cases. We have identified two groups of cases in which the appeal rights currently available seem to add unnecessary complication and certainly divert resources from resolving more important cases in a reasonable time. Those are would-be visitors, short-term students and mandatory refusals——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Secretary of State give way on that point?

Mr. Clarke: Perhaps I could be allowed to complete my brief description. After that I may give way once or twice, although I am becoming pressed for time.

For visitors and short-term students, I have decided that it is necessary to make changes in order to get a prompt and just system in place to deal with applications for settlement. Although the issue is important to the people involved, it is not important enough to justify the full panoply of judicial consideration and publicly funded representation by legal aid. *[Interruption.]* I do not know of any other country——

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My mathematics are not very good, but I have counted at least 12 sedentary interventions or observations by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). Some of us come here to do our humble best to listen and learn and I think that it is time for some parliamentary wrist-slapping. The hon. Lady may have a chance to speak later, but I am a bit fed up, as I am sure are many other hon. Members.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is the most genuine and sensible point of order put to me since I became Speaker. I have made a list of all those who are intervening, sedentary or not, because I realise that we are short of time.

Mr. Clarke: I trust that I may sail forward in unaccustomed calm.

As I say, the issue in the case of visitors does not justify the full panoply of judicial consideration and publicly funded representation. The people concerned are outside the United Kingdom and would quite like to come here for up to six months. Of course, most of those who apply are able to satisfy the authorities that they are bona fide visitors. I accept that those who fail to do so may be greatly disappointed because they are not allowed to visit, but these are not matters of life or death. If I were to be turned down on a request to visit another country, I would no doubt be annoyed, but I would not expect full judicial procedures to be invoked in my appeal against that decision.

I prefer to concentrate resources in this enormous queue of important cases awaiting consideration on quicker decisions in settlement cases where the future way of life of the applicant is at stake. In any event, in the case of many visits, in practice the appeal is often a pointless or academic exercise. What could possibly be achieved by an appeal months or years afterwards against, for example, the refusal of permission to visit the United Kingdom for a short holiday? It makes no sense to use expensive judicial procedures in this way. The net effect is just to add to the workload and the delays and to hamper efforts to deal fairly and quickly with genuine cases.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The Secretary of State makes much of publicly funded advice and representation. Does he recognise that his proposals allowing the right of oral representation to the adjudicator do not include publicly funded advice and assistance or representation? Does he intend to speak to the Lord Chancellor to ensure that in life-and-death cases legal aid is extended to people who seek to exercise the right of oral representation before an adjudicator?

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect, I regret that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because he is taking me back to a part of the Bill from which I had already moved. I am dealing here with——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State has to respond to one intervention before he can take another one, if he wishes to do so.

Mr. Clarke: We want streamlined procedures so that we can deal with manifestly unfounded cases. To start introducing the lawyers, the legalisms, the procedures, and legal aid even to those cases is a great mistake. Someone who can demonstrate to the adjudicator that he has an arguable case will no doubt go on to have legal representation. There are few countries where taxpayers pay for legal representation to allow people who have never previously set foot in that country to challenge the decisions of the authorities. There are circumstances where we are continuing to do so, but we cannot do so in all cases.

Let me move on to the subject of mandatory refusals. The appeal in this case is a completely empty shell, useful only as a device for delaying departure from this country.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Secretary of State give way on this point?

Mr. Clarke: For some categories of case, the immigration rules are worded in a way that allows no legitimate doubt that a person refused under them does not or cannot qualify. For example, the rules are clear that six months is the maximum period that a visitor is allowed to stay. However, as things stand, we allow an appeal where refusal is certain and delay and cost occur while the appeal is being considered.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Secretary of State give way on this point?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has been asking me to "give way on this point" every time I have moved to another point. I cannot believe that that is always the case.

At the moment, if a visitor has been allowed to stay for six months, there is nothing to stop him applying to stay longer. After the inevitable refusal, which the rules say has to be made, that visitor is protected from deportation for as long as it takes for a useless appeal to grind its way through the system. We must deal with such problems.

I do not intend to go in detail through the remaining provisions of the Bill. They are familiar to hon. Members from the Bill introduced last Session. Clause 3 deals with fingerprinting, clauses 4 and 5 with housing and clause 6 with curtailment of existing leave. Clause 8 creates a new avenue of appeal on a point of law to the Court of Appeal, and clause 11 deals with power to require visas for passengers ostensibly planning to transit the United Kingdom. Some drafting changes have been made to other parts of the Bill.

I should also mention the draft asylum appeals (procedure) rules and immigration rules on asylum, which the Lord Chancellor and I have made available to assist in consideration of the Bill. Earlier versions of these drafts attracted some controversy last Session and I shall say a few words about them.

The appeals procedure rules have been modified to take account of the removal of the "leave to appeal" procedure,

[Mr. Clarke]

as I said earlier. In cases certified as being without foundation, the time scale will remain essentially the same as under the former leave procedure but with an oral hearing rather than consideration of the papers. There has been particular criticism of the two-day time limit for giving notice of appeal in port cases where the notice of refusal is served in person. We need to preserve our ability to move quickly in unfounded port cases, particularly arrival from safe third countries where there is plainly no basis for a claim. To allow longer than two days in all of such cases would only encourage further abuse of the procedures. There are appropriate safeguards: the draft rules include provisions for an adjudicator to extend the two-day time limit if it is necessary in the interests of justice or to allow the applicant to vary the grounds of appeal initially stated in his notice. I believe that that sets a proper balance between protecting the interests of the individual and ensuring that the system can work quickly and efficiently where necessary.

The draft immigration rules set out our obligations to asylum seekers and also their responsibilities to co-operate in the process of deciding their claims. We have been criticised for the allegedly negative tone of these rules, but, faced with misuse of the system on the scale that we have experienced, I make no apology for spelling out how we believe that things should work. Paragraph 7 in particular sets out a number of matters that will be taken into account in assessing an applicant's credibility.

We do not expect an applicant to lie to us, to wait until the last possible moment before making his claim, or deliberately to dispose of his passport or other documents. The fact that an applicant has done any of these things will not automatically lead to his refusal. We recognise that genuine refugees may be shocked by their experiences and may be forced to use irregular and difficult means to escape from their own countries. The draft rules make clear that, wherever a reasonable explanation is provided for behaviour of this sort, it will not go against the applicant. We must, however, take account of those cases where applicants have plainly been lying, behaving irregularly or deliberately destroying their own documents.

Taken together, the Bill and the draft rules are designed to place our systems for dealing with asylum applications on a much more secure footing. Our aim is to give a fair deal to asylum applicants, to others wishing to come to this country, and to the British people. I reaffirm again the Government's commitment to the 1951 convention and to the protection of genuine refugees.

I also urge on the House the need for proper scrutiny of all the applications we receive. It defies common sense to suggest that everyone who claims to be a refugee is a refugee, or that everyone who claims to fear persecution anywhere in the world can come and live in this already crowded country. There is no incompatibility between our objectives of recognising genuine cases and curbing misuse of our system. The Bill will cut down delays, which will not only benefit the genuine cases but deal more effectively with those who would exploit our rules. It is a thoroughly good measure, much overdue, and I commend it to the House.

4.25 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The new Bill replaces the measure which fell because of the general election. It contains one concession of significance that we welcome —full oral right of appeal for all asylum seekers—but in our judgment it remains profoundly flawed. Without any justification it removes the right of appeal under immigration law from two categories—visitors and certain categories of student. The Secretary of State's speech in justification will have done nothing to allay the deep offence that the Bill has caused in many parts of our communities, which see it, rightly, as arbitrary, insensitive and unfair.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has claimed—he repeated the claim today—that good race relations are important. By implication, therefore, he acknowledges that measures such as the Bill can affect those relations. However, good race relations cannot be other than harmed when we pass legislation which in the main will adversely affect one part of our community only, and which is irrational and explicable in no terms other than it is meant predominantly to affect it adversely. That is what many, especially in Asian and Afro-Caribbean countries, feel and think. Over the coming weeks, when the Bill will be discussed in Committee, I hope that they as well as us will bring home to Conservative Members the strength of their feelings.

Throughout his speech the right hon. and learned Gentleman said that the issue is how we weed out bogus applications. In other words, he did not present the Bill as if it were ostensibly or overtly about eligibility and criteria for eligibility for entry into this country. I see that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is nodding. It is accepted that the issue between us concerns the due process of law—in other words, it is about fairness and whether our procedures conform to the rules of natural justice. I see that the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirms that. Let us test that proposition according to the Bill and its contents.

No one on the Opposition Benches condones bogus applications for asylum: everyone condemns them. However, weeding out false claims should not be at the expense of prejudicing genuine claims, and that is our fear about the Bill.

No one disputes the magnitude of the refugee problem. It is something that we must all accept and face. However, the decision on who can be given asylum and who cannot should be the outcome of a proper evaluation of each case according to rules that are clear and fair and not an accident of procedures that are at best faulty and at worst entirely arbitrary, and that would be the position under the Bill.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): If the hon. Gentleman says that everyone must face the refugee problem—the number of asylum seekers has doubled in Europe over the past year—how would he go about the process of dealing with the problem and how would be face it?

Mr. Blair: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to his right hon. and learned Friend, he would have heard him acknowledge, albeit tacitly, that the issue between us is whether the proposed procedures are fair. The number of asylum applications has halved this year compared with last year, but the Secretary of State has conceded that the issue is whether the procedures are fair.

It is not only the Opposition who are claiming that the procedures are unfair, a whole range of organisations are doing so—for example, the Law Society, many senior lawyers operating in the immigration area, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and Amnesty International. The very breadth of opposition to elements of the proposals should give any sensible Government pause for thought if their motives are genuine.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): The hon. Gentleman said that the problem is receding because the numbers are reducing, but earlier he said that we had to face the problem of a vast increase in asylum seekers on the continent. To which of those two statements will the hon. Gentleman pin his colours and what will he do about it?

Mr. Blair: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood me twice in my short speech. I did not say that there had been a vast increase in the number of asylum seekers and nor did I say that we should ignore the problem because it has receded. I merely pointed out that there are half the number of asylum seekers this year as last year. Of course, it is a major problem and we must deal with it, but the Secretary of State has conceded that we must deal with it fairly. The issue is whether the procedures are fair.

The concerns about the procedures not being fair fall into three categories—the determination of whether someone qualifies for leave to remain, the appeals procedures and the treatment of asylum seekers. It is not each of those concerns in itself but the cumulative effect of all three that will greatly inhibit the fair treatment of refugees. For example, the new power under clause 6 provides that where someone—perhaps a student—has leave to enter this country and subsequently applies for asylum but is refused, his leave can be curtailed immediately by the Secretary of State and he can be removed. There is no appeal against the curtailment.

Such an application may be genuine. A Yugoslav student who subsequently claimed asylum may not fit the precise terms of the United Nations convention definition of a refugee, but he will have paid for his course, he will be in this country and he will want to finish that course in due time. The former immigration Minister, Sir Timothy Raison, tabled an amendment when the previous Bill was debated last year that would have allowed students on recognised courses to stay even after an application for asylum had been made and refused. I hope that the Under-Secretary will deal with that specific point when he replies. The concern is that the existence of the power to curtail leave may inhibit people from making genuine asylum claims. If they think that curtailment of their leave will follow their applications for asylum, they will not make those applications. That is unfair to them.

A second related point is about group determination, which is one of the Bill's innovations. The Secretary of State has been given the power to determine applications for asylum on the basis of groups rather than individually. My understanding is that the United Nations convention makes it absolutely clear that individual cases should be considered individually, not as part of a group. However, it appears that paragraph 10 of the new rules will allow precisely that. I hope that the Under-Secretary will explain how that will work and how it is consistent with our obligations. Even more so, we need an explanation of the list of the new matters that will affect the credibility of an applicant. They are set out in paragraph 7.

The Secretary of State spoke a little about those matters and told us about people who destroy documents for various reasons. That is not necessarily evidence of fraud. There may be good reasons why that has happened and he should accept that. He should listen to what has been said by Amnesty International—that it is not that each of the matters, in isolation, is wholly unreasonable, but the impact of all of them taken together.

Amnesty International states:

> "we consider the draft Immigration Rules to be broadly inconsistent with internationally-recognised standards for the examination and determination of asylum applications, such as those set out in the UNHCR *Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status*. Whereas these standards require asylum applications to be examined and determined 'in a spirit of justice and understanding', the draft Rules give the impression of having been devised to facilitate the *refusal* of applications."

Surely, if we accept that the issue between us is whether the procedures are fair, we should at least listen to the body that has perhaps done as much as any other to bring the plight of refugees to the notice of the world.

As ever—and it is particularly true of rules such as these—the issue relates not simply to the strict letter of the rules, but to how, in the real world, they are likely to be applied by the officials at the time when the decision is made. That is what makes the issue of appeal so critical: it is the practical application of the rules on procedures for appeals that causes such dismay.

As I have said, we welcome the change from the text of the original Bill and the provision of a proper oral hearing, in country, for all appellants. However, the harsh rules governing the conduct of appeals remain—rules that were in the original Bill, and have been criticised by virtually everyone who has commented on them.

The Secretary of State opened his case today by saying that the sole purpose of the accelerated appeals procedure was to deal with manifestly bogus claims. He has made that case throughout, claiming that the procedure merely operates as a filter for bogus claims. In fact, it will apply to many more claims than those that are manifestly bogus. Two time limits for appeal are set out in the Secretary of State's own draft rules of procedure. The applicant will have 10 days in which to lodge an appeal; but, when the papers refusing leave are served personally on an applicant who has applied at the time of entry at a port, that applicant will have only two days.

In some cases, the applicant will have been in the country for a matter of hours before his application is refused. The proposed time scale is onerous and wholly unacceptable. The applicant will have 48 hours in which to obtain the service of a lawyer or the Refugee Legal Centre—which, incidentally, has admitted that it cannot handle all the claims of asylum seekers, so applicants may have to go to private law firms. Anyone with experience of dealing with such firms will realise that 48 hours is a fairly short time in this context. In that time, the applicant must lodge an appeal that must take the prescribed form.

No doubt some applicants will be able to cope with the time limit, but others—many others, I suspect—are bound to become wholly arbitrary casualties of the procedure. It should also be remembered that when there is a safe third

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country to which the applicant can be returned—or, at least, a country so designated by the Secretary of State —the Secretary of State can refuse an application without looking into the merits of the claim. The 48-hour rule will apply in that case as well. Within that time, the applicant will have to put his appeal in order.

According to paragraph 5(2) of the document relating to appeals to special adjudicators—I will give way to the Secretary of State if he wishes to correct me—the 48-hour rule applies

"where the appeal is made under section 7(1) of the 1992 Act"—

that is when people enter the country and make an asylum application immediately—

"and there has been personal service on the appellant of the notice of the decision."

I have not suggested that the rule applies to everyone. It applies to all who are personally served and who make application at the time of entry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is getting closer. He now accepts that the notice will be served on those who are certified, having given their explanation, as having groundless claims. It will not be served on every applicant. Applicants will have 48 hours in which to challenge the decision that their claims are groundless.

I assume that the hon. Gentleman does not challenge the third-country rule. Let us suppose that someone arrives at Heathrow, saying that he is a Chilean who fears persecution in Chile. He has arrived from Germany, where he has been living for some time. That is a manifestly groundless claim. We are entitled, under the convention, to say, "You are at no risk in Germany; you haven't come here as a refugee and you must go back to Germany." There is no real argument about it. In such a case, 48 hours is not too short a time. If we were to allow all those people to settle down here and to go through the full process, we should wind up with the present position that the hon. Gentleman defends where six out of 10 cases turn out to have no well-founded claim but who, because they have been here so long, have to be given, in effect, indefinite leave to remain here.

Mr. Blair: That is absolutely wrong. The Secretary of State does not understand how this applies. It is nonsense to suggest that everyone who is given exceptional leave to remain is granted that leave simply because of delays in the procedure. The Secretary of State has made a very important point. Let us take it stage by stage. It is vital to do so, otherwise thousands of people will have their rights taken away when the Bill is being presented to Parliament on one basis but when the Government are legislating on a different basis. The claims that the Secretary of State certifies are groundless are subject to a different procedure.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Blair: I see that the Minister is nodding. That is set out in paragraph 4 of schedule 2. That, however, does not affect the 48-hour rule. *[Interruption.]* If the Secretary of State will listen just for a moment, I shall take him through it. I assume that he is not saying that everybody who applies at the time of entry at the port is a bogus applicant.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No, of course not.

Mr. Blair: But the 48-hour rule applies to anyone who is personally served with the notice at the time of entry. It does not apply just to those in detention.

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Blair: I know exactly what the Secretary of State is going to say—that that simply applies to those in detention.

Mr. Clarke: Yes.

Mr. Blair: Then let me deal with that point. We are now beginning to tease out of the Secretary of State the misunderstanding that Ministers have. First, not everybody who is in detention is a bogus applicant. That is absurd. There are people who have been in detention whose claims were accepted. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State says that he is saying that, but his claim to us was that this was intended to deal with bogus applicants. Now he admits that those in detention may not be bogus applicants.

There is a second point. It does not apply just to those in detention. Let me put this point to the Secretary of State; then I shall give way to him, if he is prepared to deny it. My understanding, having talked to those who represent people in these cases, is that those who enter at the ports and immediately claim asylum are also usually served personally—not merely those who are detained but those who enter at a port and claim asylum.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Blair: The Minister denies that, does he? Then let me read, since Ministers are challenging this interpretation, from the press notice that was pushed out by the Department's press office at the time that the Bill was published. If the Secretary of State has got his press notice, he may like to get it out and have a look at it so that we can both follow the same text. It is headed

"Normal Procedure (Claim Not Certified As Groundless)".

I take that to be dealing with the category of claim that is not groundless. The press notice then says:

"Appeal to adjudicator (When a refusal notice served in person at ports)—two days)."

We should at least be clear about the basis on which we are legislating.

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Blair: I shall give way again to the Secretary of State, if he wants to explain this.

Mr. Clarke: I have said that we shall serve these notices on people who are detained on manifestly unfounded cases. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] If the hon. Gentleman is trying to persuade himself that this will normally be the case in all port applications, I have to tell him that he is talking total and utter nonsense. I advise him to address himself to the real question. Anybody who turns up at a port and says that he has come from Bosnia, is a Croat nationalist and fought in the Croat army will be admitted. The claim will then be properly looked at. The hon. Gentleman has no answer to the case that I just gave of the Chilean who says that he has come from Germany, whose claim is manifestly unfounded. He would allow more time in those cases; he would admit more of those cases; he would allow them through. Frankly, he is letting himself down by trying to misrepresent the effects of the rules and to undermine the whole point of the Bill, which is to have an accelerated procedure. The hon. Gentleman is ingeniously, and with many mistakes, trying to argue a case that would prevent us from being able to sift out a very large number of manifestly unfounded cases.

Mr. Blair: All that I am trying to do is to understand the basis on which we are legislating. I think that we are entitled to know what the legislation is that we are discussing. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State says that he has just told us. What he told us is that only he will be using this procedure in this way. I hope that the Secretary of State does not take this disrespectfully, but the Government's word as to how they will implement certain policies is not the very best guarantee that we can have that everything will operate in a just way. The Secretary of State's own press notice says that two days will be it, but the press notice is wrong now; it has gone out of the window. I make this challenge, therefore, to the Secretary of State, for it is surely right that we ought to legislate on the basis of the true position. Will he bring forward a provision, either now or in Committee, that means that the accelerated procedure applies only to cases that are manifestly groundless, not to cases where people are served at the ports? Are we to have that, or not?

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Blair: Are we to get that undertaking?

Mr. Clarke: I have dealt with those cases where they will be served with a notice. In Committee we shall have a sensible discussion that will illustrate to the hon. Gentleman that his claim—that this will apply to all applications, including those who have well-founded grounds for entry, on the basis of the application—is total nonsense. He really ought to deal with the substance of the Bill rather than seek to obfuscate the issue in this way. The hon. Gentleman and I are similarly qualified and it is unusual for the hon. Gentleman to make a barrack room lawyer's point.

Mr. Blair: This year, 5,000 people applied at the port of entry. I do not think that it is a barrack room lawyer's point to be clear about the rights for which we are legislating. The Secretary of State's casual disregard for his own legislation just will not do. If he would sit back and analyse the provisions for a minute, he would see that the worst point about them is that the 48-hour rule applies to in-port applications—in other words, when they are made at the time of entry—but that they do not apply to the very exceptional leave cases, to which the Secretary of State referred, when people come in on one basis and then make application for asylum.

Mr. Clarke: Ten days.

Mr. Blair: Exactly; the 10-day rule applies to them. I am glad that the Secretary of State has read that part of the Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) that we cannot have a semi-public, semi-private exchange. Either one intervenes properly, or seeks to do so, or one remains quiet.

Mr. Blair: The discussion has taken on the air of a seminar, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I think that it is justified.

The very people who openly admit that they are seeking asylum when they come here will be subject to the 48-hour rule, whereas those who do not do so but who enter the country in the first place on another basis—which may be for pefectly genuine reasons—and then apply for asylum have 10 days. I cannot imagine anything more absurd. Those who come in on the one basis get the fast track procedure, while those who come in on another basis—and therefore have more time—get the other track procedure.

When it comes to an adjudicator hearing an appeal—this is what I think the Secretary of State meant—there is a special procedure for cases where the Secretary of State has certified that the reasons are groundless, not in relation to the lodging of the notice of appeal, to which the 48-hour rule applies, but to the time within which the adjudicator hears the appeal. Normally that should be 42 days, but in circumstances where the Secretary of State deems the application to be groundless, the 42 days are truncated to five days. Again that is a very short period.

This definition of what constitutes a groundless claim is not merely what most lawyers would think when one uses the word "groundless" or the words "without foundation" —in other words, a frivolous or vexatious claim; it refers also to claims

> "which do not raise any issue as to the United Kingdom's obligations under the UN convention."

The second grouping may cover a wide range of cases. It is essential that we realise that the UN convention defines a refugee in strict terms: effectively, those who are likely personally to suffer persecution if returned. The obligation not to return a refugee under article 33 of the convention is limited to where individual persecution is threatened because of race, religion, nationality or politics.

Many people flee the troubled parts of this world not because they face persecution individually but because it would be unsafe to return them due to war, civil unrest or disorder. The threat to life or freedom is as real, but the cause may not be directed against them personally. In such cases, the Secretary of State will often exercise his discretion to give exceptional leave to remain. Will such cases, which are not frivolous or vexatious but which may fail to fit within the strict definition of the UN convention, be certified by him as groundless? I think that they will be.

That seems wholly wrong. Someone who enters at a port has two days within which to apply and five days within which to gather and present the evidence necessary for the application to succeed, including medical evidence, making a total of seven days. That cannot be said to be a reasonable application of the rules of natural justice.

The Secretary of State accepted that the issue is whether those rules are fair. I challenge any reasonably minded person to say that, when an applicant may have arrived in a state of desperation, shock or extreme distress, seven days is a truly fair time limit. It is not sensible, even according to the Government's terms. As the noble Lord Ackner said in another place, a host of applications for judicial review will be made because the procedures are so manifestly unfair.

I ask the Minister to deal specifically with the concern that has been expressed about fingerprinting. One of those concerns in that information will be given out without the consent of the applicant for asylum. Quite apart from the

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issue of fingerprinting as a matter of principle, that is of deep concern, and there must be specific provision in the Bill preventing information from being given out.

Under the Bill, if any accommodation is available, even of a temporary nature, the housing authority has no duty whatever. Many bodies—charities, churches and so on —will provide temporary accommodation until a proper application can be made. They may be prevented from offering that if it will prejudice a proper claim by the applicant. The point that is being made is that the Bill may not deal with the problem.

Many of my hon. Friends will deal with carriers' liability so I shall allow them to do so, but many people find it objectionable that no distinction is drawn between bogus and genuine claims. The liability remains regardless of whether the claim is bogus or genuine.

If the asylum proposals remain unjustified, the removal of the right of appeal to visitors and students refused entry to the United Kingdom appears to be the result of caprice, pure and simple, or something worse. No justification has been advanced for it, other than this, which we heard again from the Secretary of State: the system is overloaded. It is a novel, bizarre and misguided principle of the legal system that if the exercise of legal rights is causing administrative inconvenience, the solution is to remove the right. No doubt that might satisfy bureaucrats and Government administrators in many areas, but it can hardly be a justification for removing rights.

The facts cannot be gainsaid. In the past three years, more than 1,000 such appeals have been successful. If no right of appeal had existed, none of those people would have been free to enter. As a matter of inexorable logic, since those appeals were successful, they would have been excluded unfairly. We are therefore openly committing ourselves to injustice involving several thousand people over the next few years alone, the vast majority of whom will be relatives of people in Britain who deeply resent such treatment of their relations.

Mr. Winnick: Is my hon. Friend aware that when I used to represent such cases on a full-time basis before returning to the House, I often found that sponsors in this country—parents, mainly from the ethnic minorities— were heartbroken when their daughters, sons or granddaughters were refused permission for a brief visit to Britain? In most cases, the decision of the entry clearance officer was wrong in law. Immigration officers abroad may now be far more careless because they know that their decision cannot be challenged.

Mr. Blair: I was about to make exactly the same point. My hon. Friend is right. When a right of appeal is removed, what is removed is a valuable and necessary constraint on those who exercise original jurisdiction. That is true not merely of immigration officers but of anybody. The immigration officer who knows that his decision may be subject to appeal is likely to be a good deal more circumspect, careful and even-handed than the officer who knows that his power of decision is absolute. That is simply, I fear, a matter of human nature, quite apart from anything else.

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In the past six months, decisions at Delhi have become worse and worse and more unfair. A refusal for a family member is a life sentence. The Home Secretary should understand that once a family member has been refused, he or she will never be given permission to visit. A granny or auntie who has been refused entry will never be able to visit small children who are born here. It is a very serious matter.

Mr. Blair: My hon. Friends are anticipating the points that I am about to make.

The extraordinary comment that the Secretary of State made, in his usual somewhat cavalier fashion, was, "What is the point of a right of appeal? After all, it is only exercised months after the reason for the visit—a wedding or a funeral—has passed". Not everyone applies to enter for those reasons, but that is to ignore the real impact of a refusal. Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman can confirm that a refusal is marked on the passport. The person then has what is called "a bad immigration history". When it was boiled down, the Secretary of State's defence was, "It may be wrong and unfair, but what does it matter? It has no practical consequence attached to it." That is wrong and ignorant, because it has such a consequence.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is paraphrasing me to make my argument seem more extreme. I acknowledged that it was deeply disappointing if people were turned down, but they applied not for settlement here but to make a visit lasting less than six months. To be turned down for a short visit is a disappointment, but against the background of the huge arrears in more important cases, we cannot justify 11,000 such cases a year being given the full judicial treatment. That is not cavalier. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman should try to elevate this to a great principle by giving broad-brush parodies of the way in which I put the case.

Mr. Blair: With all due respect, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has just confirmed the case that I am making against him. He says that it is not a matter of life and death. How would he feel if a relative of his who was living abroad were refused entry to attend a wedding, a funeral or just to visit? We all have constituents in that situation. To say that it is not a matter of any huge significance is nonsense: it is a matter of enormous significance.

The Home Secretary talked about the backlog of appeals. The Select Committee on Home Affairs expressly said that that should not be used to deny people their rights.

The change of law is not even sensible in its own terms. Two things are bound to happen. First, Members of Parliament will be far more involved in the representations. Secondly, there will be a vast increase in the number of applications for judicial review, which is a longer, more complex and more costly process.

People may be separated for ever from their relatives. They will not be able to return to the United Kingdom if they have a refusal on their passports. They may find that they have difficulty in gaining entry to other European countries, so there will be applications for judicial review. Even on the Home Secretary's terms, which are inadequate, we are likely not to save money by that means but merely to transfer the cost burden from the Home Office to the Lord Chancellor's Department. The proposal is, therefore, unfair and arbitrary, and is likely to be administratively incompetent. That is the true character of the Bill.

The Bill is presented in lurid terms as cracking down on bogus asylum and immigration claims. In reality, it is not the fraudulent, but the genuine who will suffer. People fleeing from the war-torn areas of Yugoslavia with nowhere else to go will suffer, as will Tamils and Kurdish refugees who are in fear of their lives and who are seeking protection. Refugees from Africa with whose plight we are happy to sympathise in general terms will, under the legislation, in particular cases be passed by on the other side.

The Bill is deceptive in its presentation, arbitrary in its justice, and shabby and mean in its implementation. It should not be given a Second Reading and we will oppose it.

5.1 pm

Mr. John Ward (Poole): I welcome the Bill because it is necessary if we are to improve the position for those seeking entry at our airports and ports. The Bill is also necessary to help the officials who operate our immigration controls. They now find, as we have heard this afternoon, that the system is overloaded and that the problem shows every sign of getting worse. Many people use a claim for asylum as a means of evading immigration controls.

Ease of travel, combined with economic and political upheavals in many areas, means that, if we do not act, the support services for those in difficulties in the United Kingdom will be overwhelmed. In fairness to our resident population who over the years have paid their taxes to provide the services, we must ensure that those who seek asylum here are genuinely in need of it and are not people who simply find this country a more attractive place in which to live.

We are often reminded of how crowded our country is. An unrestricted influx of additional people would not only overload our social system but cause resentment among the population, with results that, tragically, we have seen elsewhere, especially in western Europe.

This country has had a good record over the centuries of providing sanctuary for those in danger of political or physical persecution, and that must continue. However, we cannot ignore events, nor can we ignore the ease with which many people are now able to move round the world. We are entitled to ask whether people are genuine refugees or whether they are seeking to move to areas that will give them a standard of living better than that in their own countries.

I do not blame people for wishing to improve their standard of living or for taking advantage of shortcomings in our law to move to what they see as a more attractive area. Indeed, the courage and enterprise of some of the would-be immigrants, who are prepared to move away from familiar surroundings, to leave behind their own culture, to move to a new land and to learn a new way of life and language, are to be admired.

We are entitled, however, to maintain the way of life which people already living in this country want and to provide the social and welfare services for which they have paid and which they expect to receive. We should be failing in our duty if we allowed an overload of new people to destroy that way of life.

We have been reminded by the Home Secretary of the scale of the problem, with asylum applications increasing more than tenfold in three years. In spite of increased staff and improved screening at the point of entry, which was introduced in 1991, there is still a backlog of 64,000 cases. At the same time, the proportion of genuine applications for entry has decreased steadily. Last year, only one in 10 of the applications was found to be genuine.

If we are to be fair and compassionate to genuine applicants, we must speed up the application and appeals procedure while retaining adequate safeguards for genuine applicants. Under the Bill, the improved procedures will include measures to deal swiftly with people who clearly have no hope of gaining permission to settle in this country. Too often, such applicants have been allowed in temporarily and have promptly disappeared.

There are two major loopholes in the present regulations which the Bill will go some way towards addressing. The majority of applicants arriving in the United Kingdom are found to have either forged documents or no documents. Fingerprinting will establish clearly the identity of those people. There is already a requirement for airlines and other carriers to check that passengers have entry documents, yet many arrivals claiming asylum have either damaged or no documents when they arrive in the United Kingdom. Surely that should be a ground for immediate refusal of entry to this country. In any event, people should not just be allowed to disappear into the community; they should be kept in secure accommodation until their cases are decided.

The second and largest category consists of applications by people who already live here. We have been told that they represent three quarters of the total applications for asylum. Surely it is stretching our capacity for tolerance to suggest that it is only coincidence that so many of those people become concerned for their safety only towards the end of the period of temporary residence which they have been granted. All too often, short-term students become long-term residents.

I welcome the speeding up of appeals procedures under the Bill and I welcome the proposal to introduce the fingerprinting of asylum seekers, which will help not only in identifying people making multiple applications for asylum but in dealing with the multiple social security applications which have been so well publicised. I hope that our proposals for fingerprinting will also close another loophole whereby people with passports stamped for limited entry at the place of arrival conveniently lose them and have them replaced with new and, therefore, unrestricted passports by an embassy or high commission as a matter of routine.

The new immigration appeals procedure will also be an improvement. We have been told of a backlog of 23,000 undecided immigration cases. It is right to tighten the appeals procedure so that those with no hope of eventual admission cannot use that procedure to prolong their stay here. The new procedure will close a number of well-known and well-used loopholes in the present system. I hope that the knowledge that only those who are considered to be genuine applicants will gain entry will reduce the number of bogus applicants and will enable the cases of genuine applicants to be processed far more speedily.

I also welcome the changes to the housing rules under the Bill. Time after time we have heard of local authorities being completely overloaded because of the unfairness of

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a system that gives priority to asylum seekers and enables them to go to the top of local authority waiting lists for permanent accommodation. That must be an especially hard burden for local authorities near major airports when there is a mass influx of would-be residents, many of whom are fully conversant with their rights under existing law, who demand and get accommodation that is badly needed to deal with the waiting lists of the local population, who in part, through their taxes and community charge, have paid for the accommodation that they are prevented from occupying. It is also right that if applicants are prepared to lodge with relatives when they arrive here, they should not be allowed to use that fact to leapfrog up the queue of people who may be in a worse housing position.

Other hon. Members have referred this afternoon to racketeers who prey on the ignorance of would-be immigrants. People with no hope of asylum arrive here having parted with their life savings to make the journey. I hope that when the Bill is enacted, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will seek the co-operation of other Governments in publicising the new rules. That will not stop the disgusting trade in human misery, but it may help to reduce the number of people suffering.

It is ironic that increased freedom in eastern and central Europe has made the problem of mass migration worse. That, added to the apparent impossibility of obtaining co-operation from Governments in parts of Africa to transport relief supplies and to stop the hijacking of relief food for the black market, means that all our efforts to help people prosper in their own countries will succeed only partly.

The problem of population movements is therefore likely to become more pressing. If we in this crowded island are to play our part in helping genuine asylum seekers, we must restrict the arrival of those whom we are not prepared to take. We must deal quickly and effectively with people who try to circumvent the rules and have no hope of being allowed to settle here. If we do not do that, we will simply add to our present financial and housing problems in a way that is likely to build up resentment among the people already living in this country. That can only harm the cause of the genuine asylum seeker.

Our main concern must be for the genuine asylum seeker who has real fears and nowhere else to turn. Unfortunately, in recent years, our system for dealing with applications from those seeking asylum in the United Kingdom has become totally discredited by the number of people abusing the system. The Bill will go a long way towards controlling a potentially dangerous situation and restoring confidence in the system.

The Bill is fair and reasonable and attempts to deal with the biggest problem—the time taken to deal with asylum applications. It provides relief for the hard-pressed local authorities near our major airports. I welcome the Bill. The sooner it is on the statute book, the sooner we can deal with a major problem in our society which cannot be allowed to continue.

5.11 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): This wretched little Bill thoroughly deserved the comprehensive demolition performed with such skill by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). The demonstration of how bad the Bill is was made most effectively by the Home Secretary, who was at his worst today. We all know that the Home Secretary believes that aggression can make up for ignorance. However, he exceeded even his own standards in that particular today. He made a speech which might have been made by his predecessor—I can offer no more savage criticism than that.

I wish that the Home Secretary were present to listen to the debate. However, we all know that he has his mind set on higher things these days. However, I hope that he reads the contributions to the debate and learns what his Bill contains and, more importantly, its implications.

I want to deal specifically with three points made by the Home Secretary which demonstrate how truly wretched the Bill is. It seems hardly credible, but the Home Secretary said that two thirds of all asylum applicants had intentionally destroyed their documents. That is what is known as "pub talk". That is what people say when they spread damaging rumours about minorities in this country.

We know that a large number of asylum applicants arrive at our ports with inadequate documentation. The Under-Secretary of State should know the parody of that situation because it occurred under the aegis of his right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development who generously and rightly arranged for a large number of Kurds to come to Great Britain. Having made the arrangements, she discovered that they could not come here in conformity with the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 and had to promise indemnity to British Airways. After that, she discovered that they had inadequate documents.

The Kurds came here because they were under the protection of a Minister. From that, the Government should have understood the nature of the asylum seeker who is likely to have inadequate documents. If one is a Kurd on the borders of a desperately tyrannised country, one is unlikely to queue at the foreign office to ask Saddam Hussein for a passport. It is the nature of the asylum seeker that he or she arrives here inadequately prepared. It was disreputable of the Home Secretary to trot out such a story to justify the Bill.

The Home Secretary was hideously confused about the Bill in so far as it applies to the 48-hour appeal system. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield was quite right. The Home Office handout and, I believe, the Bill make it clear that those who arrive at the ports—many of whom, although not all, will be in detention because they will be arrested as soon as they arrive—are subject to the 48-hour provision. The extraordinary thing is that it is the people who arrive at the ports who are most likely to be the genuine asylum seekers and refugees.

Those people are not the students who have been here for seven years and then suddenly changed their applications. They are not the failed applicants for matrimonial status. They are not the people who claimed last week that they were dependent relatives and have now become refugees. Those people are fleeing tyranny. The idea that they should be subject to the 48-hour rule makes the claim for universal appeal hollow. The appeal is there in theory, but not in practice.

I want to say one more thing about the asylum proposals in the Bill because in my brief speech I want to deal almost exclusively with clause 9 and the removal of the protection of the appeal system from the temporary visitor.

It is utterly intolerable that a man or woman who is legitimately in this country as an immigrant under the legislation should risk sacrificing residence here by applying for immigrant status. I assume that the Under-Secretary of State is going to reply to the debate, so I shall give him an instance from my constituency and ask how he can justify such a case.

A medical student in my constituency in his fifth year of study believed that because of his family's association with a political group in India he would be under threat if he returned to the Punjab. That was immediately after the assassination of Mr. Gandhi. I have no way of knowing whether he was under threat, but I have no doubt that he believed himself to be in political danger and there was certainly evidence that members of his family had been arrested. How can the Minister justify that young man having to choose between risking the last year of his medical degree in case his application for asylum was turned down and risking returning home to persecution and death in order to complete his final year?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I shall not go into a lengthy explanation now and I shall address that point when I reply to the debate. However, the right hon. Gentleman will wish to know that curtailment is not automatic. Individual factors are considered.

Mr. Hattersley: I was going to ask the Minister not to tell me that Ministers will use their discretion, but he has just told me that. Those of us who deal with ministerial discretion day in, day out and week in, week out have no faith in that discretion. It is an affront to the House to come here and say, "Don't bother about the legislation. Don't worry about what the words say. Rely on Ministers to take you around it when the situation warrants that." If there is to be the kind of consideration that I have described, it must be written into the legislation. Having dealt with Conservative Ministers in constituency terms for the past 13 years, I do not have the slightest belief in the compassion, understanding or discretion that Ministers use.

Mr. Wardle: Although the right hon. Gentleman is in full flight, I want to clarify one point. I was not talking about ministerial discretion. I was talking about the oral hearing.

Mr. Hattersley: If that can be written into the legislation, I should be not only delighted but extremely surprised. I wonder why it was not the intention to do that when the Bill was originally published.

I have no faith in the Government who introduce clause 9 when they seem to do so from the basis of absolute ignorance. I heard the Home Secretary say on the "Today" programme three weeks ago what he has said in the House today—that it did not matter because only visitors coming to this country were involved. Let me tell him why it matters passionately.

The clause to restrict visitors coming into this country and the clause to prevent appeals when visits are turned down are direct attacks not simply on men and women who want to come into Britain but on British citizens who already live here. They happen to be the black and Asian British, because clause 9 will not apply, for example, to American citizens living in the United Kingdom who have visa restrictions. It will apply to the two minority communities whom I know best—the Muslim and the Sikh communities. They will be cruelly affected by the simple fact that many of their relations who legitimately want and need to come to this country will not be allowed to do that. Such an action will have an horrific effect on community relations. We will be telling Sikhs and Muslims that applicants from their families abroad are automatically treated with suspicion and that it is somehow detrimental to life in this country to have a few more people like them here. I do not believe that that is true, and it is a disastrous message for the Government to send out.

An immense backlog of visitors want to appeal against refusals, but that is not because their applications are bogus. The hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) mentioned people disappearing into the community, but there are far more stories than there are people disappearing. The reasons why there are so many appeals against refusal to allow a visitor entry were largely documented in the Government's evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs: the introduction of visas for people from India and Pakistan and the limitation on visits to six months. When the issue was studied in detail, there were some special cases—there were legitimate raids on bogus language schools. No one told the Select Committee that we had to be careful about the number of visa applications and appeals because so many were bogus.

The increase in the backlog is a result of administrative matters and decisions taken by the Government. I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield—the idea that justice should be withdrawn because there are not enough men and women to deal with cases is an affront to the liberties of this country. I do not believe that we would treat any other group in that way.

When the queue for passport applications grew intolerably long, the Government drafted more civil servants into the passport office because that affected all British citizens. Now that the queue for applications to visit is growing unacceptably long, it is not tolerable for the Government to abandon the appeal system because only black and Asian British are affected. Let me remind the Under-Secretary that they are affected in the most material ways. I am sure that almost all of my hon. Friends who represent constituencies similar to mine have fought for the man who wants to come here because his father or mother is terminally ill. We have faced appeals and arguments with Ministers, hoping that they would be won before the parent died. We all know of people who desperately need to be here to solve family problems and are prevented from coming. They are not simple holidaymakers, although a family has a right to be reunited for a holiday when it is spread across two continents. It is equally absurd for the Home Secretary to ask what is the point of an appeal when someone wants to come here for a wedding as it is over by the time they get here.

What distresses me is that that approach shows ignorance of ethnic minorities. People who represent them and work with them know that they will save for years so that a cousin, parent or brother can come from the Indian sub-continent, and they will wait for years while the appeal takes place, because they have a more active sense of family values and unity than is common in other

[Mr. Hattersley]

communities in the United Kingdom. The idea that that should be denied and broken down for administrative convenience is intolerable.

I remind the Under-Secretary of what the Home Secretary clearly did not understand—the stigma automatically attached to a man or women whose application to come here has been turned down. At my constituency surgery this week, I learnt of an example. A woman of 60 wanted to come to the wedding of a member of her family. The Home Office believed that it was unreasonable for the payment for her visit to be made from such a small income and felt that there must be some ulterior motive. I have no doubt that there was none; the mores of that community mean that they spend money on attending a family wedding. Having been turned down at the age of 60, if that woman has a legitimate claim to be a dependent relative at the age of 70 or 76, her application to come to this country will certainly be prejudiced and will probably be refused. This is not a frivolous matter. It is crucial for thousands of families who happen to be Asian British or black British. They are all British families living with their rights curtailed if their families are not allowed to visit them.

Clause 9 demonstrates all that is wrong with the spirit of the Bill. Although there is a technical concession of appeal for all asylum seekers, I am not much comforted by that because it exists more in theory than in practice.

The Bill is even more wretched than the legislation that we debated a year ago, when the then Home Secretary chose to make our flesh creep with predictions about how many asylum seekers were likely to flood into this country. Instead of that figure exceeding 50,000, as he predicted and as reported in *Hansard*, the total number was barely more than half what it was last year. That happened because the flow of asylum seekers in the continent of Europe is different from the flow into this country, and it will remain so. We have a special obligation which is different from that of the rest of the Community.

I deeply resent the idea that our immigration regulations should be determined by secret meetings of the Trevi group, where the Home Secretary commits himself —without any publicity, notability, acceptability or accountability—to a course of action which he then agrees to impose on Parliament. If some of the Euro-sceptics in the Tory party were more perceptive, they would have asked the Home Secretary why, having promised them that immigration should not be part of common competence, he has chosen to prejudice our immigration regulations to make it a part. If ever there were a case for individual rather than collective decision-making, it is on immigration policy.

Our immigration relationship is different from that of the rest of Europe as we have an imperial inheritance, the responsibility of empire and a duty to Commonwealth citizens who came to this country 30 or 40 years ago, at the invitation of the Government, and who are denied the right for their families to visit them. That is a disgrace and I shall vote against the Bill with as much enthusiasm as I have voted against any Bill, because it is one of the most squalid measures ever to be put before the House.

5.26 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for bringing this legislation back before the House so promptly. The Opposition charged us with backsliding on the issue before the summer break. We have managed to demonstrate that it is not the case. Asylum and immigration are part of a greater problem, and I am glad that the Government are making it a priority. They should be warmly applauded for doing so.

The figures for this year do not matter. What is relevant is that there is a strong backdrop of economic migration, which could turn into an asylum problem if we are not careful. The general trend is likely to be upwards, no matter what the figures have been, and this is an important factor to take into consideration.

My constituents in Chingford have been desperately concerned about this legislation, and have written to me to ask why the Government have not brought it before the House again. I shall be glad to write back to tell them that they now have.

It is important to consider the national picture. Some of the figures are worrying. The rise in the number of applicants since 1988—from 4,000 to 45,000—has been so dramatic that in any other area it would be considered a near crisis. It is important to note that genuine applications have fallen from about 60 per cent. in the early 1980s, to 25 per cent. in 1990, and down to as low as 10 per cent. in 1991. The most important fact is that the picture shows that the number of genuine applicants has stayed about the same, but many people have found loopholes in immigration procedures and so the number of bogus applicants has increased dramatically.

There are huge pressures on the Home Office, which has been left with a backlog of about 64,000 applications. I note what my right hon. and learned Friend said about extra staff being employed, but it is still difficult to clear the backlog and hon. Members on both sides of the House would do well to take note of that.

The important point to be gained from my right hon. and learned Friend's speech is that the Government, despite what the Opposition say, have committed themselves in the Bill to the 1951 UN convention. In that respect the Government have set a precedent because that commitment lies at the core of the Bill and has primacy. To claim that we have departed from our international obligations is wholly unfounded. My right hon. and learned Friend and his team should be especially contratulated on that commitment.

The Bill does not leave any doubt about the United Kingdom's commitment. Historically, we stand head and shoulders above almost any other nation in our reception of genuine asylum seekers. It is clear that that commitment will not be altered. All that will happen is that the procedures will be streamlined.

Historically, the United Kingdom has been tolerant of asylum seekers. The public have always felt that they should tolerate those who have faced harder circumstances than their own and who have been forced to leave their country of origin. We should applaud such tolerance, which has always been a fact of life. However, it has been subject to enormous strain in the past seven years because of the number of asylum seekers who have been proven bogus. Many would-be immigrants have seen asylum as another way around the system. The number of those who have a genuine claim to be here, whether on the grounds of asylum or the other immigration rules, has been distorted by the number of bogus asylum seekers. It is they who have put such a strain on our traditional tolerance.

The Bill is important because it streamlines and accelerates the asylum procedures. It is also important to stress that all those rejected as asylum seekers have the right to an oral hearing at least at their appeal. One may disagree about the nature or its timing, but at least it is an improvement on current practices. The timetable of 12 weeks in which determination and procedure objectives are to be completed is important because it will focus the mind of officials. Cases will not be allowed to drift because officials will have to get on with them. That is only fair to those who need to know the outcome of their case quickly for a variety of reasons.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) referred to clause 3(6)(a) and (b) which relate to fingerprints. I am pleased to note that the Bill makes it clear that those fingerprints will be destroyed at the end of 10 years or, if not sooner, one month after the person concerned has been granted indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom. That commitment was rather glossed over by the hon. Gentleman and it is worth specifying what the Bill makes clear.

My borough of Waltham Forest has had to face certain housing problems because of the current rules on immigration and asylum, which I believe will, in part, be alleviated by the Bill. The ethnic population of Waltham Forest, which is the fifth highest in London, has put pressure on housing demand—15 per cent. of the borough's population, about 33,000 people, come from ethnic minority groupings.

Asylum seekers tend to move into communities such as Waltham Forest for the obvious reason that it is home to people from similar backgrounds and countries. I receive a huge amount of letters from families seeking accommodation from the council list when there is a limited amount of such accommodation available. It is important to note that there are 15,000 people on the waiting list in Waltham Forest and that, in the past year, homeless applicants accounted for 3,400 of those on that list. It is also important to note that most asylum seekers will end up in the homeless category and they go to the top of the list, thus distorting the size of the homeless problem. I have some sympathy with the borough in its attempts to deal with that. In any 12 months between 300 and 400 asylum seekers will go through the borough's books. It is important to note that, in the past 12 months, 858 homeless applicents were rehoused. Problems connected with housing also put a strain on efforts to maintain racial equality and test people's tolerance. I am sure that the Bill will help to overcome some of those problems, although I accept that there is a lot to be done.

Clause 4 will help to get rid of the obligation on councils to house asylum seekers irrespective of whether the council believes that the existing accommodation is good enough or temporary. The clause will empower the council to make a decision at the point of application rather than go through the previous lengthy procedure. I believe that SHAC—Shelter Housing Aid Centre—has offered some support for the idea of spreading the homeless load across other boroughs, which should help to alleviate the problems faced by boroughs such as Waltham Forest. It is most important that other boroughs should take some of the applicants on to their housing lists.

I congratulate the Secretary of State and his team on the Bill and I urge the House to get it on the statute book as quickly as possible.

5.35 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The whole country is perhaps more conscious of the problems aroused by the migration of peoples and refugees fleeing from places of civil war and oppression than at any time in the post-war period. And yet the Bill seems strangely irrelevant to those massive difficulties that face not only this country, but other European countries with whom we are in partnership, allegedly, in the European Community.

The scale of the problem in this country is not even a tenth of that faced by the German Government and I found the Home Secretary's insularity of approach extremely depressing although, it must be said, not entirely surprising. The one thing that is perhaps to be welcomed about his approach to the Bill is that it does not follow the example of his predecessor in seeking to stimulate in the press a wholly bogus campaign against alleged unlawful asylum seekers. When the previous Bill, which this one follows in most part, was introduced we had several days of popular press agitation about a few alleged bogus asylum seekers which amounted to a thinly disguised campaign of racism. I am glad that the present Home Secretary has not followed that discreditable route in commending the Bill to the House.

The difficulties of which the right hon. and learned Gentleman has spoken seem far removed from the real problem. The desire on his part to reduce the numbers of those who are given extended leave to remain is very worrying. The reason that those applications have, ultimately, in the past been accepted has not been the bureaucratic incompetencies of the Home Office, though those undoubtedly exist. In most cases the reason for the granting of extended leave to remain is that it would have been unconscionable to return to their own countries those who did not strictly qualify as refugees under the 1951 UN convention. It would have been unconscionable to require them to go back.

The reality is that, if some arbitrary decision is taken in the Home Office to reduce the numbers of those who are granted exceptional leave to remain, it is bound to result in action that we would hitherto have regarded as unconscionable. That is the dangerous penumbra of the Bill. I hope that during the Bill's passage through the House we can address the matters raised by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on the 48-hour rule, and perhaps prevail upon the Government to think again about some of its provisions.

During the Second Reading debate we are entitled to have a slightly more frank explanation from the Home Secretary. What is the Government's approach to the problem of those who do not strictly qualify as refugees under the 1951 convention? Those who qualify as refugees are by far the smallest part of the difficulty.

What the Home Secretary said had been agreed in the European Community group of Home Office Ministers was a revelation—the Home Secretary said that it was not a leak, but it certainly was not presented in the press notice that accompanied the publication of the Bill. The group described how the Home Office Ministers proposed to deal with the problem at European level.

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

We are entitled to know whether it is the view of Her Majesty's Government that

"those who fear violations of their human rights should if possible remain in their own countries, and seek protection or redress from their own authorities or under regional human rights instruments."

That is a preposterous policy for us to advocate when one considers the parts of the world from which those people are fleeing. It is a preposterous way of dealing with the Kurdish and Angolan problems, and it is not a sensible way of dealing with the Sri Lankan problem.

If the British Government are using their position as President of the European Council of Ministers for six months to bounce such policies through the Council, it is an abuse of their position. It is certainly not in the interests either of this country or of tackling the refugee problem. However, the problem must be tackled co-operatively within the Community.

We cannot turn our back on what is happening in Germany at present. It is deeply dangerous for the stability of that country and for the security of the whole of Europe. It is deeply dangerous to see the resurrection of Nazi graffiti spreading westwards across Germany in the wake of the refugee problem. We shall miss the core of the issue, to which the Home Secretary barely alluded, if we spend our time on Second Reading dealing with the small print.

Of course, we have debated most of the measures before. In so far as the Bill is different from its predecessor, I broadly welcome the differences. The removal of the arrangements for requesting leave to appeal was desirable. However, nothing in the Bill is of such great practical help in tackling the problems which the Home Secretary described as the administrative measures taken to tackle the backlog of applications. I do not know how effective those measures have been. It is possible that they have been effective because the backlog has been reduced. We also know that the number of applications has fallen—it must be said, thankfully.

As the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, the former Home Secretary tried to make our flesh creep with predictions of numbers which were far in excess of the numbers that have been experienced in the past 12 months. That is entirely welcome. However, it raises the question whether the Bill is necessary, at least in its present form. Certainly, the circumstances which gave rise to its predecessor have not come to pass.

The other practical problem with which we could ask the Government to deal—without legislation—is housing. It is absurd to suggest, as one or two Conservative Members did, that local authorities will be assisted by the Bill. It will create much greater pressure for social work departments and other departments in local authority areas because local authorities will no longer be obliged to house those who have some form of housing.

I fear that we shall see people drift aimlessly around the community and more and more of them living on the streets. That problem cannot be tackled by legislation; it can be tackled only by a recognition that local authorities, which are particularly pressed—this is not a universal but a local problem—should have the resources to tackle the housing problem. That point was forcefully made in the last Parliament by Sir Philip Goodhart, the former Conservative Member for Beckenham, but it has not been addressed in the Bill.

I cannot understand why the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) thinks that local authorities which are under pressure will be assisted by the provisions of the Bill. Conservative authorities around the country will face much worse problems if the Bill goes through in its present form. We will do local authorities a great service if we seek to amend the Bill and remove clauses 4 and 5, certainly in their present form.

I do not want to repeat all the arguments made at an earlier stage about matters of principle such as the undesirability of requiring fingerprints from all asylum seekers and their dependants, including children. Previously, only people under suspicion of crime were fingerprinted. The proposal in the Bill is thoroughly undesirable. We can deal again with such matters in Committee.

One matter has been omitted from the Bill, and I am surprised that it has not been referred to and rectified. Sir Philip Goodhart dealt forcefully in previous debates with the treatment of children. There is no provision in the Bill to safeguard children who arrive in this country and seek refugee status. There are many cases in which children are pushed on to aeroplanes by their families in countries in which there is civil war, racial persecution or denials of political freedom. It is unconscionable that we have not made proper provision for such children and that we have not stuck firmly to the requirements of the Children Act 1989 to ensure that children's interests are treated as paramount by the authorities. Between now and the Committee stage I hope that the Government will table a new clause that deals directly with that point. We should not treat that issue as a matter which divides the House. It is perceived by everyone as a real problem. However, it is not a major problem; it could be tackled by the Government without enormous resource implications.

The problems that local authorities face when people arrive unpredictably and unexpectedly are very real. Before the Bill leaves the House we have a duty to tackle those problems. Let me give one illustration that has been brought to my attention. Uttlesford district council has in its hands 112 Yugoslavs who arrived at Stansted two weeks ago. The council has neither the resources nor the capacity to deal with them. For the past two weeks the refugees have been encamped in a sports centre. That may be better than where they would be in Bosnia, but it is not good enough. We cannot blame the local authorities for not being able to tackle such a problem. I should like to hear from the Minister, even before the debate is over tonight, how the Home Office proposes to help such authorities.

5.49 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I shall take up some of the important points made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). As a Member of Parliament who represents a constituency near Heathrow airport, I know that my district is under enormous pressure to accept asylum seekers and refugees. However, our housing supply has dried up. I hope that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland is prepared to return to Caithness and to argue for housing and jobs to be made available and for invitations to be issued to asylum seekers. There has to be a dispersal policy.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Greenway: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for expressing his agreement. In today's debate, I have heard no such argument from Opposition Members, including the shadow Home Secretary, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). My constituents and I would be more interested in listening to Opposition Members if they gave us some help, as we are in grave difficulty.

Mr. Maclennan: Because of the Government's housing support policies, no local authority has an enormous quantity of housing available; therefore, the direction of people around the country is not likely to resolve the problem. I have no doubt that my constituents would be as welcoming as others to refugees if homes could be found for them. I am asking the hon. Gentleman to address the issue of the resources required by local authorities—his may be one of the most needy.

Mr. Greenway: There will be plenty of opportunities to test the hon. Gentleman's sincerity—I do not mean that unkindly. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning is present and will have heard the hon. Gentleman, who did not assert that fundamental argument in his speech.

Important aspects of the Bill should and have been raised in the House. We all have a moral duty to be compassionate to the many asylum seekers who are in difficulty—to put it mildly. Too often for comfort, people whose close relatives have been killed attend my surgeries, and I dare say that every hon. Member has had the same experience. A lady whose husband had been assassinated and whose children and extended family were dead attended my surgery the other day. Her plight was heartbreaking. One could not conceivably take a hard-hearted approach to such a person. I am not doing so and I do not believe that the Government are.

There are compelling moral imperatives for a Christian country such as ours to help asylum seekers who are facing difficulties. I do not support bogus asylum seekers, who damage the case of genuine ones, as always happens in life. In this case, the damage is deep because the community tends to judge the bogus asylum seekers and the genuine ones in the same light, which is tragic. Our nation has a moral responsibility to those refugees.

A borough such as Ealing faces great difficulties in attempting to discharge its duty to help. There has been a complete breakdown of the London boroughs voluntary agreement to distribute asylum seekers throughout London. Ealing no longer receives help from other boroughs. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) said, other boroughs encounter those pressures.

A week or two ago, Ealing had to say no to 150 refugees from Bosnia, some of whom were fleeing horrendous problems. It did so not because it was hard-hearted but because it had no housing for them. It is not that there is no new housing in Ealing. As my hon. Friend the Minister will testify, in recent years there have been substantial developments in his constituency of Ealing, Acton and in mine. However, all last year's new housing was taken by refugees. They have to be housed, but what about other people and what view will they take? That is a serious and highly disturbing problem. Ealing council could face a legal challenge because it had to say that it could not house those Bosnian asylum seekers because it had no accommodation available for them.

I sincerely ask the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland and the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) to see whether their councils can help to resolve the problem. I hate to describe people in such difficulties as a problem, but we do face a problem.

Mr. Barry Porter: I agree entirely that we have a moral obligation to look after genuine asylum seekers. I agree also with the need for their dispersal, but I do not understand how a dispersal policy can be enforced. Caithness may be a good place, but I cannot imagine that many Bosnians would want to live there. The people of Caithness may well say that they would welcome those refugees, but if those refugees do not want to go there, how can we enforce their dispersal? If we cannot, it seems inevitable that central Government will have to empower and finance the local authorities in the regions to which the refugees wish to go.

Mr. Greenway: There is no suggestion of compulsion. I simply invited the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland and other hon. Members to pick up the refugees on a voluntary basis, which must be the best way.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland spoke of children—their welfare is of great importance. The borough of Ealing is to be congratulated on its handling of the issue. Unaccompanied minors as young as seven and eight are coming to Heathrow without parents, friends or anyone else and are often left to wander around. The borough of Ealing is picking up those children, helping them and placing them in accommodation. However, the cost of that is reflected in the community charge. The borough rightly provides a range of facilities for those children, but it is in order for me to ask the Government and the House to assist Ealing council in that task. It is a major task and we need help with it.

The schools also need help—there is great pressure on them. I taught for 23 years so I know what it is like to teach a large number of children who cannot speak English. We faced the problem long ago when Hungarians left Hungary after the Soviet Union murdered Imre Nagy. It was difficult teaching the children English fast enough for them to be integrated into mainstream classes following the proper curriculum.

In Ealing, we have a large number of children who need special classes, but the borough receives no extra resources to help with language tuition. I am pleading for those resources—the task is not as easy as some people think. There are 118 families, mostly asylum seekers, in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, costing £17,000 per family per year. I reckon that the asylum-seeking population is costing the borough more than £12 million a year, a great deal of money. Unless help is provided the problem will continue.

Many parts of the world are in turmoil and many people wish to leave their place of birth and country of origin. The world rightly has a conscience about that, but no one has yet pointed out in this debate that our nation and others should fight much more strongly for peace in, say, Africa, and for better food production in areas of

[Mr. Greenway]

starvation. We should help people where they are so that they do not feel the need to uproot themselves and move to places that they must love less than their own, however welcoming we may try to be. The countries of the world must try much harder to bring about peace and to ensure that people in Africa, eastern Europe and Asia can live in peace and reasonable prosperity so that they do not need in the first place to uproot themselves and travel across the world.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I remind the House of Madam Speaker's ruling that there is a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 pm and 8 pm.

6.2 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): As time is short, I shall confine my remarks to just two aspects of the Bill. The first is the proposal to remove rights of appeal from visitors and certain categories of students who are refused entry to the United Kingdom. This afternoon we heard the Home Secretary's views. I refer to a report in the *Yorkshire Post* on 23 October. It reported the Home Secretary as saying:

> "With 26,000 appeals waiting to be processed, Ministers preferred to devote staff and energies to cases where the outcome would have a major effect on the life of the person concerned . . . 'It is not essential to the future life of anybody whether they spend a month or two here on a visit'".

As always with the Home Secretary, one is in some difficulty to know whether his views originated from breathtaking ignorance or unfeeling arrogance, or perhaps an unsubtle mixture of the two.

What is certain is that those who are forced to apply for visas to visit or study in this country and those who wish their relatives or friends to visit or study here will see the abolition of the right of appeal as deeply unjust and racially discriminatory. Most people who have to apply for visas to visit are of course black or Asian. When the visa regime was steamrollered through this House on the back of tabloid hysteria about Members conspiring in immigration rackets to slip visitors into Britain, Ministers assured us that a right of appeal would safeguard against mistakes.

Mistakes have certainly been made. We have already been told today that about one in five of appeals made by visitors refused entry are upheld—that shows that wrong decisions are made in these cases. Let us for a moment pretend that the Home Secretary is a constituent of mine, a middle class Asian who has two daughters who are going to marry their two first cousins. I am sure that if he were in that situation the right hon. and learned Gentleman would share the horror of my constituent at the fact that the mother of those two first cousins was refused entry to attend the marriage of her two sons. The decision was overturned only with the utmost difficulty, after extensive national and regional publicity and extensive correspondence from me and my constituent, and endless telephone calls to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

If the proposal to abolish appeals stands, it will result not only in an enormous increase in the workload for us all on behalf of aggrieved constituents protesting that their relatives or friends have not been given a visa but in a large increase in the correspondence of Foreign Office Ministers, particularly the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. I hope that they are prepared for that.

I should like to cite another case. This time it concerns a constituent whom I shall call Mrs. K., who is anxious to have her sister, Miss B, come here for a brief visit. The visit was refused, and on 19 October I received the following letter from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

> "The Entry Clearance Officer in Islamabad has now reviewed Miss B's application and has maintained his decision on the grounds that the 19 year old applicant has not seen her sister Mrs. K., since she was very young and does not really remember her. She is a single woman, not engaged, and there was no evidence of any family income. On these grounds, the Entry Clearance Officer considered that she was not classified as a genuine visitor.
>
> The Second Secretary (Immigration) has carefully reconsidered the case in the light of your representations but has decided that the ECOs decision to refuse an entry certificate was correct and in accordance with the Immigration Rules.
>
> The Appeal procedure has now been applied with the result that an Appeal has now been received."

So a mother has been denied the right to attend the wedding of her two sons; and two sisters have been denied the right to meet after years of separation.

It is not without significance that the second case concerned a poor woman. We all know that these decisions are racially discriminatory, but decisions are also often refused in the cases of those who are poor; they are denied the chance to exercise their rights. The Home Secretary may not think that such matters are important to many people, but on behalf of many of my constituents I urge him to maintain this important right in the interests of natural justice, if of nothing else.

This Bill is retrospective. It applies to applications made years ago and which, due to Home Office inefficiency, have not yet been considered. The Bill contains no criteria for the granting of exceptional or compassionate leave to remain. People fleeing from civil war—for instance, from former Yugoslavia—would not qualify to remain under these procedures.

In reply to a parliamentary question of mine on 23 October, the Home Office revealed that between January and August 428 nationals of the former states of Yugoslavia were refused leave to enter and were removed. Most of them were seeking entry as visitors or students. No asylum seekers have been returned to Yugoslavia, I was told by the Home Office, but 43 have been removed to so-called safe third countries. At present 930 nationals of former Yugoslav states have applied for asylum. Such people are given temporary admission while their applications are considered. I was told by the Home Office that nearly all of them are still awaiting a decision. The figure excludes dependants.

Will the Under-Secretary of State give a categorical assurance that if an applicant from a former Yugoslav state is refused asylum he will not be removed to the country of origin? What guarantees did the Home Secretary receive before the 43 were removed to the so-called safe third countries? Where are they now, and do we have any information about what happened to them? At the time the Under-Secretary appeared on television and assured us that people would not be refused if they had spent a brief time in a so-called third country. In his speech today the Home Secretary was evasive on that matter. I hope that in his winding-up speech the Under-Secretary will clearly state the time limits that are used to influence the Home Office in these matters.

Independent Bosnia faces partition between Serbia and Croatia. There is increasing support in this country for military intervention to stop genocide, ethnic cleansing, and thousands starving to dealth on mountain tops and in concentration camps. If Serbia achieves her objective of expelling Muslims from the region, we shall witness the creation of a new generation of disaffected and dispossessed—the Palestinians of the Balkans.

Britain and the United Nations must give arms to Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs with which they can defend themselves and the independence of their country. If the EC fails to intervene militarily, the numbers of refugees seeking asylum will be awesome. Some estimates show that on a European Community basis Britain could be asked to receive as many as 300,000. That shows the scale of the problem and underlines what the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said about this squalid and wretched little Bill.

The Bill is the outcome of secret talks to create a fortress Europe, and it is not without significance that not once since the Trevi and Schengen groups were established has there been a statement from the Dispatch Box about what deals have been done. The Bill is a direct result of those discussions. The Government are asking us to appease the racist right, and I, together with I am sure the vast majority of hon. Members, am not prepared to do that. The Bill must not be allowed to pass.

6.12 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has made an unsurprisingly forceful speech to which I listened with interest. I have also had the benefit of listening to other hon. Members. The message is that we are debating a Bill and assessing conflicting duties and aspirations. We have duties to our citizens in the United Kingdom and opposite duties to people who want to come to this country for whatever reason. Some applicants genuinely fall within the definition of the 1951 convention which covers people persecuted on grounds of religion, race or politics.

Our duties to our citizens include the duty to protect our welfare and benefit budgets and our housing system at a time of economic stringency. It behoves us all to do what we can in practical terms to assist those of our citizens who are already homeless, on benefit or depend upon our welfare system. Those who should not be here but who have got round the system by false applications are of no benefit to our own people. Sadly, that creates a climate of mistrust which is unfair to those who come here legitimately and those who live here and are in difficulties.

We also have a duty to people who come here from abroad. It is incumbent upon the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to make sure that our immigration and asylum rules are clear and well published throughout the foreign lands in which we are represented. Those who live in those countries and who fear persecution of one sort or another or civil unrest, famine or starvation must know the exact position so that they do not make unnecessary journeys or journeys that are likely to prove fruitless. There is nothing worse than people coming here under a misapprehension about our laws and procedures and having to be turned away at the air or sea ports.

Our procedures must be clearly subject to the rules of natural justice, as they are. We have a well-established system of law which is respected throughout the world. Our existing immigration appeal system and the system that we are debating fall well within the rules of natural justice. Applicants should have access to advice, and I urge all hon. Members to encourage constituents and others to make use of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service and the refugee legal centre.

Plainly, it is essential that those who come here should have access to the clearest and most accessible advice. That does not necessarily mean that they should be inundated with legal advice. They need guidance and help, but to increase the legal aid fund to brief lawyers to stand around at air and sea ports would not help those who arrive in this country at short notice.

I am pleased to note that there is a clear appeal route for those who wish to challenge decisions and the right to an oral hearing for all those who arrive here. Welcome changes have been made to the Bill since it was presented in November and I commend them to the House. The Bill will lead to certainty and to the proper disposal of applications with speed but not with undue haste.

We are told that there are now 500 Home Office staff dealing exclusively with asylum cases, that there were 45,000 such cases last year, and that there is a backlog of 64,000 cases. Apparently six out of 10 turn out to be misconceived or groundless. It is not to anyone's benefit, and certainly not to the benefit of those who would prefer to live in Britain rather than in their home countries, to be misled about our procedures and about the reception that will await them if they arrive here under a misconception. It must be made known to immigration racketeers who prey upon people in the Indian sub-continent and elsewhere that their cheating activities will not benefit them, still less those whom they seek to deceive and hoodwink.

It would do nobody any good to send the Bill to a Special Standing Committee; that would merely exacerbate existing problems. The House must find practical solutions to difficult and heart-searching problems. The bedrock of the Bill is in clause 2 which states:

> "Nothing in the immigration rules . . . shall lay down any practice which would be contrary to the Convention."

The convention, with its specific mention in the Bill, provides the Government with an opportunity positively to assert asylum seekers' rights and demonstrates the Government's commitment to protect asylum seekers and uphold the 1951 convention. Therefore, the specific mention of the convention is welcome because it will provide valuable protection for asylum seekers in the courts.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garnier: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not mind if I do not give way, because time is running out. I am sure that he will catch Mr. Deputy Speaker's eye later.

The answer to the problem of migration cannot simply be provided by the Bill. We must find alternative shelter for potential refugees close to their own homes. Times are hard in this country and abroad in the rest of the industrialised world, but I hope that along with the passing of the Bill will go an understanding that we must not cut the Overseas Development Administration budget. We must provide bilateral aid to enable displaced persons to

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remain near their own homes so that help can be given through the EC and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Bill is timely, fair and necessary and its terms must be made known beyond our shores.

I was interested in the comments of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who referred to Sir Philip Goodhart. If he looks back at other parts of Sir Philip's speech, he will see that he also made the point on which I am now dwelling. It is that the answer to the problem of refugees and migration lies not simply here, in the Bill, although that performs a useful role; it lies in doing what is required in the countries from which these people come.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garnier: I am sorry, but I must get on. I am sure that the hon. Lady will have an opportunity to speak.

It is up to their own people to remove the tyrannical Governments from which they suffer. It is up to them to remove, if they can do so, the conditions that create starvation. It is up to us to provide what aid we can to alleviate the position in which they find themselves. I urge the House to make sure that the Bill passes into law as quickly as possible.

6.21 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The speech by the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) was the sort of horrifying speech that was made during the 1930s or before the first world war. It is always made whenever there is a case for people fleeing from oppression and seeking political asylum. He should make that speech to those seeking to flee from totalitarian regimes in Africa, the middle east or Latin America, to those who have been tortured, those who are the victims of regimes propped up by the Tory Government with the trade deals and the Common Market with its trade policy, those kept in place by the International Monetary Fund, which turns a blind eye to prisons provided that the balance sheets are all right.

Mr. Garnier: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Corbyn: No, I shall not give way as I have only 10 minutes in which to make my speech.

It is time that the House recognised the reality for millions of people around the world—the reality of life under totalitarian Governments, when the economy collapses because of the trade situation imposed by the wealthy north American and European countries. We are not blameless for the conditions in which many people find themselves.

Kurdish asylum seekers come to my constituency and my surgery and tell me of the way that they have been beaten and given electric shock treatment and cold water treatment, and of the way in which they have been tortured day after day and denied sleep so that confessions can be dragged out of them by the Turkish Government, the Iraqi Government or the Iranian Government. With pained looks on their faces, they look me straight in the eye and say, "What have your Government done about human rights deprivations that my people are facing?" I have to tell them that the British Government are more interested in selling arms to those Governments and in maintaining a decent relationship with regimes that practise torture. That is the reality, and they call that promoting peace.

It is time that we recognised our responsibilities, and the way in which Europe is trying, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) said, to create a fortress Europe to stop people seeking asylum. Many of them are forced to go to poor countries which cannot cope with the strain. One country after another in Africa, Latin America and Asia is forced to deal with large numbers of people seeking political asylum when it does not have the necessary resources to deal with them.

Already, our immigration procedures are designed to keep people out. Already, serious mistakes have been made and people have been wrongly returned to their country of origin. I can think of cases of Sri Lankans and Kurds being returned and of a Zairean who was returned. The previous Home Secretary was found to be in contempt of court for returning somebody against the wishes of the court.

In a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), the Under-Secretary admits:

> "It is not possible to reply"—

to a question about miscarriages [illegible] justice—

> "in specific terms without more detailed information. However, there have been fewer than 30 cases in more than ten years where it is alleged that established asylum procedures have not been adhered to, or have broken down, and applicants have been removed".

I think that 30 people returned to an unknown fate where procedures "have broken down" is a serious matter. I would have thought that there should have been a more robust reply from the Under-Secretary, saying that he intended to do something about that. Instead this Bill has been introduced.

Reading through the Bill, we come first to fingerprinting—the criminalising of those seeking asylum. There is then the disgraceful section on housing in which, as Tory Members have tried to do before, the Government blame those seeking asylum for the housing crisis that already exists, instead of providing——

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Corbyn: No, I shall not give way.

Instead of behaving like this, the Government should provide the proper resources to enable the building of sufficient housing to accommodate those already here who need decent housing and those who are seeking asylum. Instead, those seeking asylum are blamed as the cause of the problem, and the children of asylum-seekers are condemned to a long stay in bed and breakfast or second rate temporary accommodation. That is the kernel of the Bill.

The Bill then goes on to deal with appeals and the limited right of appeal that it allows and then to more regulation arising from the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987. When that was passing through the House, it met with a great deal of opposition because many of us recognised that it would make it more difficult for people to seek asylum here. Those who talk glibly about people in countries with oppressive regimes stepping on a plane to travel over here to gain political asylum should think a bit about that. Getting on a plane requires a lot of money, a ticket and a visa. The Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act means that if the person is not subsequently admitted, the airline that has carried him here will be fined.

As a result of all this, people do not queue up at the British embassy or high commission to get a visa while the secret police observe them, nor do they openly buy a ticket. Instead, they go to a shark or a spiv who charges a lot of money for a single ticket here knowing that if the airline subsequently gets fined, the price of the ticket will cover the fine. The sum of £1,500 for a single ticket from Istanbul to London is not uncommon if one is a Kurdish asylum seeker. Any one of us could get a single ticket from Istanbul to London for £100. That is how the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act works. It is a spivs' charter designed both to allow people to make a lot of money in an unscrupulous way and to keep out those seeking political asylum.

The Home Secretary has obviously been taking a few lessons from the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) in how to raise ogres and falsify the presentation of information. He talked about asylum seekers destroying their documents or travelling with false documents. If one lives a shadowy life because of an oppressive regime, and if one is trying to escape from one of today's oppressive regimes, it is not uncommon to assume a different identity. The same thing would have happened if one had been trying to escape from Nazi Germany. In fact, it is a perfectly sensible thing to do because it is a way of getting out, of escaping through covering one's real identity. It also makes sense to destroy the documents at a later stage so as to reveal one's true identity and try to gain political asylum.

Does any Minister or Tory Member really understand what it is like to try to survive under a totalitarian regime? Do they understand how difficult it is for human rights representatives and lawyers, trade union representatives and many others in such societies to survive, let alone live? Do they understand what it is like? If the Bill is enacted it will make the position of a totalitarian regime even stronger. At the same time it will make the position of the potential asylum applicant much weaker.

Ministers and other Conservative Members have talked about the documentation that is required before an individual can come to this country. It is clear that the required documentation will make it extremely difficult to get here. They talk also about third-country cases. The draft regulations that the Home Secretary has produced are completely nonsensical in this respect. It seems that no one can apply for asylum in the United Kingdom if he or she has had the opportunity to apply for asylum in a third country. I understand that that includes transit arrangements in a third-country airport.

Once again, the Government are trying to duck out of admitting people to this country. That includes, possibly, people from the former Yugoslavia, from Africa, from Latin America or anywhere else. A disgraceful and shoddy piece of proposed legislation has been put before us and I hope that the House will reject it. I fear, however, that it will approve the Bill's Second Reading, which means that we shall be forced to oppose it in Committee.

Conservative Members should think carefully about voting for the Bill's Second Reading. There is a racist tide in Europe and a racist agenda, and I believe the Bill to be part of them. I believe also that millions of ordinary, decent people in Britain and throughout the rest of Europe oppose the notion that lies behind the Bill and will mount strong opposition to it.

6.31 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I recall that when the measure that the Bill succeeds was introduced last year it was opposed with some venom by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who described it as squalid, wicked and wretched. It is obvious that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) thought, after mature reflection, that a much more modest approach was required. It was not until the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook spoke—he has been reincarnated on the Opposition Back Benches, to which a grateful Labour party has consigned him—that we heard the old language, which has been repeated by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

The Bill contains nothing like the horrors that have been foretold of it. It is a genuine attempt to make Britain's immigration and asylum policies fairer for everyone at a time of considerably increasing pressure from many who want to settle in Britain. No system of the sort that is outlined in the Bill can be perfect, but except in one regard I do not accept that it will unreasonably prejudice legitimate claims while dealing firmly with bogus claims. The Government have listened to and accepted the arguments of Justice, which is the British arm of the International Commission of Jurists, upon whose council I am privileged to sit. There was something unreasonably harsh about requiring leave to appeal to be set out in writing by asylum seekers and much good would be done if the applicant were allowed an oral hearing before he was removed. The Government are to be thanked for this improvement, and I am glad that the Opposition welcome it.

Unfortunately, the pressure created by applications has increased since last year, and so the need to process applications more quickly has increased. There were only 4,000 applicants in 1988. In 1991 there were more than 10 times as many. The number has been reduced this year, but the increase since 1988 is still considerable. The number of staff has increased from 120 to 500, but that has not been enough to staunch the backlog of about 64,000 cases waiting for consideration. Many of these people should not be settling in this country under any of the rules, international or national. They disappear into the cities and cannot be traced until years later, by which time they have set up families and local connections. It is then almost impossible for the authorities to do anything about it.

I continue to hear it said that not many asylum applications are bogus. Unfortunately—I use that word because one would like to accept the argument—the facts are otherwise. It seems that 60 per cent. of applications for asylum under the United Nations rules—that means where a person is in genuine fear of persecution—were genuine in the 1980s. By 1991, only one in four was genuine. Last year, only one in 10 was found to be so. So, if 45,000 people apply, 40,000 are not genuine asylum seekers. Surely the British public are entitled to demand that the House does something about that.

In practice, we can speed up the appeal procedures. We have done that to try to reduce them to 12 weeks. The procedure can be even quicker if, for example, an applicant has come from another western country and patently has no right to permanent settlement in the United Kingdom under the international rules.

Two particular objections have been raised by the hon. Member for Sedgefield and others. The first is that it is not

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

sufficient to give an applicant two days in which to appeal. But most applicants will have 10 days in which to register their appeal by post. Only those arriving at ports where refusal notices are served in person will have only two days in which to register their appeal. Surely that is enough time to decide to make an appeal. The grounds of the application should not have changed very much in two days. If they have changed, or if there is some injustice such as a delay that has eaten into the 48 hours, I understand that the rules provide flexibility to enable the authorities to extend the two-day procedure.

Mr. Watson: The hon. and learned Gentleman is a notable lawyer; indeed, he is a QC. Will he compare the time scale that has been provided for appealing in the cases that we are discussing with that for the cases with which he deals? Does he accept that the Bill's appeal provisions are woefully inadequate when compared with normal legal rights?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: We have an obligation to British citizens to consider points of law according to the rules of our system. We do not have the same obligation towards those who come into Britain and demand rights that they, as non-British citizens, are not able to expect. We are talking especially about those who are refused entry when we know that genuine applicants are quickly seen to be so and are allowed into the country to stay here. It is preposterous to suggest that we should deal with asylum seekers in precisely the same way as we engage in cool, calm and collected legal processes, which in any event take far too long.

The Opposition's second objection rests on the fingerprint provisions. As, unfortunately, there is much abuse, it is necessary that asylum seekers should be properly and fairly identified. Two thirds of all applicants at the ports have no valid documents that state who they are. That is because their papers have been forged, mutilated or given away. If it is not possible to identify an asylum seeker accurately, there is nothing to stop him or her going from one social security office to another to claim benefits in different names, and many such people do.

Investigators discovered recently that 27 racketeers have 700 different identities. I understand that 1,500 other cases are under consideration. Computer checks in France and Switzerland have shown that multiple claims have been made by five to 20 per cent. of applicants. As fraudulent applications delay genuine ones, it is always the honest applicants who are hurt in the end.

Every European Community country except the Republic of Ireland has the power to fingerprint asylum seekers. We shall be falling in line with more or less the rest of the Community in a procedural matter, which seems to be sensible. Surely reasonable people cannot object to these precautions being taken—fingerprinting and limitation of time for appeal—to speed up the asylum appeal system.

I am pleased that the Government have taken the opportunity to speed up ordinary immigration appeals as well. They have risen from 9,600 in 1986 to 27,000 in 1991. It is not surprising that an enormous number of immigration cases—I believe more than 23,000—are waiting to be resolved. The total amounts to a year of the appeal authorities' work.

The Government have identified three areas that lead to unnecessary delay. First, there is the appeal that is futile because the basic immigration rules are not met. That means that a delay cannot serve any legitimate purpose. I do not think that there is any dispute about the steps that the Government take in relation to that grouping.

The second area is where someone presents himself at a port as a visitor or a student but does not have a valid entry permit. We have rules and it is reasonable to expect them to be followed. If they are not, there should be no waste of time on appeals.

The third area is where entry clearance has been refused to students or visitors who would have been entitled to stay only for six months if they had been legitimate. I understand the Government's argument that there is no point in dragging on an appeal that might be heard in two or three years' time, long after the applicant would have returned home.

All the cases in those areas add up to 11,000 appeals currently being processed. If that is not a waste of time and resources, I do not know what is. It is better to concentrate resources on the cases where marriage and rights to permanent settlement are in question. Surely that is common sense. It is no surprise that a usually sensible Government have chosen to concentrate scarce resources in that way.

However, I am a little uneasy about the automatic refusal of appeal for visitors. As a Member of Parliament with a Pakistani community of some size, I am sometimes aware of unfair refusals. I have drawn them to the attention of the Home Office, especially when a family en route to the Haj stops in this country and wants to see members of its family who live in my constituency. On some occasions, although only a few, they have been refused——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman's time is up.

6.41 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I welcome one aspect of the Bill—it is a proper United Kingdom Bill covering all parts of the kingdom. Obviously, it has been possible for the parliamentary draftsmen to deal with the fact that the Bill amends parts of existing Northern Ireland legislation, especially housing provisions. In other contexts, when we asked the Government to apply legislation to Northern Ireland, they said that they could not do so because it would interfere with the integrity of the Northern Ireland statute book. The Home Office has been able to do so with this Bill without worrying about that integrity and I commend that action to other Government Departments. There is no reason why we cannot legislate on that basis all the time.

I welcome the fact that the United Nations convention on refugees is being given primacy in the Bill. That is important and I hope that that policy will continue. It is acknowledged that there is a problem with asylum seeking. It might not be as bad as was predicted last year, but it exists. There are a number of reasons for that. Reference was made to the fact that some economic migration is now being disguised as asylum seeking. That aspect of the problem may affect us even more in Europe during the next few years.

I note the comments about migration to Germany. More effort should be made by the European Community to improve the economic conditions of the former socialist states of eastern Europe. The EC's record is poor. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to the danger to the stability of Germany from that migration. I am not convinced that there is such a danger, but if there is it arises because of the unrealistic liberality of German legislation. Many countries are in an unfortunate economic condition and in many other countries there is not the respect for democracy and human rights that we would wish. However, the solution is not for all the citizens of the world to come to live in western Europe or the United Kingdom.

Some hon. Members appear to think it unreasonable to focus efforts on improving the economic conditions or increasing the respect for human rights and democracy in other countries. However, that must be the solution, rather than to widen or to try to sustain unrealistically wide rights of entry on the ground of asylum.

I note the comments about the way in which decisions are taken by the Trevi group. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) commented on the way in which secret decisions are taken and on the fact that there is not proper accountability. I wish that he had the same attitude to the secret meetings that take decisions on policies that affect Northern Ireland. A secret conference has existed for seven years without any accountability to the House; indeed, it is ignored by the House. That secret conference is supported by the right hon. Gentleman. I should like some consistency of approach from him.

The Secretary of State said that the key matter was to ensure that the procedures were quick and fair, and those must be the criteria. First, we must acknowledge that there is a need for speed. I recognise that the Bill makes an attempt to tackle that. However, I am worried about fairness. That cannot be achieved by removing rights of appeal or by creating special procedures that will apply solely to asylum matters. There is little confidence in the way in which immigration officials operate, so the right of appeal is important. I support what has been said about visitors and students. A right of appeal is a check on the actions of officials. It is not sufficient to rely on the belief that officials will always be right; they are not.

Northern Ireland does not have a significant numbers problem with people seeking entry, but problems do arise from time to time. We are aware of the excessive delays in the system and the uncertainty about the way in which it operates. The relatives of those affected have little opportunity to influence the system and that causes a great deal of unnecessary anguish. It may be necessary to have a truncated procedure if we are to speed up the system, but why should that be applied solely to asylum seekers? Surely there is an argument for a unified procedure for all immigrants. If it does not work effectively or if it is taking too long, the solution is to make it more effective and more efficient and to put the necessary resources into it to achieve that.

We have some reservations about the procedure, not in the Bill, but in the rules. I listened with interest to the debate between the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), especially on the two-day appeal. It appeared to boil down to the fact that the Secretary of State spoke as though he would ensure that a personal service notice was made only in cases that he believed to be manifestly groundless. If that is his approach, why not include it in the rules? Why expect us to approve the Bill purely on the basis of his intentions? The rules should be clarified in that respect.

I shall refer only briefly to the provisions on fingerprinting and housing. We do not have any problems with the fingerprinting requirement as it could be necessary in some circumstances to identify people. Although fingerprinting might be undignified, it is not a serious infringement of human rights. One justification put forward for fingerprinting is that without it people might disappear into the cities and be untraceable. The solution to that problem would be what we have recommended in other contexts—identity cards for all the population. We could then identity those who do not have proper documents.

On the housing issue, I note that, on Second Reading of the previous Bill last year, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said:

> "once an asylum seeker is allowed to enter the country, he or she should be treated like any other resident—no better, no worse."—[*Official Report*, 13 November 1991; Vol. 198, c. 1104.]

That view should be adopted, but with changes. Once an asylum seeker is recognised as having a right to be in this country, he should be treated the same as other people. That would be fair. The Bill is trying to delay people's rights under housing and homelessness legislation until a right to be in the country is acknowledged. Until a person has that right to be in the country, he does not have the right to take advantage of legislation. That is not unfair.

The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) spoke of the desirability of dispersal in connection with the provision of temporary accommodation. When the boat people came to the United Kingdom, we in Craigavon were happy to accommodate some of them; in similar circumstances, we should be happy to act similarly.

A problem exits, and the Bill attempts to tackle it. There are some imperfections in the way in which it does so, but I am glad that the Government have made some concessions since the presentation of the original Bill. I hope that they will be flexible when dealing with the detail in Committee. We intend, however, to support the Bill and the principle behind it.

6.50 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): The Bill deals with a problem that the House can no longer avoid. Migration is a rapidly growing problem throughout Europe. We have seen a vast influx into Germany of east Europeans and other immigrants, which has brought a phoenix-like rise of fascism in Germany.

Our television screens have shown us scenes of violence —such as the burning of hostels by mobs—that are reminiscent of the activities of the "brown shirts" in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. It will have brought a chill to the heart of any human being to see otherwise decent German folk voicing racial hatred, and justifying —or even supporting—the violence. In France, an influx from Algeria and black Africa has had similar results. It is

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now respectable in French political circles to use hateful racist language. We are seeing the same in Belgium—the rise of fascism and mob unrest.

A vast horde of aspirant economic migrants is creating pressures in Europe, leading to political responses that are extremely distasteful to democrats and, I am sure, to all hon. Members. We should face up to the fact that the United Kingdom is not immune to such pressures: indeed, we are even more vulnerable to them. We have good race relations, and, by and large, the days of National Front marches are gone; but that improvement is based on public trust in our tight immigration controls. If those controls are doubted, we shall risk a resurgence of the National Front and other such nasty activists.

I speak with particular feeling, because Gravesend and Northfleet—which I have the honour to represent—contain 7,000 Sikh residents. They live in the local community in peace, a condition of which I am extremely proud. They can, for instance, hold their religious processions to celebrate their Baisakhi festival without disturbance. Only last week I was able to support the bid of a Sikh gentleman, Mr. Amrik Singh Jandoo, to become a Conservative Gravesham borough councillor. He obtained public support across the community; moreover, he achieved a 1 per cent. swing towards the Conservatives—at a time like this!

This country has a proud record in regard to the granting of asylum. We have given asylum to political refugees for many centuries: we can cast our minds back to the Huguenots, the Jews from eastern Europe and Russia at the turn of the century, continental Europeans during the last war and many others. The Bill is compatible with that tradition, and also with the 1951 United Nations refugee convention.

My Sikh constituents are particularly aware of the need for real asylum in this country. The large Gravesend and Northfleet community of Sikhs originates from the Punjab in India. I need not detain the House with a contemporary history of that sad state; grievances against the federal Government of the republic of India go back to the time of independence, when many Sikhs felt that Nehru and his Congress party had reneged on solemn undertakings. Since then, relations between the Sikhs of Punjab and the federal Government have been poor: there has been an escalating round of rebellion and repression. The conflict, highlighted by the sacking of the golden temple at Amritsar—which has again been occupied by Indian forces during the past month—has thrown up refugees fleeing in fear of their lives. Nevertheless, they are a statistically small number.

Despite the current concerns, this is a wonderful and prosperous country in which to bring up one's family. Millions of people in less-well-off parts of the world would migrate to it on precisely those economic grounds. Given the immense pressure imposed by economic migrants, it is natural that there has been a search for the loopholes and weak points in our immigration law, and asylum application procedures have been a major weak point. Under the guidance of paid Mr. Fixits, such applicants have developed abuse of the system on a grand scale.

During our debate in the previous Session we were told that, only four years ago, 5,000 applications a year had been made, of which only 25 per cent. had proved genuine. Since then, the rate of application has escalated vastly and clogged up the system, causing two-year delays. A total of 64,000 applications is now outstanding. Why is that? Have human rights around the world deteriorated so sharply now that so many dictatorships have tumbled? The answer must be no: it is just that thousands of people are attempting to charge through a loophole in our immigration controls.

Let us take the cases that I frequently encounter in Gravesend. People come to Britain to visit relatives, or as tourists or students, on six-month visas. At the end of that period they suddenly produce letters from home telling them that their return would imperil their lives because of their political views. They apply for political asylum; that gives them some two years. In most cases the application is turned down, because they are identified as economic migrants. By that time, however, they may well have married and had British-born children; 25 per cent. of them have been identified as political refugees, another 60 per cent. have been granted exceptional leave to remain on compassionate grounds. The remaining 15 per cent. of applicants then appeal—and months, if not years, ensue. At the end of that period, they either succeed or are granted exceptional leave to remain. The unsuccessful few frequently then embark on an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.

Such examples make it clear that, if skilfully handled, applications for political asylum are a one-way bet on getting through our immigration laws. Ministers are quite right to act on grounds of equity—by which I mean equal treatment not only for British people but for my Sikh constituents. We should not overlook what happens to applicants while they are waiting. Some occupy council housing at the expense of local people in housing need; many take low-paid jobs in the local labour market, forcing down wages at the expense of Sikh residents.

Not only do my Sikh constituents resent such people; their treatment dents the Sikhs' belief in British justice and fair play. They have accepted the need for tight immigration rules, and they resent what is effectively queue-jumping. I nevertheless ask my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to look again at the provision to end the right of appeal on refusals of visitors' and students' visas.

The current problem is exacerbated by the recent tragic events in Bosnia. There is a danger that the displacement of people from that area will spread ever more widely. They are increasingly coming to Britain, frequently on the initiative of idealistic but naive people. Only recently, in my own county of Kent, 26 Bosnians—members of six families—were brought in through Dover by a Surrey clergyman. He effectively dumped them, without notice, on the Dover authorities. His action put immediate stress on health, education, social services and voluntary agencies in the town. Eventually the Bosnians were moved to Surrey.

The irony is that Dover has been assisting its twin town, Split in Croatia, and has helped the very Bosnian refugees who were brought to Dover. It is supporting people close to their original homes. It is no service to them to be dumped far from home in a foreign country. Surely it is better to serve them locally by providing aid and supplies—ironically, protected by British forces who are serving with the United Nations force based in that country.

The Bill will speed up procedures, help real political asylum seekers, and limit the scope for Mr. Fixit to batten expensively on to human misery. It will restore justice and equity; it will close a vast loophole. I hope that on this occasion the Bill will reach the statute book.

6.59 pm

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and the Home Secretary agreed that the differences between us are about whether these rules are fair. Since then, I have listened to a debate that has completely distorted the interpretation of that word. Blame has been heaped on asylum seekers by Conservative Members for the length of housing lists, unemployment and the lack of social services in inner-city areas. We have to remember that we are talking about asylum seekers, not about a return to full-blown primary immigration. We are talking about applying fair treatment to asylum seekers who wish to enter this country.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) gave us an interpretation of "fairness." He said that United Kingdom citizens are entitled to it but that people who seek asylum here are not entitled to fair treatment under the United Kingdom's legal system. If that is Conservative Members' interpretation of "fairness", one can understand clearly what the differences are between us.

My knowledge of this issue arises out of the casework with which I have dealt since I became a Member of Parliament last April. Many of the points have already been made in the debate, but one of the most important was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield. He spoke of how these rules will be interpreted and applied. I know from first-hand experience how people are dealt with and the problems that they encounter. I am currently dealing with an asylum case. This legislation would have had a direct effect on it. A young man in Winson Green prison is awaiting the outcome of an asylum appeal. If the two-day rule had applied to him, he would have been long gone from this country.

In these cases, a distant relative gets in touch with a Member of Parliament. He assesses the case and then contacts a community leader, who manages to persuade a lawyer to make representations on that person's behalf. It is not the case, as has been said by Conservative Members, that all that is paid for by the British taxpayer. All of that has to be done if people are to be provided with proper representation. It cannot be done in two days. The concession that has been made since this legislation last came before the House is a concession in name only. It is not real when it comes to the practicalities. The two-day rule means that people will, effectively, have no right to an appeal.

Reference has been made to the European convention on human rights being enshrined in the Bill. The individual in the case with which I am dealing has been told that, because he is a member of a particular group, he cannot be in danger in the country from which he came. He comes from the Punjab. He is a Hindu. He says that he has been repeatedly harassed by the police. Having interviewed him, I believe what he says. The immigration service, however, says that that cannot be right—as he is a Hindu, how can he have been harassed by the police? To say that a member of a religious group cannot really be in danger and cannot, therefore, be entitled to asylum goes specifically against the terms of the convention, yet that argument is being used even before the passage of the Bill. If this legislation is passed, it will be enshrined in legislation that members of particular groups will not be dealt with properly.

I shall now deal with the refusal to give any right of appeal to visitors. I intend to refer again to cases that I have encountered. My blood boils when I read the details of interviews that relatives of my constituents have been put through by employees of Her Majesty's Government when they go to the high commission in Delhi, Bombay and elsewhere. Under the Bill, the Government intend to remove any right of appeal in those cases.

A young couple came to see me. The husband's mother applied to come to this country to assist her daughter-in-law while she had her second child. She was asked why on earth she did not come here when her daughter-in-law had her first child. She said that it was because of ill-health when the first child was born four years ago. She was then asked why she had to come and why there was no one in this country who could help her daughter-in-law. She said that the reason for coming was that it was her duty, that it was tradition. The interviewing officer then asked her, "Why on earth didn't you invoke tradition when you allowed your son to go to live in the United Kingdom?" Having in some cases travelled hundreds of miles, from the Punjab to the capital, people are treated like that when all they seek to do is to come here—half-way around the world—to see their grandchildren and perhaps, as in this case, assist a daughter-in-law when she has her second child. It is traditional for that to happen in those parts of the world that do not enjoy the medical care that we enjoy here.

If we remove the right of appeal, those attitudes will be reinforced. They are already bad. Something ought to be done. I do not believe that officials behave in that way without it being sanctioned from above. Ordinary people in the immigration service, both here and abroad, do not treat people like that without it having been clearly intimated to them that it is okay to do so and that it is required. They have been given clearance from their bosses. That clearance extends right up to the Government. If we take away the right of appeal, the horror stories will grow tenfold.

The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) blamed asylum seekers for the housing waiting list. Other Conservative Members blamed asylum seekers for unemployment. I do not know when a council house was last built in that borough or how many council houses have been built in that borough in recent years. The lack of council housing is a massive problem, compared with the size of this problem. It is disgraceful to put the blame for the lack of council housing on to asylum seekers.

We are in the process of building fortress Europe. A few years ago we criticised communist regimes for erecting an iron curtain. It appears that we are now determined to create one of our own and to turn our backs on ordinary human beings, in desperate circumstances.

7.9 pm

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): There are a number of seamen's hostels in my constituency and many of their residents come from Somalia. They are British citizens and many of them served Britain in the Burma campaign. They spent their lives as seamen and their families, homes and farms were in Somalia, where they

[Ms Mildred Gordon]

intended to return when they retired. They never sought a council flat or housing here; they stayed in their cubicles in the seamen's hostel, where they remain to this day.

In the past two years, many of them have come to see me to try to bring their families here. It was never their intention to do so, but their families are dying and have been shot, bombed and slaughtered. Many of those who applied for entry have disappeared and are presumed dead. Others have come here with limbs missing, which could have been avoided if the procedures had moved more quickly.

I approach the Bill with my Somali constituents very much in mind because I have witnessed their distress, suffering and concern for their relatives. Some of the Somalis have been granted refugee status, whereas others have been granted exceptional leave to remain. The Geneva convention defines refugee status quite narrowly. It excludes ordinary people who are simply caught up between warring factions and are the victims of air and land attacks, such as those in the horn of Africa, where medical facilities are almost non-existent. It also excludes the victims of breakdowns in public and economic order, which in the Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia have been aggravated by many years of drought.

Britain, Germany and the Netherlands have had a second category of exceptional leave to remain on humanitarian grounds. Those who were allowed here on that basis were disadvantaged compared with those who were accepted as refugees because they could not apply for family reunion until they had been here four years. In addition, they had to wait seven years before applying for settlement, compared with four years for those who had refugee status. At least their lives were saved and they were able to start a new life here.

When the Bill was being reconsidered, a number of organisations approached the Secretary of State to give exceptional leave to remain some statutory recognition. He did not respond to that. I believe that exceptional leave should be given statutory recognition but, failing that, the Minister should at least give a categoric assurance in Committee that exceptional leave to remain will continue as heretofore, because it is important that it should. I should not like to see Britain abolish that right when other European countries which have taken more refugees than us continue to have a more humanitarian approach.

On the question of housing homeless asylum seekers, clauses 4 and 5 cause considerable concern. Clause 4(1)(b) relieves local authorities of their obligation to provide housing to people in priority need if the asylum seeker has

"any accommodation, however temporary, which it would be reasonable for him to occupy"

with those living with him. It has been pointed out that that could mean sleeping on a church floor or, as so often happens in my constituency, on the floor of a house of a distant relative. A homeless asylum seeker would have to spend a period on the streets before being accepted as someone whom the local authority must rehouse. The present conditions for homeless people are humiliating. Clause 4 will place an additional burden on a small group of people who arrive here traumatised and who have gone through hell only to be put through further hoops, which is quite unacceptable.

The issue of confidentiality arises under the housing provisions. Paragraph 2 of schedule 1 imposes a duty on the local housing authority to satisfy itself that an applicant is truly an asylum seeker, but it does not impose a concurrent duty of confidentiality. Civil servants in the asylum section will have to assist local authorities, which may breach their excellent practice of confidentiality. Asylum staff at Lunar house and Quest house do not allow records to be given to, and have foiled devious attempts by, foreign embassies seeking to gain details on asylum seekers to persecute them or their families abroad. They maintain strict confidentiality, which would be breached by this provision. That is another serious concern.

I should like to deal with the loss of appeal rights under clauses 9 and 10. Hon. Members have said that if officials at overseas posts know that an applicant has no right of appeal, it will make their attitudes harsher. In 1985, the Commission for Racial Equality, investigating the sub-continent, found in overseas posts widespread racism and contemptuous attitudes to applicants.

Clauses 9 and 10 will deprive unsuccessful applicants of the right of appeal. If the clauses are passed, a further independent inquiry must investigate whether there has been any improvement or fundamental change in those attitudes at overseas posts. If the right of appeal is to be removed, there must be a provision for representations to be made to officials in this country and by Members of Parliament to Ministers. At present, representations against a refusal at an overseas post can be made only to local officials, which obviously leads to widespread unfairness.

Clause 9 deals with applications by visitors, of which almost all Labour Members have had experience through their constituents. Black and Asian people make up 4·5 per cent. of the population. They are mostly younger people and they have close ties with their relations who wish to visit them. The immigration and nationality department report for 1990-91, which covered India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ghana and Nigeria, showed that 272,870 applications for visitors visas were received, of which 42,220 were initially refused and 12,080 were subsequently granted on appeal. That meant that 28 per cent. of refusals were wrongly decided and later overturned. That 28 per cent. will now have no opportunity of having their case reconsidered.

I have found from my constituents' cases that there seems to be no rhyme or reason to many of the refusals. There is no logic to who is allowed to enter.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Does my hon. Friend agree that immigration officers deal with cases so badly that perhaps we should have an immigration complaints authority, like the Police Complaints Authority, whereby people could take up complaints against immigration officers? There is no procedure by which Members of Parliament and others can take up such matters with the Home Office.

Ms. Gordon: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. He has made a good suggestion. There is no quality control. Whether one gets one's permit to come here for a holiday seems to depend on what the official had for breakfast. Grandmothers and parents are humiliated and heartbroken when the grandparents want to come to see a new grandchild and are refused admittance or when they want to travel for similar reasons that would apply to us—to visit relatives, to go to family occasions, and so on. They must go through unpleasant procedures. A constituent——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady. The 10-minute limit is a cruel one.

Ms. Gordon: May I have half a minute to wind up?

Madam Deputy Speaker: No. I am so sorry.

7.19 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): The hon. Members for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) and for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) have dealt with specific immigration issues with which, I am sure, the whole House has a great deal of sympathy. Immigration officials should always be courteous and should never display prejudice in these matters. I join those hon. Members in getting extremely angry when officials overstep the law and the intentions of the House in administering immigration rules.

By contrast with some hon. Members, I very much welcome the Bill because it will enhance the ability of true asylum seekers to have their cases dealt with quickly and courteously. Their cases can be decided so that they can then go on to plan their lives.

The present arrangements are highly unsatisfactory. Until recently, asylum seekers had to wait upwards of five years before their cases were decided. It is cruel to keep people in total ignorance of their future for that period. Many of them are accompanied by their children who do not know when the cases will be decided, and how and where they will live in the future. The Bill, which is designed to cut the time to consider asylum cases, is welcome and necessary, and I hope that it gets on to the statute book quickly.

I will put the matter in its historical context and in the context of the present world. Traditionally, asylum seekers have been welcomed in this country because they were fleeing from a tyrannical regime in their own countries where they could confidently expect to be either badly injured or murdered. That was the sense in which we and many other countries signed the United Nations convention, and I believe that my hon. Friends are trying to implement its provisions.

It is obvious from the research that has been carried out that the provisions have been cruelly exploited by ruthless people who are determined to migrate to this country regardless of the circumstances. That has given rise to the long waiting lists which true political asylum seekers have to face. More than 50 per cent. of those interviewed as asylum seekers have been found to be already resident in this country. They have come into the country on visitors' visas. Hence the need to tighten in clauses 9 and 10 the visitors' visas regime. It is most unfortunate that we have to do that. Like the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar, I should like people to be able to visit this country and their relatives as easily as possible. However, the visitors' visas regime has been cruelly exploited and the result has been that people who subsequently decide——

Mr. Vaz: Where is the evidence?

Mr. Wells: The evidence, if the hon. Gentleman would like to see it, was given by Ministers when the previous Asylum Bill was in Committee. There is a mass of evidence to that effect. It cannot be denied that what I have said is the case. We must face the facts and we must make provision to ensure that we deal with asylum seekers fairly.

More than 50 per cent. of those seeking asylum are already resident in this country. Anybody who seeks asylum, in the traditional meaning of the word, if he is resident in this country is by definition not an asylum seeker. Anybody who is resident in this country should be debarred from seeking asylum here. Obviously, there are some exceptional circumstances in which we should consider those already resident in this country for asylum, but such circumstances would be highly exceptional and should be specified in legislation.

All that refugees seeking asylum have to do is to know the word "asylum". All that those arriving at Stansted and coming into Bishop's Stortford and the neighbouring Uttlesford district council have to do—they have been doing it in larger and larger numbers over the past six months—is to say that they are seeking asylum under the present rules. They will not only be welcomed into this country, but they will be given shelter and priority on the housing list. Indeed, they will be given housing benefit. That is causing immense resentment in my constituency and in Uttlesford district council.

The House should think again if it thinks that the phenomenon occurs only in this country. The recent attacks on immigrants' hostels in Germany have their roots in uncontrolled immigration and asylum seeking by those from eastern Europe. Such over-generosity undermines good race relations and stability, not only in this country, but in Germany and elsewhere. For that reason, the reasons for asylum seeking should be narrow and should apply to those genuinely seeking political asylum from those who would kill or molest them and their families in the countries from which they come.

It is right that we should take away from those seeking asylum the right to come to this country via a third country. If one is a true political refugee, one should seek asylum only in the country next to the one from which one is fleeing. That would demonstrate the necessity of one's cause and the need for asylum. The idea that people can fly from Sri Lanka, as Tamils did the other day, to Malaysia, to India, to Germany and then to this country to seek political asylum is nonsense and I am glad that the Bill will tighten that aspect of asylum seeking.

I draw the House's attention to the fact that the right for certain categories to appeal when visitors' visas are refused is narrowly defined. I believe that that is right because it will speed up the system and prevent the clogging of the processing of applications for asylum and for immigration.

The Bill will speed up, streamline and make more humane our present methods of processing asylum seekers, and I very much welcome and support it.

7.27 pm

Mr. Piara S. Khabra (Ealing, Southall): I oppose the Bill and I will vote against it tonight because it is a travesty of natural justice, and it is outrageously against human decency and human rights.

I represent a constituency that deals with many cases of immigration and nationality matters. I dealt with such cases as the head of one of the biggest grass-roots, democratic organisations in the country.

The Home Secretary said earlier:

"We live in a multiracial and multicultural society."

[Mr. Piara S. Khabra]

He also said that he believed in "civilised values". He knows that during the election many Ministers and senior Tory party officers visited my constituency. They talked to the Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities because they wanted their votes. They promised that they would do everything possible for them. They said, "We believe in the same values of family life that you believe in. You are hard working and you believe in the unity of the family."

It is ironic that the Government have a dismal record on immigration. That is clear from decisions taken by this and the previous Government. In 1985, visa requirements were imposed on Sri Lankans. In 1986, similar restrictions were imposed on nationals of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria. Citizens of Turkey and Haiti were added to the list in 1989. In 1990, the rules were harmonised to include citizens of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. In April 1991, Ugandans were required to obtain visas to come to this country. The despicable primary purpose rule is yet more evidence of the Government's present immigration policy.

My constituency comprises nearly 40 per cent. ethnic minority communities. I was told recently that nearly 4,000 Somalis live in my constituency. I was amused to hear the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) claim that the refugees who have come to Ealing should be dispersed to other areas in the country. He does not realise that the 4,000 Somalis live in my constituency, not in his constituency or in that of the Minister for Housing and Planning, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young).

The hon. Member for Ealing, North knows that the Tories control the town hall. They are completely unsympathetic to the refugees of ethnic minority communities. They propose a £14 million cut which will hit the ordinary people very hard. My area in particular has been hit very hard by the proposals. The Tories will pursue such policies until the elections in 1994 when we can get rid of the Tory administration in the town hall.

I welcome the fact that refugees and asylum seekers will have a right of appeal. However, I am not happy about the time limit. Many people who have visited my constituency have already made applications. They are finding it very difficult to find legal advice available in such a short period. I believe that that right will be denied to them and that they will be vulnerable to the Government's proposals.

I am not happy about fingerprinting. It has been suggested that children might be fingerprinted. If that happened, it would contravene the United Nations convention. It would be an injustice and against all human values.

I am aware of people in my constituency who have made applications to enter as visitors to visit relatives for very good reasons. For example, old men and women want to participate in weddings or some other family celebration. Asian families are close knit. The people still believe in their own culture and they want to have something to do with each other. They like to get together. However, when they make applications in Delhi to do that they encounter many difficulties and their applications are rejected; I could cite many cases to prove that.

The proposal to remove the right of appeal is despicable. The people who visit my constituency bring money into the country. They buy things to take back to India and so spend money here. Also, visitors come for social, cultural and traditional reasons. They do not come to stay permanently. Of course, I am aware that some people contravene the conditions of their stay, but that does not mean that we must punish the decent and honest citizens.

People who were refused an application in Delhi, Pakistan or elsewhere have the right to appeal. My organisation has been dealing with appeals cases and it has represented people in the adjudicators' courts. Nearly 1,700 appeals were accepted and those people had the right to come to this country. That facility was available under immigration rules but will be denied under the Bill. That is against human decency and human justice. People will be punished for nothing.

The entry clearance officers over there, who I have been told are bloody minded, already ask totally unreasonable questions. They ask applicants how many cows they have in the village or how many cows the family has. They want to know the colour of the bricks or the direction that the main door of the house faces. Those are unreasonable questions. In effect, the entry clearance officers have already decided that they will reject such applications. It is clear from the records of appeal cases that such interviews are conducted by entry clearance officers in foreign countries.

The Home Secretary said that there was a backlog of 23,000 applications. If that backlog is the reason for the removal of such a fundamental right, that is illogical. The Bill places Conservative Members in a difficult position. The two Conservative Members who represent constituencies in Ealing are present in the Chamber. They are aware of the problems that people face, but they are not as sensitive to the matter as I am——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman's time is up.

7.38 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): May I first declare an interest in that I am chairman of the Africa committee of the British Refugee Council and have held that post for a considerable number of years. Therefore, I have dealt intermittently and consistently with asylum cases.

Although I understand why we have an Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill and I spoke in the debates on the earlier Asylum Bill, I am sorry that we have confused the two issues of asylum and immigration, particularly in the long title. Many of the fears expressed across Europe and elsewhere in the world are related to immigration and not asylum.

From an analysis of the figures in this country, the people who seek asylum here come from countries where there are wars and real difficulties, but people seek to emigrate for different reasons. Immigration is a separate issue and should be handled differently from asylum. I am sorry that the two are confused. I hope that all hon. Members will try as far as they can to ensure that the two are not related in the public mind.

From my long experience of dealing with asylum seekers from Africa, I know that many people who come here have been detected by our embassies and high commissions abroad. Consulates often earmark and identify people who are genuinely politically at risk—the serious cases—and provide documents to enable them to come here, especially when there have been the sort of changes of Government that have taken place in Africa.

People who come here by other means from Ethiopia or Uganda or people who are here when there has been a change of Government abroad are, by and large, highly qualified and they seek employment. One aspect of asylum seekers which is often misunderstood is that they do not seek to stay here. They want to be here temporarily until whatever has happened in their country changes—until the war finishes or a more acceptable regime comes to power—and then they go back. I know of many happy occasions when Ugandan refugees—who have been here more than once as that sad country has gone through different regimes—have returned home.

I know of such a case at the moment. An Ethiopian, whom I was able to help in the short term because of changes in his country, has now been satisfied by his family and the Ethiopian ambassador that—in spite of the steps which he has taken to apply for asylum—it is safe for him to return to Ethiopia. He is going back willingly because that is his country and that is where he can make his contribution.

We all recognise that some asylum cases are manifestly unfounded and that they need to be dealt with quickly and efficiently. During the passage of the Asylum Bill last year, Conservative Members applied pressure on the issue of secondary appeals and I am grateful that that has been worked out in this Bill.

I have listened carefully to Opposition Members' speeches. We must take care that we do not narrow asylum to the definition in the 1951 convention. The world has changed a great deal since then. My colleagues in the Home Office have exercised the right of exceptional leave to remain on more than one occasion. It requires the wisdom of Solomon. We all know of cases which could not be narrowly defined as asylum cases under the 1951 convention but which, in all humanity, required help and assistance.

I hope that we are not shutting out exceptional leave to remain, which is difficult to define. I have often wondered whether we should redefine refugees and asylum seekers, but I recognise that that would be incredibly difficult to do internationally. We must retain in our system the humanity to deal with cases when exceptional leave to remain for a short time could be helpful.

When we talk about numbers, I feel concerned. I am humbled at the number of refugees taken in by poor countries such as Malawi and Kenya. At one stage, southern Sudan took in refugees from Uganda. If we translated those numbers to our situation, it would mean taking in hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of refugees. It is incumbent upon us to be helpful to asylum seekers and those in need of exceptional leave to remain and to ensure that we give the maximum possible assistance to countries with far fewer resources than ours—countries which have to deal with far greater refugee problems.

We should be able to deal with fingerprinting sensibly. I see no reason why people should be fingerprinted because they are seeking asylum, unless they have destroyed their documents. If they have done so, for whatever reason, they need some form of identification. That problem could be dealt with by ruling that people would not be fingerprinted as a matter of course but only if they had no proper identification.

I share Opposition Members' anxieties about clause 9. If we take away the right of appeal for people who have asked for their families to visit for legitimate and sensible reasons, we must do more to the mechanism at the other end where people apply. Those of my constituents who seek leave to appeal do not do so because they are not clued in to the fact that if the appeal takes place a year after the wedding it is no good. They appeal out of a sense of resentment. Their families have been accused of being guilty of some crime and they want to clear their name. People who issue wedding invitations are more likely to be resentful than some of the people refused the opportunity to come to Britain. Not everyone views coming to Britain as a great prospect, especially if it is winter.

I have constantly suggested that we should study people who issue invitations for family functions and judge their credibility and position in society. I have never been let down in my constituency experience, and I have been bitterly resentful when constituents have been let down because their relatives have not been able to come here for a family occasion.

However hard one tries, it is difficult to find a genuine reason for the refusals. I heard it suggested that some people had been refused entry because they had not sent in their documents. I discovered that there was a preliminary procedure when people looked at the documents and said, "You haven't got a chance, don't bother to submit these." When their documents were faxed to me and submitted from this end of the system, I was told that the case would be considered.

This is not the end of the matter. If we refuse leave to appeal through a complicated legal system, we must find a better mechanism to be just to families who want relatives to join them for family occasions—something that we would think of as normal.

7.46 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). If only he were the Home Secretary piloting the Bill through the House, perhaps its clauses would be different and we would have much to agree about.

There is a clock in the office of the Minister with responsibility for immigration—an office which was once occupied by the Minister of State at the Home Office, who is sitting on the Government Front Bench. The hands of the clock are stuck at a particular time—I think that it is 4 o'clock. Whenever I visit the Minister the clock remains at the same time. The clock, like the Government's immigration policy, is stuck in a time warp, which appeals to the prejudices and fears of a section of the community in Britain.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is mistaken. He always comes to see me at 4 o'clock in time for tea and thinks that the clock has stopped. It is his interest in a cup of tea which is responsible for the clock always showing that time.

Mr. Vaz: I shall take up the Minister's challenge and visit him about another case tomorrow at 5 o'clock and find out what time the clock shows.

The prejudice to which the Bill appeals is typical of Conservative Governments. In 1987, when I was first elected to the House, the Immigration Bill was one of the first pieces of legislation tabled by the Government. I

[Mr. Vaz]

served with my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on the Standing Committee of that Bill. The then Home Secretary, who is now the Foreign Secretary, told the House that that Bill was being tabled to provide a better customer service. If the Home Secretary was the managing director of Marks and Spencer and was providing a customer service, would he still be in a job?

Our immigration service has been in a shambles and a crisis for the past 13 years. Even the Select Committee on Home Affairs, of which I was a member until recently, produced an all-party report which described the shambles at Lunar house when 250,000 unopened letters were discovered some years ago. It is a measure of concern about problems which are indicative of the Government's immigration policy that one of the last debates of the Home Affairs Select Committee with which I was involved concerned a proposal to set up a subcommittee on immigration and nationality. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) is to be a member of that subcommittee, because I have felt for many years that it is extremely important for the House and the Select Committee to take a keen interest in immigration and nationality.

It is typical of a Conservative Government to try to rush through such a controversial and outrageous piece of legislation as this in the first year of their parliamentary term. It is typical of them to have done so in such a brazen way as that adopted by the Home Secretary. It is as if the Government believe that they are introducing the Bill to benefit people in this country and in some way to appease some unknown section of the community that is demanding tough new immigration and asylum procedures.

There is much to disagree about in the Bill and if I were to go through every single clause, many of which have already been mentioned, I and the House would be here all night. I am conscious of the fact that I only have a few minutes to speak and in that time I should like to refer to the clause concerning the removal of the right of appeal in visitors' cases.

It must be obvious to the Minister of State that there is concern on both sides of the House about that proposal. When the Minister with responsibility for immigration returns from his supper and replies to the debate, I hope that he will address himself not only to the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and others but those raised by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and the hon. Member for Broxtowe, because those people speak with the experience gained from working with immigration cases.

Each week at my constituency surgery I deal with 60 new immigration cases, half of which are directly concerned with refusals of visitors' visas. Of course people want to go through the appeal process because they feel that it is vital that they should. I encourage them to do so because I believe that that is the only way in which we can check and double check on the actions of entry clearance officers.

We have already heard what entry clearance officers do when they interview people, some of whom travel from distant parts of the sub-continent to get there. If they are refused a visa they must then send in an appeal form. Those people must wait up to nine months before an explanatory statement is sent from Bombay or Islamabad to the Home Office in London. They have to wait a further three months for the statement to go from the Home Office to the immigration tribunal. They then have to wait for up to a further six months until a date is fixed for their hearing. Those delays are the cause of the backlog of 23,000 cases. Insufficient resources have been allocated to the immigration tribunal to deal with the problem. If the explanatory statement was sent from Bombay, Islamabad or New Delhi in a time acceptable to all, the backlog would simply not exist because people would be able to make their appeal in the proper way.

I appreciate that Ministers and the Government believe that if they take away the right of appeal, the backlog will disappear. However, I assure them that that means that constituents will lobby their Members of Parliament and that those hon. Members will write not just to the migration and visa correspondence unit—the convenient place where Ministers have now asked us to send our correspondence—but straight to Ministers. We will expect a speedy answer from them.

I do not hold a shadow Front Bench position, but I am prepared to do a deal with the Minister, and, if he is in the mood, I hope that he will accept my bargain. If he restores the right of Members of Parliament to intervene in immigration cases, and if every person refused admission on a visitor's visa is allowed to come into this country if their Member of Parliament intervenes so that that visit can take place—it will cost the taxpayer absolutely nothing —I am prepared to support his call for the removal of the right of appeal. If he accepts my offer, the Member of Parliament would still be able to ensure that cases are monitored and a proper result is achieved.

I accept that such a deal would result in a lot more work for hon. Members, but I am prepared to take on such a work load because I am sick of people visiting my constituency surgery, many of them weeping and suffering from deep anxiety and distress, because close relatives have been refused admission for a wedding or to visit members of their family.

It was an outrage for the Minister of State to turn up at the temple in Newham and to talk to members of the community as though he were their friend. He appealed to them about their involvement in British society, but in the same month he restricted the rights of that community's relatives to come to this country. He refused relatives the right to visit the very people in the temple at Brent to whom he was trying to appeal and appease. That is an outrage and I promise him and the Home Secretary——

Mr. Peter Lloyd *rose*——

Mr. Vaz: I will not give way.

I will follow the Minister and the Home Secretary around the country—I hope that other hon. Members will do the same—and when they turn up at places of worship and pretend to be friends of the community, I will point out what they seek to do under the Bill.

After the Bill becomes law—I very much hope that that will not happen—what will be the next thing the Government introduce to restrict the rights of people coming into this country? That is my greatest fear. Recently I re-read Enoch Powell's speech of 28 April 1968. I am proud that the country has been able to progress as it has in the past 24 years. I fear that Bills of this nature will set the nation back and create even more prejudices than they seek to avert.

7.55 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I spoke against this Bill's predecessor when it came before the House in November last year and again in January. I am sorry to see that the present version shows little improvement, if any, on the original one. Hon. Members will recall that the Government tried to rush through the original Bill before the general election was called in April. Although there is no such pressure on the Government at present, they are rushing the Bill through again without due time for consideration. That in itself is a matter for great regret.

I have listened to the entire debate and it is noticeable that a number of Conservative Members, including the hon. Members for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths), for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) and for Harborough (Mr. Garnier), made great play of the fact that clause 2 mentions the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees. They did not tell us—I hope that the Minister will do so when he replies—that it is impossible to reconcile a commitment to that convention with the fact that clause 11 puts the onus on airlines and shipping companies, on pain of fines, to prevent potential asylum seekers from travelling to this country. It may not be widely known that fines totalling £40 million were levied on shipping and airline companies in 1991 as a result of their contravention of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987. That illustrates the scale of the problem and the extent to which the Government are shifting the burden of dealing with the problem on to airline and shipping companies. That is entirely wrong.

By preventing political refugees from leaving their country of origin to seek asylum the Government are denying them justice and are in breach of the 1951 convention. The Government have not addressed that specific important issue. It is also important to note that paragraphs 6 and 7 of the draft immigration rules issued with the Bill state:

> "In determining an asylum application the Secretary of State will have regard to matters, which, if no reasonable explanation is adduced, may damage an asylum applicant's credibility. Among such matters are . . . that the applicant has made false representations, either orally or in writing. That the applicant has destroyed, damaged or disposed of any passport, other document or ticket relevant to his claim."

Those conditions are in direct contravention of article 31 of the United Nations convention, which, according to clause 2, the Government are prepared to stand by. That article accepts that asylum seekers may, in certain cases, be required to disguise their intentions, or indeed their identity, in order to reach safety from their country.

How do Conservative Members, or indeed the Minister, reconcile that with the commitment in clause 2? We might well ask why the European convention on human rights is not included in clause 2 because the immigration rules contravene article 3 of it which forbids the expulsion of people to a territory where they may be tortured. That is precisely what may happen—my hon. Friends and I believe that it will—if this squalid Bill is introduced. There is more to it than the Government would have us believe.

I hope that the Minister will answer those points. Unless the Bill is amended as we suggest, the Government will be in contravention of both conventions to which I referred. They will then be vilified much more widely than merely by Opposition Members.

Clause 3 contains the scandalous proposal to fingerprint people who have made an asylum claim. That is a basic and fundamental breach of human rights. Not only those who may apply for asylum after the Bill becomes law but those who applied before the Bill was even drafted will be fingerprinted. It is a restrospective measure which further exacerbates the iniquitous nature of the clause.

Those who fail to comply with the requirement to be fingerprinted under clause 3 will be criminalised. It will be assumed that they are guilty and that they have made a bogus application. At present, the only people who can be fingerprinted under the law in Britain are those who have been charged with an imprisonable offence. The measure breaks entirely new ground and for that reason it is worrying. It is not—at least not yet—a criminal offence to apply for asylum in Britain, but it will become so if the Bill becomes law. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may tut, but that is the thrust of the Bill. If people do not provide fingerprints, they will be treated the same as those who are guilty of a criminal offence. If that is not the case, I challenge Conservative Members to gainsay it.

The Government suggest that there is a danger of multiple applications for asylum or of unspecified benefit fraud. The Home Secretary failed to give evidence of the problem and why it was necessary for individuals to be fingerprinted. It is alarmist to suggest that there will be multiple applications or, indeed, fraud. The measure is more likely to engender animosity towards asylum seekers. Even more iniquitously, families, wives and children will also be subjected to fingerprinting. The implication is that they are out to defraud Britain. Automatically, they are required to prove their innocence. If they do not, they are treated as guilty.

The provision to apply undue weight to a failure to report for fingerprinting is equally lacking in natural justice. Failure to report for fingerprinting may be taken into account and used when reaching a decision. It is separate from the decision and from the merits of the case whether the individual who seeks asylum has submitted himself to fingerprinting. That underlines that the Government, their supporters and those who were involved in drafting the Bill fundamentally failed to grasp what is involved when many of the people who approach our shores seek asylum.

As my hon. Friends said earlier, it is not possible for people to queue at the embassy in their country of origin to ask for an exit visa. Equally, it may not be possible for individuals who seek asylum to submit themselves to fingerprinting. They almost certainly have suffered at the hands of the authorities in their country. They may mistrust people in authority. They certainly will not find it easy to subject themselves to human rights abuses, which they seek to escape. That shows a lack of understanding on the part of the Government. The Home Secretary and Conservative Back Benchers live in a different world from those of us who deal regularly with asylum and immigration cases.

Clause 3 is just one of the clauses that fail to identify the priorities which I suggest any advanced society should exhibit to people who flee persecution or who simply wish to visit relatives already resident in the United Kingdom.

[Mr. Mike Watson]

I have many members of the ethnic minority community in my constituency. Many of the cases with which I deal involve visitors. Families who come to me because they cannot bring relatives into this country suffer great anguish. Yet the Government propose to make that more difficult, first, by denying people appeals and, secondly, by tainting those people for ever and preventing them from coming to Britain at a later date.

I quote two figures. In 1991, some 8,000 appeals were made on behalf of people seeking entry visas. Some 1,700 of those appeals were successful. That is precisely the type of people who will be denied the right to enter Britain if the Bill becomes law in its present form. I and many others will seek to ensure that it does not. The Committee stage offers us the opportunity to so so. For the sake of the reputation of the Government and of our country in the broader community, and especially the United Nations—in the context of the convention to which I referred—I hope that the Government will take on board the points that I have made and realise that they are out of tune with what people are entitled to expect from the Government. I hope that they will amend the Bill accordingly.

8.4 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in the debate. I apologise profusely to the House for not being here earlier because I had to attend to other parliamentary business. I am aware that Opposition Members have been waiting a considerable time to speak. I shall endeavour not to detain them too long.

Some Opposition Members, including the hon. Members for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), are aware of my interest in immigration matters. I was privileged to serve on the Committee which considered the previous Bill, before it fell because the general election was called. That Bill had my support. It will not surprise the House to know that, having reconsidered the arguments, the new Bill also has my support.

As a member of the Home Affairs Select Committee before the dissolution of the previous Parliament, I was privileged, along with some other hon. Members present this evening, to visit the then east German-Polish border and the Italian frontier. My colleagues and I saw for ourselves the scale of the problem of emigration from the former Soviet Union and from northern Africa into Italy and, therefore, into the European Community. It became apparent to all of us who took part in the exercise that a problem existed on a scale with which Europe has not had to deal for a long time.

Germany is introducing measures to control immigration and tighten up its asylum procedures, which are currently prolonged. Other countries in the European Community—not just the United Kingdom—find it necessary to address this matter. If we do not do so, we will see more of the abhorrent incidents that we witnessed in southern Germany recently. They have been described as neo-nazism but are simply racism by whatever name. We all find that abhorrent.

I studied the previous Bill in great detail. I was satisfied that, broadly speaking, it satisfied the ends that we wished to achieve. Any Bill can be improved by fine-tuning in Committee and I am sure that the new Bill will be. Our ends were to speed the process of granting asylum for the genuine political asylum seeker and to ensure that fraudulent abuse of the procedure was prevented as far as possible, given a humane approach.

As a constituency Member of Parliament, I have dealt —as I am sure other hon. Members have done—with two types of asylum case. The first is that of the genuine asylum seeker, which we have staunchly sought to promote. The second is the case of those whom we have represented to the best of our ability because we represent our constituencies, but we have done so in the fairly certain knowledge that they have sought to abuse the system. I am thinking of students who live in Britain for some years yet who, when the time comes to return home, suddenly choose to claim asylum. I regard that as an abuse of the system.

I have had to reconsider one issue in the light of personal experience. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) made a plea when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary was briefly absent and the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), was on the Front Bench. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe stressed the need to give great consideration to exceptional need to remain and to a careful definition of the manner in which we applied our asylum rules.

I have had two recent cases. The first was a family who fled what was Yugoslavia to their only known relative and safe haven in the United Kingdom. It was a powerful case. The family's grandparents had been murdered by the Nazis during the war and the parents were murdered during the current disturbances in what was Yugoslavia. They were left with nowhere to go, except to one relative who happened to live in my constituency. I was pleased that, with enormous help from my hon. Friend the Minister and his Department, as well as considerable help from the Foreign Office, that family was able to obtain a safe haven in this country. It was absolutely correct that they should be able to do so. It is a slightly moot point as to whether, under the rigid convention, they were political refugees. I was most impressed by the manner in which the immigration service, the Home Office and the Foreign Office exercised compassionate judgment.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows that my wife and I have been involved to some extent in the plight of Romanian refugees. One case is that of a young man, now 18, whose family home burnt down when he was about 15. His parents disappeared, believed shot, under the Ceausescu regime. His sisters were placed in a convent and he and his brothers were placed in an orphanage from which he escaped. He made his way overland to Germany, where he was resident and seeking asylum for 18 months.

The young man found himself on the receiving end of neo-Nazi persecution. Not entirely surprisingly, he got out of Germany as fast as possible. Following a bizarre set of circumstances, he ended up on our shores and he is currently seeking asylum. If experience is anything to go by, I have no doubt that the Home Office will be sympathetic to his case, and I hope and believe that he will be given leave to remain in this country. I appreciate the sympathetic manner with which the immigration services at Dover handled that case.

I see that the hon. Member for Leicester, East has returned to the Chamber following his departure on what was, I am sure, parliamentary business. I find it sad that someone who I know pays diligent attention to his constituents' needs and to immigration generally thought it necessary to attack my hon. Friend the Minister, who has given sympathetic attention to such matters over many years.

I shall most certainly support the Bill, which I believe to be necessary. In the interests both of good relations in this country and of genuine asylum seekers, I hope that the Bill's provisions will be tempered in future, as they have in the past, with the sympathetic and individual consideration of every case.

8.13 pm

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The issue of asylum and its possible denial is of particular concern to my constituents. Hampstead and Highgate, in common with many other parts of the country, has played an historic role in providing a haven for those fleeing war and tyranny. In the late 18th century my constituency was home to many refugees fleeing the French revolution's reign of terror. Some 200 years later it provided sanctuary for those members of the Jewish community escaping the scourge of fascism that was enveloping Europe. It now offers home to, among others, refugees from the African continent and eastern Europe. I am proud of my constituency's record in providing a home for those seeking asylum, as are those whom I represent and, I believe, the vast majority of people in the country.

When the Bill's forerunner was introduced immediately prior to the last election I believe its purpose was clear. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) that, by attempting to blur the separate issues of asylum and immigration, the Government tried to introduce a note of racism. Governments facing electoral difficulty often evoke the image of the enemy without to divert attention from problems at home. It is a matter of deep regret that the House was not spared the Bill's reintroduction. In a multi-cultural society it is no longer acceptable to portray the arrival on our shores of those with different nationalities and racial origins as a threat that must be opposed tooth and nail.

If the Government had an impeccable record on discharging their obligation to those seeking asylum, one might be prepared to entertain their argument that the Bill's sole purpose was to distinguish quickly and fairly between those genuinely afraid and in danger of persecution and those who are not. However, the Bill is being introduced by a Government who have already, within existing legislation, returned a number of genuine asylum seekers to imprisonment, torture and, in some cases, death. Therefore, for the Government to ask the House for powers to restrict further the ability of people to seek refuge within these islands is little short of incredible.

I shall list some of the legislation to which we, as hon. Members, are being asked to accede. We are being asked to provide the Home Secretary with the power to fingerprint those guilty of no crime and those who are not even suspected of crime. We are being asked to provide the Home Secretary with powers to fingerprint children and even babies. We are being asked to provide the Home Secretary with the power to

"take such steps as may be reasonably necessary"

to force an asylum seeker to provide his or her fingerprints. What is the definition of reasonable steps? Is that how those fleeing persecution are to be greeted when they enter the United Kingdom?

We are being asked to remove local authorities from their obligation to house those asylum seekers deemed to have access to

"any accommodation, however temporary, which it would be reasonable . . . to occupy".

What is the definition of "reasonable"? The Government deem it reasonable to leave hundreds of their own citizens to sleep in cardboard boxes on the streets. It is disgraceful for the Government to attempt to blame asylum seekers for the appalling housing shortage as the Government could and should have tackled the housing shortage years ago.

The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) said that his local authority found it very difficult to provide housing, but every local authority within the London district is experiencing that problem. This nation is a signatory to the United Nations convention; the problem is a national one, and central Government should help local authorities that still have—as I believe they should—the responsibility at the sharp end to house those granted asylum.

The right of appeal is something of which the Government would seem to be proud. In their booklet "Guidance to Members of Parliament" the Government boast:

"Britain is the only nation in the world to offer a statutory right of appeal over refusal of entry from abroad".

However, they are now asking the House to remove that right. The Government seek to destroy all that makes this country unique and special. That will have direct consequences for those who genuinely seek asylum because, as the Foreign Secretary said, the majority of asylum applications are made by people who are already in this country on a genuine and properly documented basis but who, due to a change in the circumstances of their home country, are unwilling or afraid to return.

I have referred to some of the powers that the House is being asked to confer on the Home Secretary under the Bill. One of the most disturbing aspects of Government policy towards asylum and immigration is the amount of power already exercised by the Home Secretary. Clause 11 of the Bill amends the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 to

"provide that the Secretary of State may by order require persons of a description specified in the order to hold a visa if they wish to pass through the United Kingdom en route to another country."

Last week I was contacted by one of my constituents who wished to meet for a couple of hours with his sister-in-law—a Sri Lankan national—who was passing through the United Kingdom en route to South Africa. When I contacted the immigration officers at Heathrow I was informed that such a meeting would not be possible as Sri Lankan nationals require a visa even if they wish to pass through the United Kingdom en route to another country.

While the House is being asked to vote on whether to confer powers on the Home Secretary, he is already exercising them. Presumably, if the House votes against conferring those powers on the Home Secretary, he will still continue to exercise them freely. Therefore, I ask the Minister who is to respond to the debate to give the House an assurance that he will suspend the visa restriction on

[Ms. Glenda Jackson]

those nationals currently passing en route to other destinations until the legislation is either passed or, as I hope and believe, defeated.

If this Bill is defeated and the House refuses to grant the powers that the Home Secretary is requesting—even though he is already exercising them—I ask for an assurance that the visa restriction be immediately dropped. Asylum is about providing sanctuary from tyranny and oppression. This Bill returns people to tyranny and oppression. It stands in total opposition to everything that the House has always represented and, I believe, always will represent. It has no place here.

8.20 pm

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): During the course of this debate Conservative Members have spoken of the asylum record of this country. They have said that Great Britain provided a refuge for the Huguenot community and later for the Jewish community —in which case I have personal experience. My great-grandparents were asylum seekers who came to this country. They sought asylum at the beginning of the century from the pogroms in Russia and from anti-semitism in Poland. Were they here today, they would be delighted to learn that their great-granddaughter had been elected to the House of Commons, but they would be appalled by the fact that we were debating a Bill of this nature.

There is a sense of revulsion against the Bill, not just in communities that have come here from elsewhere but among the people of Britain. My post bag is full of letters from constituents who feel that sense of revulsion.

The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) put the Bill in its correct context: the majority of the world's refugees seek sanctuary in their own regions. Most of them come from countries in the south and they seek refuge in neighbouring—often poor—countries. Only about 5 per cent. of the world's estimated 17·5 million refugees try to come to Europe. In Somalia one person in six is a refugee; in Britain, the figure is only one in 5,500. That puts the debate in perspective.

We can, therefore, discount the Government's suggestion that the Bill is being introduced to create a fairer system. It is clearly not about that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) rightly said, the Bill is about diverting attention from the catastrophic economic difficulties in which the Government find themselves—and they are taking it out on the most vulnerable people who are seeking refuge in this country.

Why has there been such an outcry if this is such a fair system? When the Bill last came before the House and then had to be dropped because of the election it was hoped that the Government would talk to all the interested organisations. Have they? Have they spoken to Shelter, to SHAC—the Shelter Housing Aid Centre—to the Refugee Council, to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants? Have they spoken to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or to the Board of Deputies of British Jews, or to the church groups?

As Amnesty International has said:

> "It is a matter of deep regret . . . that the Government has failed to use the opportunity provided by the shelving of the Asylum Bill to engage in . . . dialogue".

The Bill proposes that fingerprints be taken from people who seek asylum here. No wonder there is such a feeling of outrage. To what end will the fingerprints be taken? Who will have access to them; to whom will the information be passed? The Bill is silent on these points.

The 1951 Geneva convention obliges the Government to accord to refugees

> "lawfully staying in their territory the same treatment with respect to public relief and assistance as is accorded to their nationals".

Is it not an absolute disgrace that we have been presented with proposals on housing and fingerprinting which will break that convention?

Why do the Government want to keep these fingerprints for 10 years? If a person is refused asylum or leave to remain, is that to disqualify him or her from applying again in new circumstances—new persecution, new threats to life? Cannot these factors be considered when a person applies a second time? There is a strong feeling in this country that fingerprints should be taken only in exceptionally serious circumstances. That has been enshrined in our law, and it is why these proposals have been greeted with such outrage by so many.

Opposition Members have already spoken of the indignity that will befall asylum seekers. Having gone through the process of fingerprinting they then face the new restriction on the right of appeal. The Secretary of State and other Conservative Members have told us that, although a fair appeals process is necessary for the people of this country, we should apply lesser standards to others.

Let us examine the way in which visitors to this country are treated. Last year, 1,726 such people won their appeals. Some of them were my constituents. I agree with hon. Friends who have told us why it is essential that the right to appeal should remain. Recently a constituent of mine was refused, at first sight, entry to this country to spend a holiday because when she had come here a couple of years before she had said at first that she would stay for a month. Subsequently given six months to stay, she quite properly left after five, but when she returned she was told that that was a reason to deny her. Was she to have no right to appeal against this stain on her character and on her immigration history?

Amnesty International's document "Towards a Credible Asylum Process" suggests some positive principles:

> "if each applicant is given a complete personal interview by the official responsible for the determination of the asylum claim, his or her credibility can be fairly assessed . . . a competent interviewer with expert knowledge of current conditions in the applicant's country of origin should be able to make a correct and fair determination promptly."

That does not happen, and nothing in this legislation will bring it about.

If Britain is to live up to its obligations under the United Nations convention on refugees, we must have a just asylum system. As long as there is conflict or abuse of human rights throughout the world, people will apply for asylum and rightly so. Unless we deal with these applications fairly and thoroughly we run the risk of sending people back to countries where they may be tortured or where they may face death. This Bill makes that risk palpable for many asylum seekers as well as creating terrible difficulties for people seeking to visit their families or to study in this country. I urge hon. Members to oppose it.

8.28 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): This quite short Bill contains perhaps only nine clauses covering substantive issues. It would be difficult to find a Bill containing so few clauses which packs in so much obnoxious and discriminatory material. The Bill sets out to attack some of the most vulnerable people. It discriminates against them, harasses them and, above all, seeks to get them out of the country. The public approach of the Government, as we have heard in the debate, is to brand asylum seekers as liars and as bogus. They say that such people are economic refugees and play the numbers game. The Secretary of State said that there were 500,000 or possibly 750,000 refugees in Europe. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) about the need to take a broader view.

The vast majority of the world's 18 million refugees are not in Europe and, of those who are, relatively few are in the United Kingdom. Most refugees are in the poorest countries. It is a dreadful commentary on the way that the so-called civilised world responds to its duties under the UN convention and its moral responsibilities that a country such as Ethiopia, which has gone through a great deal in the past decade, has to play host to several hundred thousand Somali refugees—and it gets little help to deal with the problem.

Several hon. Members have spoken about the Home Secretary's comments on exceptional leave to remain. It is plain that the Government consider that people given exceptional leave to remain are not worthy of asylum and are not covered by the 1951 convention. The Home Secretary said that exceptional leave was given because the time taken on decisions and delays meant that it would be unreasonable to remove people from the country. My experience and that of many people who deal with asylum seekers and casework is that it is extremely difficult to see the logic of past decisions. Often people who are given exceptional leave to remain have genuine fears of persecution.

It is difficult to follow Home Office logic in deciding who should be chosen for asylum status and who should be chosen for exceptional leave to remain. I recently dealt with the case of two Sri Lankan asylum seekers. Both had been in the same prison in Sri Lanka, both had been tortured and both arrived here and applied for asylum. One was granted asylum and the other was given exceptional leave to remain, although it is impossible to find a distinction between the two. I fear that under the Bill exceptional leave will become a refusal, the refusal rate will go up and more and more people at risk will be deported.

I should like to concentrate on the Bill's housing clauses which are a catalogue of discrimination. The Commission for Racial Equality takes the view that they contradict the Race Relations Act 1976. It is the first time for many years that a specific group of people will be singled out for lesser housing entitlement because of the nature of their case and their race and country. The Bill introduces discrimination to what is now—I was about to say fair, but the legislation could not be described as fair—the practice of treating everybody under the same set of rules.

When some people—not all—go to the housing departments of local authorities, they will be asked to prove their status. Those who will be asked for passports will inevitably be non-white and appear to have a foreign accent and a foreign name. That is how many local authority housing officers will set about establishing whether someone is an asylum seeker. Not only asylum seekers but black people going to housing offices will be affected.

Mr. Corbyn: The related problem is that the information held by local authority housing departments could be passed to oppressive regimes which could then seek retribution against their relatives.

Mr. Gerrard: I agree. That was mentioned earlier. The Government should state that there will be confidentiality and, if necessary, table amendments to make sure that that is the case.

The Bill specifically overrides the homelessness legislation and directly contradicts the homelessness guidance code which was issued only last year by the Government. The Bill does not even say that an asylum seeker has to be occupying property but simply says that there should be available accommodation which the local authority thinks might be reasonable. It specifically says "however temporary". That might be accommodation that is available for just one or two days. That means that asylum seekers will have to be on the streets before they are considered homeless.

Even when asylum is granted, there is more discrimination because the asylum seeker is sent back to square one and is reassessed by the housing authority as if he had never been dealt with before. That raises the possibility of someone who had applied for asylum six months before being accepted as a person in priority need. For example, under the Bill, a woman who is five months pregnant might have her application determined six months later. If in the meantime she has lost the child, she no longer qualifies for priority need. What is the local authority expected to do? The legislation implies that she will be evicted.

I have not heard any justification for that nasty little piece of discrimination, the 12-month wait for secure or assured tenancy. Why should people be kicked out after they have been granted asylum? Housing pressures, shortages and queues are caused not by asylum seekers but by the Government's failure to invest. I agree with Conservative Members who spoke about the need for extra resources for local authorities that have to deal with asylum seekers. I have been on delegations which met Ministers on precisely that point.

We object to the Bill and will campaign and vote against it because it will lead to people living in squalor on the streets. People will be sent back to prison and torture and many will die. When those things happen, we shall remind everyone who votes for the Bill.

8.37 pm

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was right when he described the Bill and its forerunner as squalid pieces of legislation. Conservative Members would have us believe that good community and race relations depend upon restrictive immigration policies. The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) attributed the fact that Britain does not have a powerful National Front party to the imposition of strict immigration controls. The decline of the National Front owes more to the swamping speech by the former Prime Minister, which led to members of the National Front

[Mr. John Austin-Walker]

leaving in droves to support the Conservative party, than to any immigration or asylum policy. Who needs the National Front or a Le Pen in this country when we have the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker)?

My hon. Friends the Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) were right to say that the Bill and especially its forerunner were used during the general election to fan the flames of racism. I agree with the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) that it is entirely wrong to introduce to an asylum Bill the whole question of immigration because the two issues are clearly separate. To combine them is to confuse the issue.

The Opposition recognise that there is a need for a process to deal with asylum applications. It must be based on the 1951 United Nations convention on human rights and it must contain an automatic right of appeal, with the time and facilities to prepare a case. The Bill does not fulfil those requirements. The way in which it drags in immigration law is squalid.

I opposed the Immigration Act 1971, but the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) had no intention of using that Act to stop people coming here to visit their families or to attend weddings, funerals, religious ceremonies and family get-togethers, or to take away from any applicant to be a visitor the right of appeal against an arbitrary decision of an immigration or entry clearance officer. As other hon. Members have pointed out, the strength of any appeals system lies not only in the right of redress for the aggrieved or wronged but in the fact that it acts as a control on arbitrary decision-making by officials. Those who know that their decisions may be subject to appeal are likely to behave differently from those who know that their appeals are not subject to appeal, scrutiny, challenge or review.

Under the present appeals system for visitors entering the country, 20 per cent. of those whose applications are refused are subsequently accepted, on appeal, as genuine visitors. That is 1,700 a year unjustly refused entry, and if the Bill becomes law, they will have no justice.

The Home Secretary said that we do not need an elaborate appeals system for visitors because visits are not a question of life or death. However, people often come to visit a terminally ill relative. They may be grandparents coming for the birth of a grandchild. They may be coming to a daughter's wedding. These may not be the matters of life or death of which we think when we debate asylum, but they are matters of life for the community and they are an essential part of the community's life. The vivid pictures painted by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook and my hon. Friends the Members for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) and for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) of the way in which the Conservative party, which claims to be the party of family life actually divides families, show how squalid is this Bill.

Tory Members say that we should beware of economic refugees, but the Government and their immigration officials assume that anybody coming from a country with a lower standard of living must be attempting to enter by deception. If that is not the assumption, why is it that of white visitors from America, Australia or Canada, one in 2,000 are refused entry, while one in 50 visitors from Jamaica are refused entry? Why is a visitor 40 times more likely to be refused entry to visit relatives if he is black than if he is white? Despite that statistic, the right of appeal will be taken away by this squalid Bill.

Some urgent reforms could have been brought into an asylum Bill if immigration matters are to be included in it. It is not only in other countries that people face violence and oppression. The immigration laws trap many women in violent marital relationships. If the Government wanted to relieve oppression, they could have changed the law to free such women, allowing them to escape without the fear of deportation.

Another omission is any reference to unaccompanied children, a problem that the Government would address if they were truly concerned about genuine refugees. The Bill offers nothing to such children or to the local authorities that are trying to cope with their arrival. The Government have manifestly failed to establish facilities to support them, and have attended only as observers the various meetings set up to try to provide those resources. All that the Bill offers child refugees is the chance to be fingerprinted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) outlined the problems that will occur in housing. He mentioned the clause that refers to

"accommodation, however temporary, which it would be reasonable for him to occupy".

I have recently returned from visiting Bosnian refugee camps in Slovenia where I saw some of the former military barracks and prisons in which refugees are temporarily accommodated. Is that the kind of accommodation that would relieve a local authority of the obligation to respond to the needs of refugees within its community? If there is a spare space on a church floor, does that absolve the local authority of any responsibility under the Housing Act 1985?

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow was right to say that the operation of the clause will force local authorities into breaches of the Race Relations Act 1976, and to point out the impact that it will have on black residents as local authorities try to establish whether the people applying for accommodation are asylum seekers. It will introduce the immigration checks and passport controls that he outlined and will bring in a system that is contrary to the code of guidance issued to local authorities and to the statutory code of practice on rented housing. In effect, it is the criminalisation of the black community.

The Bill will also impose a problem for those authorities that are attempting to carry out their housing functions without discrimination. That may not be important to the Westminsters and Tower Hamlets, but it is important to Labour boroughs. This squalid Bill will worsen race relations rather than improve them.

Tory Members say that asylum seekers should seek asylum in the countries closest to their country or in the regions from which they come. If that is the Government's policy, they have a responsibility to provide those countries with the resources that will allow them to cope with the influx of immigrants and asylum seekers. For example, in Slovenia, 7 per cent. of the population are refugees from Bosnia and surrounding countries, but the Government are doing nothing to provide support, help or heating for the refugee camps in which people will die this winter.

This squalid Bill does not address the needs of the asylum seekers. It confuses the issue by including immigration matters, and the House should throw it out.

8.47 pm

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): In my maiden speech in May, I pledged to fight against the reintroduction of the discriminatory, racist and unjust asylum proposals that had been introduced in the previous Parliament. I regret, having read the Bill in detail, that there are so many bad clauses and ill-thought-out proposals in it. My constituency contains a large number of people whose parents or grandparents came as refugees from Nazi oppression. Had the Bill been enacted then, they would not have been able to seek refuge and safety in Ilford. I am appalled by some of the remarks that I have heard from Tory Members.

This is a strange Bill. There are two aspects to it. Why is it that tucked into the middle of an asylum Bill is clause 9, which removes the right of appeal for visitors? There is no logic in that. I suspect that it is there for the simple reason that some Conservative Members are unable to distinguish between immigration and asylum. Basically, they think that it is all to do with keeping as many foreigners as possible, especially those with black skins, out of the country.

Unfortunately, there is not likely to be a rebellion by Conservative Members. None the less, I appeal to all liberal, fair-minded Conservative Members with a conscience—unfortunately, I can see only three Conservative Members sitting in their places—to vote against the Bill's Second Reading. I am not appealing to the rabid nationalists who, no doubt for their own reasons, will rebel later this week. Instead, I appeal to all Conservative Members with a conscience to join the Opposition when the Division takes place.

The Bill is obnoxious and outrageous. It will cause so much suffering to so many people that it must be stopped. There are Kurdish refugees in my constituency with bodies riddled with bullets. They come to see me in wheel-chairs. Some of them have artificial limbs. They were shot up by Saddam Hussein.

A Christian Iraqi—an opponent of Saddam—came to see me a few weeks ago. He has been in the country for four years. He is seeking political asylum and he has been given exceptional leave to remain. He does not know what the future is for his children and their education. Equally, he does not know whether he is able to stay for a long time. He does not know about his home and he has no real security. He is extremely worried. By their actions the Government are increasing the pressures and worries of that man.

Somalis who fled from the civil war and the gangs come to see me. They want family reunion. They know that their relatives are in refugee camps in Ethiopia because they have tracked them down. There are those who know that their brothers and uncles have died but they have been able to make contact with five or six surviving relatives. Some of them have been waiting for one year, one and a half years or two years for the Government to respond, but the Government have now decided to make it far more difficult for relatives to join their families in the United Kingdom.

I would now like to turn to clause 9. Why is the right of appeal being removed by clause 9? A few weeks ago I was contacted by a local councillor in my constituency. He told me about a family that was travelling from India to Canada to visit relatives. The members of the family wanted to stop over in Britain to see their relatives, who live in my constituency. The entry clearance officer in New Delhi decided not to allow them to come to this country. I made representations and I was told eventually that the appeal had been allowed. It was too late, however, because the plane on which the members of the family were travelling had already left India. They had to travel on the flight for which they were booked. Under the proposals in the Bill, however, no appeal would be allowed. Even worse, a mark would appear in a passport declaring that entry clearance had been refused.

We know what is going on now in the European Community. I am talking about respectable people who have homes and jobs. They merely want to visit their relatives in another country. If there is a mark in a passport stating that the individual cannot come to Britain, that could mean similar marks declaring that they cannot go to France, Italy, Germany or Holland. That is the direction in which the development of common policies within the European Community is taking us.

I am a supporter of Maastricht. I want to see a democratically accountable Europe. At present, we have the worst of all worlds. There is no democratic accountability attached to what immigration Ministers and their civil servants are cooking up because they are operating in an area that is not part of the treaty. Everything is being done in secret. Changes to our rules will make it difficult for people to visit other European countries apart from Britain because immigration officers will apply the rules in that way.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that the Trevi and Schengen groups are trying to introduce common immigration and visa regulations is a reason for voting against the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Gapes: No. We must work for a more democratic and accountable Community. We must give more powers to this Parliament and the European Parliament so that they can resist bureaucrats, unelected officials and Ministers who choose to hide behind decisions taken in secret by saying that the result is not their responsibility. We must have democratic accountability. Instead, the Government propose that there should be a further erosion of that accountability. As a result, officials in the Home Office, in the immigration and nationality department, in high commissions and in embassies will take decisions in the knowledge that we in this place have no right to make representations. The applicants who they so arbitrarily refuse will have no right of appeal. It is an outrage.

The Bill sets out an entirely unjustified and undemocratic approach and it must be stopped. Only a Government who have been in office too long and who are so arrogant that they feel that there is no need to worry would dare to introduce such proposals. The Government could not care less about the poor grandmothers in India or Pakistan who want to come to this country to see their grandchildren for the first time. They could not care less about people having the right to travel to visit their relatives. They are prepared to trust officials to take decisions without accountability. I ask the House to reject the Bill and everything for which it stands.

8.57 pm

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): I wish to endorse everything that my colleagues have said and to reinforce some of their arguments. I wonder what

[Mr. Jim Cunningham]

communities within the United Kingdom, many of which have come from abroad and lived here for generations, think of us. They know that whenever there is a political issue the Conservative party uses immigration to make cheap political points. It does so to try to secure the election of a Conservative Government. That is despicable.

The Bill must be set against a European background. I am sure that the Government did not meekly accept the Bill that is before us, and we must accept that what is on the statute book is better than that which we have before us this evening. Some of the members of the Council of Ministers have a north and south phobia, and the result is that it rushes into making proposals. That is the background to the Bill. As a result, we have legislation that is based on panic, not justice. We all know what happens when Governments start to panic. After all, we have had a few examples recently.

We are told that the Bill is not racialist. Yet the Government propose a reduction in overseas aid. When the issues of race and the proposed reduction in aid are put together we see exactly where the Bill will take the United Kingdom.

My colleagues and I regard the right of appeal as sacrosanct. Any hon. Member with experience of immigration cases knows that if the right of appeal is removed and the time factors altered an individual can be out of the country within 24 hours. We must reject any curtailment of the right of appeal.

Hon. Members have spoken about the need for an investigation by a parliamentary Committee into the way that the immigration service operates. They have highlighted individual experiences and cited evidence suggesting that the way that the immigration service treats people is suspect. Imagine being someone who comes from a village in the Punjab, with only a simple education, and being confronted by a highly skilled immigration officer whose sole objective is to make it appear that a person is not telling the truth about his reason for wanting entry. That is an issue that needs investigation. The system also tells us that we cannot trust Ministers to consider cases. We can assume only that the immigration officials are carrying out Ministers' instructions.

We must consider the whole context of the Bill against the background of an extremist backlash in Europe. Instead of challenging that backlash, European Governments are backing off and introducing legislation like this Bill. I went around Europe 18 months ago and there were only two countries with any semblance of credibility in their immigration policies—Holland and Britain. Despite all the talk in the other European countries about rights, there are hardly any rights for immigrants, especially black immigrants, whether they come from the Punjab or whether they happen to be Muslims. Those countries are way behind this country in their immigration policies.

However, having said that, I do not endorse the Bill. It is a bad Bill and we must reject it. Many of my constituents are extremely uneasy about it because ultimately not only will it put father against son, but brother against sister and child against parents. I hope that hon. Members will reject the Bill.

9.1 pm

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I am pleased to be called to speak in this debate, not only because I have worked with black and migrant communities in my constituency in Nottingham for 13 years but because of my specific work over the past two years relating to the rising tide or racism that has surfaced throughout Europe.

I am concerned that a pattern is emerging of black and migrant communities being blamed for the economic failures of the countries in which they happen to be living. That blaming process is no different here than it is in France, Italy, Germany and the rest of western Europe. It cannot be separated from the arguments about the position of refugees and asylum seekers. There is a serious and sustained attempt to deflect the failures of capitalism, and the Governments who have enthusiastically embraced it, on to those who have been most cruelly exploited by the process and been its primary victims.

One or two Conservative Members have mentioned the increasing number of attacks in Germany and said that it is a consequence of German unification and a policy of letting in all sorts of people. In fact, those attacks are part of a trend of well-established harassment and persecution of Turkish gastarbeiters in Germany, who have been most cruelly exploited. They have been taken there and employed on the most miserable wages and when their tasks have been completed they have been arbitrarily sent back to Turkey. They have also been subject to vicious attacks, which have been happening for more than a decade. The fact that the knowledge of them is only now surfacing does not make them a new feature—the attacks are simply emerging in a more virulent form.

Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in western Europe are being made the scapegoats for Governments of ill-repute. I was appalled by the comments today of the Secretary of State and some Conservative Members. We witnessed the process known as "blaming the victim"—with the blame for the Government's economic failures being shifted on to the backs of black and migrant communities in Britain. I was amazed at the apparent ease with which Ministers virtually blamed migrants for the fact that my city of Nottingham has not been allowed to build any houses this year and has been allowed to build no more than 50 over the past three years. I presume that, according to the Government, the record number of bankruptcies in Nottingham is also attributable to the migrants who have been admitted into the country. Perhaps they should also be blamed for the record level of house repossessions: in Nottingham, the number has risen by 72 per cent.

The truth is that migrants have made little or no contribution to the current problems. At one stage, however, I wondered whether the Government would try to blame migrants and refugees for catastrophes such as the collapse of the pound and the closure of the pits.

Mr. Bernie Grant: They called it Black Wednesday.

Mr. Simpson: They did indeed—and I think that we should take stock of the language that we use to describe the catastrophes into which the Government lead us.

If we examine Britain's real international contribution, it is revealed as abject—miserable. We do not contribute greatly to any alleviation of the sufferings of refugees or asylum seekers. I spent some time in Mozambique and in southern Africa, and that brought home to me the real meaning of humanitarian support and the human conscience operating in a day-to-day context.

Millions of people are being supported by their neighbours. We talk of the threat to stability and civilisation that is posed by the notion of "swamping" Britain with asylum seekers. Most refugees and asylum seekers, however, are being tended and supported by neighbours who have precious little more to offer. The poorest are supporting the poorest; the homeless are supporting those without homelands; those without food are supporting those without families. Yet the fear expressed by Conservative Members today is not much different from the fear expressed some years ago by the then Prime Minister when she talked of being "swamped by an alien culture". Such phrases show that our internationhal record of concern is an illusion.

The Bill is a hotch-potch of dubious virtues. It seems to suggest that the House of Commons prefers death to take place on a distant shore: if people are dying somewhere else, at least they are dying out of sight. Perhaps the House also feels better for having brought forward the notion of a permanent exclusion that can be tied around the necks of bona fide visitors. The Bill also moves us towards the criminalisation of children who are to be subjected to arbitrary fingerprinting—the "sus" law for civil war victims, perhaps.

Implicit in the Bill is the establishment of a Euro-backlash against migrants and black people. Let us make no bones about it: the powers that a Minister takes tonight will be traded behind closed doors, in card games played by Euro-leaders. Under the Maastricht proposals, rights of scrutiny will be taken away from our Parliament; they will be traded by Ministers playing with powers whose value amounts to no less than the human rights of migrants and black people.

When I was working in France, a colleague said to me, "Britain does not need Le Pen. He is our problem. You do not need him because your Government are willing to drape themselves in Le Pen's political underwear and they claim to be doing so with dignity and pride."

This is a tawdry Bill. I hope that it will be opposed here as vehemently as I know it will be opposed outside in the country. There are communities of black and white people throughout the length and breadth of the land who will not subscribe to the scapegoating process that is written into this Bill. They will not subscribe to the denigration to which black people will be subjected when they try to visit their families.

Let me illustrate how far we have stepped back. Five years ago, we were involved in campaigns in this country to establish the right of family unity. We are now faced with campaigns to try to prevent the exclusion of people from this country. Five years ago, people in Germany talked about the right of settled people to vote. People in Germany today talk about the right of people to stay. We are going backwards at a phenomenal pace. It ill-befits any of us to collude with that process. I hope that all hon. Members with a sense of integrity will join the official Opposition in opposing this shabby Bill tooth and nail.

9.11 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I was not here for the beginning of the debate. I was travelling back from Germany, where I heard at first hand of the rising tide of racism and anti-semitism that is going hand in hand with the recession in Europe. The motivation behind the Bill and the way that it is presented to the public is part of that rising tide of racism and anti-semitism.

My hon. Friends have made many excellent points about the Bill; I do not intend to repeat them. One of the most obnoxious aspects of the Bill is the way that it was launched in the run-up to the general election. It was launched on the back of orchestrated articles in the Tory tabloids. Week after week there were articles about the tide of refugees that was going to engulf Europe, in particular the United Kingdom.

The way that the Bill was launched and tied in with entirely negative and obnoxious publicity about the threat from refugees and asylum seekers is the key to what the Bill is about. It is not about allaying public fears, or about giving refugees a better and fairer deal. In particular, it is not about giving communities with large numbers of refugees the help and support that they need. It is about playing on the fears of the public.

A Bill that will cause so much misery to so many thousands of genuine asylum seekers and to so many thousands of people who want to visit their families here is supported by Tories who will march through the Lobby in 45 minutes to try to make the Bill law. It is extraordinary that they should have shown such studied indifference to the misery that the legislation will wreak.

The Bill exemplifies the type of Europe that we shall be invited to vote for in 48 hours' time. It is not the type of Europe that I support. It is a fortress Europe, a xenophobic, little Europe. It is a Europe that I and many of my hon. Friends cannot and will not support.

I represent an east London constituency that historically has been a haven for refugees and asylum seekers from all over the world. When the Huguenots came to the east end in the 17th century, there was no talk about economic refugees; they were seen as people who were fleeing from real fears and who had come here to make a real contribution to this country. When the Jews came to the east end of London from Russia and eastern europe, there was no talk of economic refugees; they were seen for that they were—people fleeing from genuine fears, genuine oppression, genuine brutality. But as it suits the Government to discriminate between refugees and asylum seekers according to colour, some refugees and some asylum seekers are now stigmatised as so-called economic refugees.

The problem with immigration, refugees and asylum seekers is that only a small group of Members have broad experience of it and care about it. I would not want the debate to pass without trying to convey to my colleagues and Conservative Members what it means to people whose family members overseas—brothers, aunties, grandmothers and children—save the equivalent of a lifetime's salary to come here for Christmas, a wedding or to see a new grandchild only to receive the sort of treatment that is regularly dished out at Heathrow. Conservative Members cannot understand what it means to come from rural Jamaica or Trinidad—to have saved and come across in one's best suit—only to be treated by immigration officers as some sort of criminal. I have no doubt that the clause on visitors' appeal rights will make the situation worse. Immigration officers are bad enough as it stands, but if they know that people have no right of appeal they will be even more arbitrary, unpleasant and unfair.

[Ms. Diane Abbott]

White Europeans living in this country—Germans, French, Belgians or Dutch—have more rights to see their parents, grandparents or children than black British residents, who may have fought in the war and worked all their lives in this country. That must be unfair and racist.

Many of the comments that I intended to make about the Bill have already been made excellently by my colleagues. I feel particularly strongly about the Bill because I represent a wide range of refugees and asylum seekers, from people whose parents came across from Tsarist Russia at the turn of the century to today's Somali and Kurdish refugees. I know that my constituents, across the ethnic range and mix, regard the Bill and the politics that motivate it with much fear. It is playing with black people's family lives. It is playing the racist card and I urge the House to oppose it.

9.16 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I should comment first on the fact that 27 speeches have been made from the Back Benches. I hope that my colleagues will take *Hansard* and spread it far and wide, particularly among the black and ethnic communities in Britain, to show where the support for their views and for asylum seekers rests. The debate has shown the concern of the parties. This is probably the fullest that the Conservative Benches have been tonight, whereas it is probably the barest that the Opposition Benches have been

After that education of 27 Back-Bench speeches, one thing is crystal clear: that the Bill does not help, in any shape or form, those who are seeking political asylum, who are fleeing terror and persecution, to whom lip service is paid every night when we see the terrible scenes in Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

The Bill is irrelevant when viewed against the background of those problems. Indeed, it increases the risk that someone who is desperate to escape torture or death in his or her country will be sent back. This is a Bill for domestic consumption, not to help refugees.

We must question whether the Bill, even on its own terms, is needed. The former Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who unfortunately is not here at the moment, justified the Bill on two grounds—first, to reduce the number of applications and, secondly, to reduce the backlog of applications. The Government's latest figures blow away both arguments for initiating the Bill. The number of applications is not increasing but declining dramatically. The backlog of applications, far from increasing, has been halted and is now declining steadily as a result of employing an adequate number of staff, which Labour proposed more than a year ago.

For all the bluster about bogus applications, about bogus asylum seekers and about bogus arguments, it is plain that the most bogus thing about the Bill is the Conservative party's attempts to justify it. The Bill is a relic from a previous Administration and fails to address the real problems.

The real problems are the desperate problems facing those who are fleeing persecution. The Conservatives chose to abuse that suffering and to blow up the asylum issue into a pre-election immigration scare. Once again, they seek to confuse the two wholly distinct issues of asylum and immigration. They feel obliged to run the Bill again whether it is necessary or not.

We are told that the Bill will foster good community relations. Perhaps that is what the Home Secretary's predecessor was doing when he produced headlines such as the famous one in *The Sun* which read, "No entry". It was one of many put out at the time by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley and his cohorts. I give the Secretary of State the chance to condemn before the House tonight the way in which the Asylum Bill was first used, not to foster good community relations but to play on fears about immigration before the general election.

The Home Secretary's reluctance to come to the Dispatch Box may be caused by a spate of similar stories. There are not as many stories as there were, but there is enough evidence in some of the papers that support the Conservative party. There are headlines such as:

> "Clarke acts to stop phoney refugees flooding into Britain";

and

> "Clarke launches new war on the refugees racket".

For all the perfumed phrases about humanitarianism, it is the whiff of racism which lingers around the Bill. Let us hear no more hypocrisy about the worries about the rise of fascism in Europe from the party that has deliberately dragged the asylum issue into the gutter.

The proposals, designed to deter rather than to aid those fleeing persecution who seek a safe haven here, are being recycled, trashing the United Nations convention and the Race Relations Act 1976 along the way. If ever we needed another reason to reconsider the question of a Bill of Rights, this Bill provides it.

The Bill will introduce a fast-track appeals system to eject people from the country within eight days, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) finally got the Home Secretary to admit this afternoon. Taking people's fingerprints and those of their children is a further humiliation. The only other people in our society on whom that humiliation is visited are criminals, as was underlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson).

The Bill will remove from asylum seekers the hospitality traditionally shown to guests fleeing persecution. It used to be the case that, in spite of everything else, they had the security of being adequately housed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) and many other hon. Friends put it.

How curious it is that a Government who have no money to build new houses and who are not prepared to release the funds from capital receipts which are tied up in the banks of local authorities can find the money to build 300 extra detention places for asylum seekers. That tells us something about their priorities.

The Bill will make it more difficult for asylum seekers to meet the criteria. There is a fundamental misunderstanding among Home Office Ministers. They believe that coming to the United Kingdom and seeking asylum is akin to a Thomas Cook package. They believe that asylum seekers get off the plane wearing Hawaiian shirts and carry cameras round their necks. They believe that asylum seekers are familiar with all the procedures. That is not the psychology of people fleeing potential death, persecution or torture.

I quote readily from a letter from Amnesty International which highlights one aspect of the rules that the Secretary of State proposes to introduce—that the applicant must make a prompt and full disclosure of his or her claim for asylum. Amnesty International says:

> "Asylum seekers can hardly be expected to know what 'all material' factors are"

as they arrive in a country totally confused and unfamiliar with the language or how things work at Heathrow.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Is my hon. Friend aware of the very unsatisfactory nature of the interpretation facilities for refugees and asylum seekers? For example, is he aware that a refugee was intimidated by an interpreter who turned out to be one of his torturers? Has my hon. Friend made any representations to the Home Office about drastically improving the way in which translators operate and controlling who they are, how they are chosen and how they are trained?

Mr. Allen: That is one of the main points that we will seek to hammer out in Committee. It will be essential to ensure that adequate interpretation facilities are available if such onerous rules are to be imposed on asylum seekers. On a lighter note, my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) had great difficulty in interpreting the Home Secretary's legislation to the Home Secretary himself. If that is the case, how can we expect someone who is unfamiliar with our language or procedures to understand what is going on?

The Amnesty International letter continues:

> "especially if the person speaks little English and is deeply traumatised by his/her escape and journey. It is normal for refugees to fear officialdom and a person in such a situation cannot be expected to make a full disclosure of his experiences at his first encounter with officials. This is particularly true of those who have been tortured."

A tremendous amount of evidence is available and can be produced in Committee to clarify that point. It is not a matter of stepping off the plane at Castle Donington airport in the east midlands, having arrived back from a Thompson's package holiday. The psychology is completely different and the rules that are to be imposed on asylum seekers are ignorant of that possibility.

Airline check-in staff abroad will continue to have almost the power of life and death over refugees when they decide whether to accept their credentials and documentation. That power is far too extensive and we will return to it in Committee. We will seek to render it a little more harmless.

It can be only with a profound sense of shame that decent people throughout Britain will stand by as the Conservatives welcome the tortured, raped and frightened with a cynical sneer and two fingers. It is the new Clarke doctrine: "Give me your tired, your poor and your huddled masses yearning to breathe free—and I'll give them a fingerprinting and a cardboard box on the Strand."

The Conservatives' overall contribution to the world effort on refugees has been pathetic. It has been matched only by the derisory attempt to "help people in their own countries" with such things as the know-how fund. When the newly liberated of central and eastern Europe cried out for a Marshall plan, they got the red-braced consultants who had created Britain's own economic miracle. That shortsightedness and meanspiritedness have helped to create the human drifts piling up on the EC's eastern border.

History will judge that the Bill was the Conservatives' only response to one of the greatest challenges of our century and perhaps a fitting crown on the British presidency of the European Community. Many of the worst features of the changes in the Bill will not be discussed properly by Parliament. Not content with taking the earlier Asylum Bill through 27 hours of Committee without accepting a single amendment, the arrogance of an unchecked Government in Parliament is such that they can reserve from the Bill pages of immigration and asylum rules.

The Home Secretary has already turned down the idea of a Special Standing Committee, which could sit before the Committee stage of the Bill and take evidence for one month in public so that we would all be better informed on the real issues. In putting our motion to the vote, we shall make the Home Secretary go public on that denial of democracy.

Potential Committee Members have even been refused a visit to the immigration and nationality department to be briefed before the Committee stage. Of what are the Executive afraid? Just two things—knowledge and the truth.

Our democracy is deeply stained by the Executive's ability to make up their own rules, beyond all but the most nominal democratic vetting in this place. In a week when Members of Parliament from Southend to Stafford will be celebrating our Europeanness, it is clear that Governments ruling the nation states of Europe have played more than a small part in drafting the Bill. Those Governments—many even more laughably unaccountable to their Parliaments than ours—meet in secret to decide our laws and the fate of refugees whom they will never meet. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to that fact with such venom that I almost thought that he might vote with us on Wednesday to bring down the Government who are perpetrating the things of which he complained.

The United Kingdom is not even a member of the Schengen group, yet its footprint lies heavily on the Bill, and it is not even accountable to the European Commission, let alone the European or British Parliaments.

The ad hoc group on immigration is so secretive that its closed nature came as a surprise to the Home Secretary in June, although since that discovery there have not been many changes to make it more open.

The Trevi group is attended by British Ministers, who quaintly feel that Parliament's consent to their activities is given by their placing an answer to a planted written question in *Hansard*. We should join my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and demand that every time the Trevi group meets there should be a statement to the House to tell us what has been decided that affects the people of this country.

That masonic college of European committees is beginning to harmonise our asylum and immigration rights with those of Europe through the Bill. Those harmonisation policies will be voted through tonight by hon. Members who, on another night, will call for Opposition support to defend the myth of British parliamentary sovereignty—xenophobes hiding behind an illusion. In the United Kingdom, we have governmental sovereignty, and it is being used again tonight to build fortress Europe and to pull up the ladder behind the Government. Nowhere is that more evident than in botching immigration provisions and putting them into an asylum Bill.

[Mr. Allen]

The Conservatives are abolishing the right of appeal for visitors and others who are refused entry, as my right hon. and hon. Friends have made clear. Last year, hon. Members from both sides of the House intervened to draw cases to the attention of the Home Secretary. To be fair, many Conservative Members have spoken tonight against the provisions abolishing the right to appeal. Last year, in 1,700 cases from the sub-continent of India alone, an intitial refusal to enter was overturned on appeal. Next year, such people will be denied appeal and will unjustly be denied entry to visit family and friends. When thousands of unjustified refusals are brought to light and corrected by the appeals system, only the Conservatives would think that the answer was to abolish the appeals system, rather than to examine why so many unjust decisions are taken in the first place. Once again, unchecked administrative convenience and unaccountable power are replacing what few checks and balances exist on the side of the individual.

We have not adequately tackled the Conservatives' motives in reintroducing the Bill. Yes, it is a concern to deliver the British Parliament to what has been secretly agreed with the Schengen and Trevi groups in Europe. Yes, it is an embarrassed carry-over from a previous era, but that is hardly the real reason. Perhaps those in the Home Office do not quite know what to do with their parliamentary time. A crime every six seconds and a doubling in recorded crime since the Conservatives came to power might not be regarded as priorities, yet KC Plod appears to flex his knees and wag his finger at the infants who drop litter, oblivious to the armed robbery going on behind him.

It could hardly be that the Home Secretary has run out of ideas—he is so full of ideas that he is doing the job of the Chancellor, the President of the Board of Trade and even the Prime Minister. Perhaps here the cynic would find a clue. Every aspirant to the Tory leadership needs to keep the Neanderthal right on board, particularly a Europhiliac like the Home Secretary.

Rather than ditch a Bill that passed its sell-buy date on 9 April, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has tarted it up and thrown it to the rottweilers. Who cares? He has never met those fleeing torture and the death squads—they are not likely to live in Rushcliffe. They are certainly not voters in the election for the next Tory leader.

Labour will vote against the Bill's Second Reading. We will seek to neutralise its worst excesses in Committee and in the second Chamber. Secretary of State, it has been in your power to let this Bill lie. You chose to revive it and may God forgive you for its consequences.

9.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): This has been a wide-ranging, well-informed debate, sometimes passionate, only occasionally truculent and always interesting. It has scanned broad horizons when addressing the migration of peoples far beyond this country. It has also touched on complex technical details when examining our immigration control systems.

This is my first opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on his new Front-Bench role. Judging by the number of questions for written answer that he has tabled—to which I have replied—and by his more than assiduous inquiries of the immigration and nationality department, he must already have an encyclopaedic knowledge of this important subject. But from his remarks this evening I cannot help wondering whether he really can see the wood for the trees—the same may apply to one or two of his colleagues.

In the time available I shall attempt to answer as many of the points raised as I can. The Bill reflects the Government's commitment to ensuring that our immigration controls provide a fair and effective response to the changing conditions and worldwide pressures that face us in the 1990s. As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) said, it strikes a proper balance between the protection of the rights of the individual on the one hand and the maintenance of an effective immigration control on the other.

It may be argued that asylum and immigration are separate issues, but it is clear from experience here, elsewhere in Europe and from further afield that huge numbers of people are now issuing asylum claims as a means of evading immigration control. That was made clear by my hon. Friends the Members for Poole (Mr. Ward), for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith), for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) and for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) among others.

As the numbers of asylum applications rise, a decreasing proportion have been found to qualify for refugee status within the terms of the United Nations convention. Of the asylum cases decided here in 1980, just 64 per cent. were found to be refugees. Last year the figure was down to 10 per cent. and in Germany it was less than 5 per cent.

The common pattern across Europe is of a large majority of applicants continuing to stay on, despite being refused. They manage to do so because, unsurprisingly, they take advantage of delays inherent in determination systems and in the complicated review and appeal procedures after the initial decisions to refuse. Because most applicants succeed in staying on, no matter how flimsy some of their claims are, still more people, quite understandably, are encouraged to try their luck too. The result is a large backlog of cases, which inevitably means that officials are forced to take longer than should be necessary to reach those genuine and often harrowing cases of a well-founded fear of persecution in which the individuals who have suffered deserve support and attention.

I shall deal with as many of the points raised in the debate as possible and try to throw light on some of the issues that caused differences of opinion earlier in the debate. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) referred to the power to curtail leave, say, for a student who has applied for and then been refused asylum. Curtailment is not automatic in such cases. The individual factors of each case will be considered. The main intention is to use the power of curtailment in the case of visitors who cannot continue to be treated as tourists after they seek asylum. To exempt other categories such as students under the rules will inevitably encourage exploitation of loopholes. For that reason the rules stand.

The Immigration Act 1971 provides a general power to curtail. It is not a novel concept. The provision appears specifically in the Bill because of the telescoping of appeal rights in such cases. I remind the House that every person whose leave is curtailed will have a full right of appeal before removal from Britain.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the rules on the determination of asylum applications by groups. The rules are not inconsistent with the 1951 convention. They state clearly that any evidence advanced by an individual to distinguish himself or herself from the group with which he or she arrived will always be taken into consideration. For example, if a coachful of unfounded applicants arrives and an individual does not seek to distinguish himself from the rest, it would be legitimate to refuse him as part of the group without further investigation. It is the responsibility of the individual to make the distinction.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Wardle: I will, but the hon. Gentleman will be aware that I want to make some progress. He has already spoken.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister define "a coachful of unfounded applicants" who seek political asylum? We discussed the matter at length in Committee on the previous Bill. What powers and what sense of justice will one have to make blanket decisions in such cases?

Mr. Wardle: It is simply a group of people acting as a group who say that they are refugees and clearly they are not. That is the answer. That makes the point.

I move on to the matter of accelerated procedures. Two time factors appear to cause some confusion. The first time factor is the difference between 48 hours and 10 working days for lodging an appeal. That depends on whether the notice of refusal is served in person—that is the 48-hour deadline—or whether it is served by post. In that case we are talking about 10 working days, which is two weeks in practice.

The other time factor—as I say this I look at the hon. Member for Sedgefield—is the difference between the accelerated procedure at that point for a groundless case and the ordinary procedure. That means that after the appeal has been lodged, it can take a maximum of five days for the appeal to be heard. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton was right earlier, as I am sure *Hansard* will show. Alternatively, when the application is not dealt with under the accelerated process, it will take up to 13 weeks or three months. I am happy to look further at the wording of the rules to see whether the matter can be spelt out more clearly. The 48-hour rule is aimed primarily at those in detention, in particular those who arrive from safe third countries. Most port applicants will receive refusals by post and be subject to the normal 10-working-day rule. I hope that that clarifies the matter.

Mr. Blair: The matter should be further clarified so that we have it absolutely straight. The Home Secretary said that the 48-hour rule applied only to groundless cases. He has now accepted that that is not the case. In the light of the present exchanges, may we have an undertaking that the legislation will specify that the 48-hour rule, which has been subject to so much criticism from so many groups, will apply only to groundless cases?

Mr. Wardle: There is still some confusion in the mind of the hon. Member for Sedgefield. The 48-hour rule does not apply to all groundless cases. It is intended to apply to people who have arrived at ports and who are held in detention. As I have already said to the hon. Gentleman, we shall consider the matter to see whether the guidelines can be made clearer. What my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said will be borne out with ever-increasing clarity.

Fingerprinting is a sensitive issue. However, the process is necessary because a number of those people who arrive at ports and claim asylum do so without documents or with mutilated documents. Therefore, the most straightforward method of establishing identity is fingerprinting. There have been a number of multiple applications for social security by asylum seekers whose cases are being considered and who, under the urgent cases rule, are entitled to apply for personal benefits. Asylum seekers cannot receive income support at the normal rates, but under the urgent cases rule, they can receive 90 per cent. of the normal allowances.

There are many instances, to which some allusion has already been made, of asylum applicants submitting more than one bid for social security benefit. One asylum applicant entered the United Kingdom with his wife and two children. Checks in Croydon revealed—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members seem to find the case amusing, but it is an example of the rampant waste of social security benefit through fraud. Checks revealed that there were 54 files, each representing that man and his family, and there are many other such cases.

Immigration department fingerprint records will be held entirely separately from police records. There will be no possibility of trawls being made through the asylum records. The police or Government Departments may legitimately make a specific inquiry of the Home Office about an individual. That inquiry can be answered without giving general access to fingerprint records. Proper confidentiality has always been maintained, and the House should not ignore the fact that the Home Office already holds much confidential information on asylum seekers, and does so securely. Fingerprints are not an unduly sensitive way of increasing the checks on mulitple applications and identity—indeed, they are much less sensitive than some of the details that emerge in other cases.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: Does it not occur to the Minister that, for people who have known officialdom only in the guise of officials who are about to inflict torture and possibly death, being asked to provide fingerprints could produce in them an increased return of their trauma? It is suggested that the same people who meet the asylum seekers at the port of entry and whose request for fingerprints might produce in the applicants what could be deemed aggressive or non-co-operative behaviour should have the right to deny entry to those applicants. The Minister must realise that that would be a most destructive way of introducing people to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wardle: I am sure that officials can explain to people, however vexed and agitated, the reason for fingerprinting. The hon. Lady should bear in mind that reserve powers to fingerprint are already in place in most European countries and in much of the world. The connotation that some Opposition Members attached to fingerprinting—as being specifically associated with crime—is not shared by a wider audience, and there is no reason why such an impression should be given to asylum applicants.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield suggested that the refusal of a visit visa would mean a ban for life. Not so.

[Mr. Wardle]

Such a refusal does not mean that an applicant will never be able to visit the United Kingdom. Entry clearance officers will consider each application on its merits and previous refusals will not automatically result in the refusal of later applications.

A number of hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), and for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon), and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), discussed groundless cases in the context of the criteria for asylum applications under the United Nations convention. People may be fleeing from war although not technically refugees under the terms of the 1951 convention. The House will wish to know that exceptional leave will continue to be available in genuine humanitarian cases, outside the strict criteria of the convention. If such cases are not refused outright, the accelerated timetable will not be relevant. There is no intention to detain every port applicant. People fleeing from places such as Bosnia will be likely, as now, to be given temporary admission; they will then have time to reflect and to seek advice before making their case to the Home Office.

It is right, however, to reduce the granting of exceptional leave to remain in some cases, and the streamlined procedures of the Bill will ensure that decisions to let people stay are taken on their merits, not because of any impracticality associated with their removal.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook talked about asylum seekers with inadequate documentation. Of course some genuine refugees may have valid reasons for being without proper documentation, but the figures show that two thirds of port applicants do not have such documentation on arrival. Whether they had it when they boarded the aircraft or vessel is another matter. They must have had documents when they embarked; possibly they destroyed or disposed of them on wrong advice, or mutilated them to make the processing of their applications more difficult.

It is also by no means clear that genuine refugees from all parts of the world must have immediate access to the United Kingdom. If he has escaped over a land border to a neighbouring country, a person can then apply at the British embassy if he thinks that the United Kingdom is the right place to seek refuge.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook also said that the refusal of a visitor's visa will prejudice later applications. I have already said that that will not happen.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland and several others referred to Trevi. The House will wish to know that the resolution to which he referred is only a draft resolution. If and when Ministers agree something on the subject in final form, it will be made public. While it remains a draft resolution, that is not necessary—it is no more than a statement of views and intentions, not a binding legal instrument. Any binding conventions that are developed will, of course, be subject to parliamentary approval. In case there is any doubt, let me say that there is nothing on the part of the ad hoc group on immigration or in the work of the Twelve that in any sense seeks to reduce the existing obligations under the 1951 convention.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland spoke about the specific problems of child asylum applicants. When they come to notice at ports, children are promptly referred to social services after a minimum of necessary inquiries by immigration staff. The responsibility of local authorities for the welfare of all children irrespective of immigration status is made clear in the Children Act 1989.

As I have said, the Government remain firmly committed to the provisions of the 1951 United Nations refugees convention and to helping those who genuinely need our protection. Our aim is a fair and workable system that will no longer allow undeserving applicants to stay here by default simply because of the length of time they have been in this country before their cases are settled.

The Bill seeks to improve the fairness and effectiveness of the current system of general immigration appeals by removing rights of appeal against decisions which do not have a fundamental impact on the lives of the individuals concerned, and against decisions where the appeal cannot in any event succeed because a mandatory requirement of the rules has not been met.

A reduction in the rights of appeal is not a step to be taken lightly, but if the system is to function effectively and retain public confidence it is essential to ensure that resources can be concentrated on those cases where issues of real substance are involved. A proper opportunity to challenge decisions which are crucial to people's lives is vital to wider confidence in the integrity of our system as well as in the fairness of treatment of individuals. But the system is neither fair nor effective if it is subject to substantial delays which work to the advantage of appellants in this country who have no arguable claim to remain here, and to the detriment of appellants abroad seeking to join their spouses or relatives and who are held up because of a backlog of claims.

Fairness does not demand that all decisions should attract the same rights of appeal. It demands that available remedies should be in proportion to the potential grievances. For example, no reasonable concept of fairness demands that when a visitor is refused an extension of stay because he has already been here for six months—the maximum period allowed under the immigration rules approved by Parliament—he should be entitled to remain here for another year or even longer pursuing a hopeless appeal against that decision.

Hon. Members who suggested that the Bill is racist are utterly wrong. There is nothing racist in a firm but fair and efficient system of asylum control that seeks swiftly to dispense with clearly unfounded claims in order to deal all the more quickly with the interests of genuine refugees. There is nothing racist in ensuring prompt attention to immigration cases that matter fundamentally to people's lives.

Last year this country welcomed more than 8 million non-EC nationals as visitors, students and in other categories. That figure included more than 400,000 visitors, students and business people from the Indian sub-continent. This country has a tradition of freedom and tolerance and, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said, fair and efficient immigration controls will help to sustain good race relations in the interests of all the communities in our multicultural society.

There is much merit in a policy that upholds the UN convention on refugees and allows bona fide visitors and students to enter the United Kingdom. That policy will continue to admit spouses and dependants of those who are already settled here and will exercise proper and effective control over others who wish to reside here. The Government have already committed more resources, staff, premises and computerisation to the immigration service, and have introduced better procedures for eliminating multiple applications. Now, what is needed is the opportunity to proceed with the measures in the Bill. I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 321, Noes 276.

Division No. 78] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*

Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'a W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Motion made—[Mr. Blair]—and Question put, That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee:—

The House divided: Ayes 275, Noes 315.

Division No. 78] **[10.16 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Darling, Alistair

Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*

Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert

Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard

Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael

Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION APPEALS [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenditure of the Secretary of State which is attributable to the Act, and

(b) any increase in the sums payable out of such money under the Immigration Act 1971 which is attributable to provisions about appeals to special immigration adjudicators; and

(2) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund. —*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

PETITION

Deep Water Jetty (Canvey Island)

10.31 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): I wish to present a massive petition representing the views of more than 6,000 people who live on Canvey Island. It is a most timely petition which raises issues that are of deep concern to many hon. Members of all parties and to many people across the nation.

The terms of the petition are:

That it is proposed by Brocton Minerals Ltd. to use a deep water jetty at Canvey Island for the transhipment of coal from ship (by grab to hopper and conveyor) to smaller ships and that we the undersigned are vigorously opposed to this planning application on the grounds of increased air pollution from coal dust as a result of the transhipment process; noise pollution from the 24 hr operation; increased water pollution to an already heavily polluted area of the Thames Estuary; and finally loss of jobs locally due to the above forms of pollution and nationally due to the now well publicised closure of British Coal mines.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do see that this and any similar proposals are not allowed to, eventually, ruin our county and country.

To lie upon the Table.

Cyprus

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.32 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to initiate an Adjournment debate on the important and topical subject of Cyprus. I am pleased to note the presence of colleagues who share my deep interest in and concern about the tragedy that besets that beautiful island. I am especially pleased to notice the presence of the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), a distinguished Member who has the honour to serve as the chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Union international Cyprus committee. I am especially gratified by his presence in the Chamber tonight.

The basic facts can be stated with classical brevity. In 1974, Cyprus was invaded. Some 6,000 casualties were inflicted on the Greek population. Two hundred thousand people were displaced from their homes and 1,619 people are still officially registered as missing.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): What about 1963?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Seated interventions of that kind are to be deplored.

Mr. O'Hara: Eighteen years later, in 1992, 37 per cent. of Cyprus is still occupied by 35,000 Turkish troops, 400 tanks and supporting artillery. Refugees are still debarred from returning to their homes, churches and cemeteries —worse, those are being desecrated. Their land, property and business assets have been expropriated. Nicosia is the only divided city in Europe and the families of the missing people still do not know the fate of their loved ones. To quote a relative of one of the missing people:

> "Double is the pain and unbearable the agony of all those of us who live in uncertainty waiting to learn what happened to the 1,619 missing people."

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. O'Hara: No, I will not give way. I have only 15 minutes or less and there is much to say on the subject.

The majority of the victims are of course Greek Cypriots. In 1974, they comprised 77 per cent. of the population when the Turks comprised 17 per cent. The majority of those displaced were Greeks and the majority of the expropriated assets, in volume aand value, belonged to them. The families of the missing people are, in the main, Greek.

However, the tragedy affects both the main communities of Cyprus. Some 40,000 Turkish Cypriots were also induced by the invading army to displace themselves to the occupied zone in the north. They and the 40,000 Turkish Cypriots of the north to this day suffer the economic consequences of the division of the island arising, for example, from the failure of the international community to recognise the Turkish republic of northern Cyprus and from the systematic settlement of immgrants from Anatolia which brings depressed wages, social strains and consequently a mass migration of Turkish Cypriots from the north.

It is difficult to obtain reliable statistics. The Cuco report, which has now been adopted by the Council of Europe, suggests serious and systematic alteration of the demography of northern Cyprus and it is a conservative

[Mr. O'Hara]

estimate that 80,000 of a likely 160,000 now resident in northern Cyprus are immigrants—with a second generation reaching majority, with the consequential social strains that that will bring.

There have been numerous abortive efforts to produce a solution in the 18 years between 1974 and 1992. In April 1992 the Secretary-General of the United Nations presented a set of ideas to the Security Council for a solution based on the establishment of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federal republic of Cyprus.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. O'Hara: I will give way to my hon. Friend because she had the courtesy beforehand to seek my permission to intervene.

Mrs. Roche: With regard to the United Nations, will my hon. Friend comment on the recent decision by this Government to reduce their contribution to the UN force by 25 per cent. and the effect that that will have on the security of the island?

Mr. O'Hara: I fear for the consequences of that decision. The ideal solution is obviously for all foreign troops to be withdrawn from Cyprus to allow the two communities to work out their future amicably amongst themselves.

In the transitional period there will be a need for some security forces—preferably independent and provided by the United Nations. I fear for any reduction in those forces, and for Government decisions to reduce their contribution to that force.

The set of ideas presented by the United Nations Secretary-General to the Security Council dealt with several issues: constitutional arrangements for a bi-zonal, bi-communal federal republic; security and guarantees; territorial adjustments, including a map which could be a basis for settlement; the rights of displaced persons, which is crucial; and economic and developmental safeguards, because the economies of northern and southern Cyprus are out of alignment.

That set of ideas was endorsed by the Security Council, which charged the Secretary-General to produce by July 1992 a report on progress to a solution based on those ideas. The Secretary-General thus undertook the first round of talks separately with Mr. Vassiliou and Mr. Denktas in June 1992; he undertook a second round, including joint sessions, between 15 July and 14 August, when it was agreed that there should be a pause for reflection; and the crucial third round of talks started seven days ago on 26 October.

I regret to say that the auspices for the third round do not seem to be the most favourable. The Secretary-General was unequivocally critical of Mr. Denktas's intransigence in the second round of talks, referring to his need to avoid adopting positions which would upset the delicate balance of the set of ideas or be counter to resolutions of the Security Council, and to his need to show a necessary willingness to adjust his position.

Mr. Denktas's negative remarks prior to leaving for New York reinforce that negative impression, and in the first week of the present talks he has indulged in behaviour which has suggested that he is not approaching them in the most positive manner. He has refused to accept the right of refugees to return to their homes, although he had agreed to that in August, which is a retrograde step. That is a serious and fundamental matter. The freedom of movement and settlement, and the right to own property, are essential components of any solution to the problems of Cyprus.

Why should the House turn its attention to all that? Because of the geo-political position of Cyprus and the historical, moral and legal bonds between it and the United Kingdom. Cyprus is European in its history, its culture and its orientation. From the late 19th century to 1960 it was governed by a British colonial administration. Its progress to independence occurred during the historical watershed decade of the 1950s—the decade of Suez and associated upheavals in the middle east. That had its effect on the decolonisation of Cyprus, causing strains in both communities, in which were sown the seeds of subsequent intercommunal conflict.

Mistakes were made by all concerned, but they were not such that Cyprus deserved the tragedy of the past 18 years. Despite the problems of the 1950s, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots value their close relationship with the United Kingdom and wish it to continue. It is interesting to note that the majority of Greeks and Turks in Cyprus co-existed amicably before 1974, and expatriate members of both the Greek and Turkish communities co-exist amicably in London.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. O'Hara: I am willing to give way to colleagues who had the courtesy to ask me beforehand if I would give way, but if one gives way too often in an Adjournment debate one runs out of a limited amount of time.

It is also interesting to note that Greek and Turkish Cypriots still co-exist peacefully in one village in Cyprus, Pile, which is on the green line near the sovereign base of Dhekeleia. That is an example of how Greeks and Turks in Cyprus could work out their future together without an occupying force in the way. There is growing evidence of a widespread desire in the north for a solution, but the voice of opposition to Mr. Denktas must struggle hard to be heard.

In 1960, Britain, in consequence of its role, was a signatory to the treaty that guaranteed the independence of Cyprus. Furthermore, Britain retained its sovereign bases, significant tracts of land which cover 90 sq miles —equivalent to the size of Malta. Those bases are important to the security not only of Britain but of the west.

In 1961, within a year of independence, Cyprus was enrolled as a member of the Council of Europe and the British Commonwealth. In 1972, it was accepted as an associate member of the European Economic Community; and in 1987 it signed an agreement on customs union—it is almost the only country to achieve such status within the EC.

Cyprus, although small, is a natural and significant trading partner of the United Kingdom. Where do the United Kingdom Government stand now? Whatever the outcome of the current round of talks, the United Kingdom has an important role to play as a guarantor power. If the talks are successful in easing the process of transition, there will still be many problems over the detailed constitutional arrangements in the Secretary-General's proposed set of ideas; the potential for deadlock and dispute over those arrangements is enormous. Problems will arise relating to the withdrawal of the occupying Turkish forces and the detailed settlement of the claims of displaced persons.

If those talks are unsuccessful, the Government will have an important role in taking positive initiatives to support Cyprus and to get the two sides around the table again. They will have a role in supporting Cyprus's application for full membership of the EC. They should also put Cyprus on the agenda in any discussions with Turkey, because let no one pretend otherwise than that Ankara pulls the strings that move Mr. Denktas. Turkey currently has preoccupations to the east, but the Government must remind the Turkish Government of the potential costs of failure to resolve the problem of Cyprus. The Government should also put Cyprus on the agenda in discussions with the United States—that agenda and that of Turkey are connected. That may mean different things, depending on the outcome of the presidential elections tomorrow. Mr. Clinton has made much stronger public commitments on the problem of Cyprus than President Bush.

The British Government have a responsibility, not least, to assist the relatives of the missing people in ascertaining their fate.

Cyprus has witnessed violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity no less brutal than that which happened in Kuwait. It has also witnessed violation of human rights and ethnic cleansing no less callous than that which has occurred in Bosnia. No Government bear a greater responsibility than Her Majesty's Government for the correction of those injustices. I call on the support of both sides of the House in urging the Government to undertake their responsibilities earnestly. The Government should not merely support the UN Secretary-General but should display energy and vigour to demonstrate to the international community that they recognise their special responsibilities for Cyprus.

10.49 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): I congratulate the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) on initiating this opportune debate. It is a tribute to the intense interest which the House takes in the matter that several hon. Members on both sides of the House should have remained at this late hour to listen to not only the hon. Gentleman's speech but my reply.

On the Opposition Benches, the hon. Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), for Tooting (Mr. Cox), for Bootle (Mr. Benton) and for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) have been here throughout the debate. We are pleased to see them here. On the Conservative Benches, as many as a dozen of my hon. Friends are here, including my hon. Friends the Members for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen), for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva), for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) and for Rochford (Dr. Clark), who has a particular interest in the matter, as well as my hon. Friends the Members for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn), for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), for Newark (Mr. Alexander), for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) and for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith).

I am only surprised that my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), a senior member of the Administration, is not here, as he would normally be. As the House will know, he is engaged in the public expenditure round. He is a constant writer on Cyprus and visitor to the island, as are all the hon. Members present tonight. That reflects the intense interest that the House rightly takes in the matter.

The Adjournment debate today is opportune because Cyprus is very much in our minds as a result of the key talks taking place in New York even as we speak. The United Nations Secretary-General, building on the work of his predecessor, has done remarkably well in narrowing down the differences. The proximity talks at the United Nations this summer were very difficult, but some progress was made on most of the important issues. We are now at the point where face-to-face negotiations are starting.

The talks reconvened on 26 October in New York and moved to face-to-face discussion on 28 October. These are still early days and so far only limited ground has been covered. But both sides appear to be taking a constructive approach to the talks. The sessions have been full and lengthy. The Secretary-General's set of ideas, to which the hon. Member for Knowsley, South referred, provides an outline of a federal settlement along bi-communal lines. Cyprus must remain one country, but in reality it houses two communities and that must be recognised.

Security Council resolution 774, passed unanimously in August, endorsed the set of ideas as the basis for a solution. Within that framework, the detail must be negotiated between the leaders of the two communities. That involves a great deal of effort in rebuilding trust between the two Cypriot peoples.

If I may digress for a moment, it seems that the interest that has been shown in the debate by several hon. Members reflects in many instances not only the responsibility of the United Kingdom, with which I shall deal later, but the number of Cypriots from both communities who make a substantial contribution to life in Britain. I suspect that that is what first elicited many hon. Members' interest in the matter.

I have had many meetings with Cypriot constituents who have been introduced to me by hon. Members—I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton has done so. It seems that Cypriots from both communities who live in the United Kingdom now have a special responsibility and opportunity to play a part. It may be a little presumptuous of me to say so, but we shall not find the solution to this tragic problem if those of us who talk to people feel that there must be 150 per cent. support for one side of the argument or the other. British Cypriots have a role to play in saying to the leaders of the two communities that they want a settlement and recognise that, by definition, any settlement will involve substantial sacrifices on both sides.

I am not making a criticism, but I sometimes feel that hon. Members with a particular interest in one or other of the two communities are a little more partisan or papist than the Pope in defending the legitimate interests, as they see them, of their constituents in Britain. Now more than ever, British Cypriots can contribute towards a settlement.

Mr. O'Hara: I appreciate the Minister's concern for the feelings and the contribution of the native Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Would he be prepared to visit Cyprus to have direct discussions with those members of the island's population now resident there?

Mr. Garel-Jones: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the whole thrust of Britain's support for the peace process in Cyprus is based on the support that we and the international community give to the Secretary-General's efforts. That support is tangibly demonstrated by the effort that we make in supporting the United Nations force in Cyprus.

We can claim that Britain has lived up to the responsibilities and opportunities presented by our position, both within the United Nations and with other major partners. I think that hon. Members know that an immense amount of diplomatic effort has been made by the United Kingdom with all parties. The Secretary of State and I have held lengthy discussions with our Greek and Turkish counterparts, and with President Vassiliou. There has been continual British contact with Mr. Denktash; and senior officials in Nicosia, New York, Athens and Ankara, as well as London, have been involved throughout. I appreciate that many of the negotiations conducted during the dispute take the form of megaphone diplomacy and that Britain's responsibilities to both communities and as a guarantor power involve us in an immense amount of work that is, of necessity, in the background.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green spoke of UNFICYP. We remain committed to maintaining a peacekeeping force in Cyprus for as long as it is necessary to do so. I am glad that the improved political climate in Cyprus and the stable security position have meant that current force levels are no longer needed. UNFICYP is a substantial strain on the finances of the troop contributors. The cost to the United Kingdom now runs at about £30 million per annum. It has also been a strain on the manpower and resources of the Ministry of Defence, given the increasing United Nations commitments we have elsewhere, particularly in Bosnia and Cambodia.

After extensive discussions with the other contributors, all contingents are reducing this December. The Danish contingent is withdrawing altogether. The United Kingdom will still be the largest contributor and will provide an even higher percentage of the total force. So there is no doubt that we intend to continue to play what I think we can claim is more than our full part in this important duty.

The UN set of ideas specifies that the two communities shall be politically equal following a settlement, each having its own majority zone of the federal state, and sharing power at the federal level.

The status quo is not tenable in the long term. Recognition of the Turkish republic of northern Cyprus would cement division, increase tension and make UN efforts more difficult. On the contrary, we must seek to promote reconciliation. That is the purpose of the effort that we are putting into the current negotiation. At the specific request of the UN Secretary-General, our high commissioner to Cyprus will be in attendance throughout the talks now going on in New York.

Sir Dudley Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that since the intervention, unfortunate as it was, there has not been one killing or murder in the island of Cyprus?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am glad to confirm that.

At the end of the day, it is not in the power of the UK, the United Nations or anyone else to compel a working solution. That must depend on the political will of the two Cypriot communities.

We should not underestimate the difficult choices that that involves for both sides. Greek Cypriots must agree to genuine power sharing that accepts Turkish Cypriots as a politically equal community. Turkish Cypriots must agree to give up some of their unequal share of the island.

Dr. Boutros Ghali and the Security Council have pointed the way to a settlement which can bring peace, security and the chance of prosperity to all Cypriots. Now is the best chance for a generation to solve the dispute. I very much hope that President Vassiliou and Mr. Denktash will find the courage to make the necessary compromises.

The international community is watching events in New York very closely. I do not think that that community will forgive failure due to intransigence. I very much hope that the House and the hon. Members who have attended this debate and who have influence in this matter will seek to persuade the two leaders meeting in New York and the Cypriot communities in the United Kingdom to strain every effort to make it possible to bring this tragic dispute to an end.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 3 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LONDON UNDERGROUND (JUBILEE) BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received in the last six months on the future of wages councils.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I have received a number of representations from employers and others.

Mr. Wallace: Although the Secretary of State for Employment has said that wages councils should have no permanent place in the labour market, should those of us who fundamentally disagree take heart that she has not said what the position will be with regard to the employment Bill. Can she confirm that she has received representations from shopping hours deregularisation organisations, among others, and that some backstage deal has been stitched up between her Department and those who want total deregulation of Sunday trading to put wages council reform on the back burner?

Mr. Forsyth: My right hon. Friend would never get involved in any backstage deal. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that in the Department of Employment we are concerned to have the maximum number of jobs in this country. As wage fixing destroys jobs, wage councils will have no permanent place in the labour market.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that wages councils destroy jobs in the same way as the introduction of a national minimum wage would destroy jobs? It is scandalous that the Labour party wants to become the party of higher unemployment.

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Labour party fought the general election committed to a minimum wage, which would have destroyed 2 million jobs. At a time of high unemployment, it is amazing that the Opposition adhere to that job-destroying dogma.

Ms. Eagle: Given his views on wages councils, will the Minister tell the House how low he thinks it reasonable for wages to fall?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady ought to be aware that about two thirds of the people covered by wages councils are paid above the minimum wage level set by those councils. Wages should be determined according to an employer's ability to pay and to local wage conditions; if that does not pertain, people lose their jobs. It is better to have low pay than no pay.

Dr. Liam Fox: Does my hon. Friend agree that the problem with wages councils is that they take no account of performance and profitability, and have no place in a proper market economy?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend's observations about some of the limitations of wages councils. It is important to recognise that those who are subject to wages councils—we are talking about only 10 per cent. of employees—cannot have remuneration systems that take into account productivity or commitment to training. In a flexible labour market, that cannot be right.

Mr. Galbraith: Why did the Secretary of State, in a letter to the Equal Opportunities Commission, maintain that most women covered by wages councils work only for pin money? What is the evidence for that? Is the Minister aware that, in a recent parliamentary reply, his Department was unable to produce one shred of evidence to support that claim? Will the Minister ask the Secretary of State to withdraw that remark, to recognise the number of women who are the principal source of family income, and to try to base his future policy on facts and not on fiction and prejudice?

Mr. Forsyth: If anyone should withdraw anything, it is the hon. Gentleman. My right hon. Friend made no assertion that people were working for pin money in any letter, as the hon. Gentleman well knows. Of the people who are subject to low pay, 80 per cent. are in households where there is another source of income. The hon. Gentleman ought to recognise that. *[Interruption.]* I shall be happy to write to him to set out the position. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that my right hon. Friend is committed to encouraging employment opportunities in this country for women. Wage fixing would destroy opportunity.

Training Credits

2. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to extend the use of training credits.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): We will extend credits progressively, year by year. Our aim is that, in 1996, every 16 and 17-year-old leaving full-time education will have the offer of a training credit.

Mr. Lester: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. She may be aware that I and another hon. Member originally suggested training credits because of our belief that it was the best way to motivate young people. It gives them a choice: they can choose where to spend their training credits, and those who seek to train must offer facilities that attract them. That is the best possible way to ensure that Government money is spent on motivating young people and seeing that they get the qualifications that are most needed.

Mrs. Shephard: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his enthusiasm for the training credits cause. More than 35,000 young people have been using credits since the initiative began. About 10 per cent. of the national total of 16 and 17-year-old school leavers are covered by the 11 pilot schemes. We intend to extend those schemes, with a new round starting in April 1993.

Coal Mining Communities

3. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if it remains her policy to maintain the real value of the funds of the training and enterprise councils in addition to those announced by her right hon. Friend, the President of the Board of Trade, to assist coal mining communities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: An announcement about overall resources for training and enterprise councils for future financial years will be made after my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announces this year's public expenditure settlement.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Minister agree that if the Government are claiming to go for economic growth, that claim can never be reconciled with any cut in the training and enterprise budget? Is it not a fact that the Secretary of State is currently battling to maintain the budget even at its present level and that if she fails, as I understand is likely, she will resign?

Mr. Forsyth: No is the answer to both parts of that supplementary question. The hon. Gentleman should realise, for example, from the point of view of 16-year-olds, that during the last Parliament the numbers staying on at school went up from just under half to nearly two thirds.

Mr. Wareing: I was asking about cuts.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman cannot argue that money should be spent on school provision as well as on training—*[Interruption.]* The Government have created an opportunity for our young people to be involved in full-time education, in training or in employment. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that.

Mr. Richards: Will the Minister confirm that the money set aside for the mining communities is, indeed, new money?

Mr. Forsyth: The package announced by my right hon. Friend provides for £75 million to be available, should closures take place, to the communities affected. That money will be administered and co-ordinated through the training and enterprise councils concerned.

Mr. Dobson: Why are the Government cutting back on help for the unemployed when thousands are being thrown on the dole every week? Is the explanation madness or badness?

Mr. Forsyth: Never has such a wide range of measures and resources been committed to help the unemployed to get back to work. The measures include training and job clubs and a whole range of other services. I totally repudiate the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question, which does not take account of the splendid work being done by the Employment Service throughout the country to help Britain back to work.

Unemployment

4. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action is being taken at a European Community level under the British presidency to help combat unemployment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friends are fighting to complete the single market and secure a conclusion of the GATT round, which is vital for jobs in Europe. We shall also continue to oppose job-destroying measures such as the working time directive.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Will the Minister take every opportunity to impress on the Commission that bureaucracy and regulations destroy jobs?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend, and if I were to make a criticism of the Commission and the Community, it is that in the past they have concentrated far too much on measures geared to those in work. There are 16 million people unemployed in the European Community. It is high time that we had a package of measures which recognise that job creation depends on creating the conditions in which businesses can expand —and that means deregulation and a concentration on free enterprise, not more regulation to destroy businesses and employment.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the Minister agree that any further delay and dithering on Britain's position in relation to the rest of the European Community, specifically our attitude to the Maastricht treaty, will drive away foreign investment and have a devastating effect on jobs in this country?

Mr. Forsyth: I could not possibly agree with the hon. Gentleman. He must be aware that one of the things that needs to be discussed at the Council in Edinburgh is the impact of the Delors 2 package, which will mean redirecting some 40 per cent. of the resources currently provided to help the unemployed through the European social fund away from the unemployed and towards those in employment. The hon. Gentleman should not confuse being pro-European with not looking after our country's interests.

Mrs. Currie: May I support my hon. Friend's announcement of a package of measures to combat unemployment and urge him to tell us what they are? If the European Community means anything, it surely means co-operation between nations to work together to ensure that all barriers to employment are removed. For example, interest rates should be reduced throughout Europe so that we, like the United States of America, can recommence growth.

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is important that we make progress in reducing interest rates. Now that we are out of the exchange rate mechanism, we have seen further progress in that area. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in her capacity as President of the Social Affairs Council, has promoted a package of measures which I shall send to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). My hon. Friend will be delighted that the Danes plan to continue that during the course of their presidency.

Mr. Mandelson: Will the Minister confirm that, prior to the recent Council meeting in Birmingham, the President of the European Commission wrote to the Prime Minister and asked him to place unemployment and a Europewide programme of measures to combat it on the agenda for that Council meeting? Will the Minister explain why the Prime Minister turned down that request out of hand? Will the Prime Minister rectify that by placing the issue of jobs and measures to tackle them high on the agenda of the forthcoming Council meeting in Edinburgh?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is obviously blissfully unaware of the Social Affairs Council which took place in Chepstow, where that matter was the main subject on the agenda and where Ministers from throughout Europe focused on it. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in calling for a completion of the single market and the GATT round, both of which are vital to employment throughout Europe and the world.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend accept that throughout Europe, including Chelmsford, many thousands of jobs are being lost in defence-related industries as a result of the peace dividend? Given that those losing their jobs are highly skilled members of the work force, does he agree that the European Community should seek to look at that problem and try to come up with a constructive package so that those people can be put back to work and use their skills for the benefit of each member state of the European Community?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree that that is an important matter. My hon. Friend is right to focus attention on those who are made redundant, perhaps in mid or late career, as a result of structural changes of that kind. One of the matters that we must concentrate on fighting within Europe is the practice of ageism, which discriminates against people because of their age. The European Community institutions are guilty of that themselves.

5. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she is taking to reduce unemployment in Cheltenham.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): The Employment Service and training and enterprise councils deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help unemployed people back to employment. In Cheltenham, as elsewhere, these programmes are tailored to take account of special local circumstances.

Mr. Jones: May I press the Minister on the answer that he gave a few moments ago? Does he believe that the ratification of the Maastricht treaty will be good or bad for jobs in my constituency?

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has clearly made the point about the ratification of Maastricht. The simple fact is that a number of inward investment programmes would be in danger if we were unable to complete the single market. Inward investment is the important point.

European Community

6. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the main issues which she is currently discussing with the European Commission and Britain's EC partners.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As president of the Social Affairs Council, I have taken a wide range of initiatives. These include discussions on unemployment in the Community, on improving the implementation and enforcement in member states of existing EC legislation, and on subsidiarity in the field of employment and social affairs.

Mr. Riddick: Is my right hon. Friend aware that British industry and the textile industry in particular, are strongly opposed to the working time directive? Is that directive not a prime example of where subsidiarity should apply? Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that she will do everything in her power to resist this damaging and job-destroying directive which, with the social chapter, Opposition Members are only too happy to support?

Mrs. Shephard: I share my hon. Friend's concern. I am pleased that our express concerns were met at last June's Council. The problems now with the working time directive are with two other member states. We are considering the findings of a technical working group to see whether we can make progress, but the principle of the directive remains unacceptable to the United Kingdom in that it breaches the principle of subsidiarity and it should not have been introduced as a health and safety proposal. We intend to challenge its legal base in the European Court, should it finally be agreed to. I remind my hon. Friend that there is at present no directive.

Mr. Janner: Does the Secretary of State accept that to combat unemployment a first-class training programme is essential, that our programme is grossly underfunded, and that the Department's budget for training is already woefully inadequate? If she recognises that, will she undertake to do everything in her power to get money from the EC for training, and will she assure us that in the meanwhile she is fighting hard to retain the budget that she has? Can she assure the House that she will keep that budget in the face of a vastly growing tide of unemployment?

Mrs. Shephard: We are devoting £2·6 billion to training in the current year. That is supplemented by £20 billion from industry. Part of our training budget does, indeed, come from European structural funds and we shall continue to press for our fair share of those funds.

As for the hon. and learned Gentleman's last question, negotiations with the Treasury continue.

Mr. Butler: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Milton Keynes we have more than 80 European and foreign-based companies, largely as a result of the Government's policies? Will she join me in congratulating the employers and work force of Milton Keynes on the unique fact that year on year statistics show that there has been no loss of jobs in Milton Keynes between 1991 and 1992—a well-deserved achievement?

Mrs. Shephard: I do indeed congratulate the employers and work force of Milton Keynes—and also my hon.

Friend. He will recall that I paid an interesting and pleasant visit to the Milton Keynes training and enterprise council recently.

It is clear that completion of the Maastricht treaty is necessary if we are to continue to attract inward investment to Britain, with a stable place in the heart of Europe.

Ms. Quin: If the Secretary of State and her colleagues are right, which they are not, to say that measures of employment protection destroy jobs, how is it that Britain has the fastest rising unemployment in the European Community?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Lady will know that we started from a lower base. She will also know, since she studies these matters, that more people are in work here; we have a higher participation rate than any other EC country apart from Denmark. That is something to be proud of. Unemployment in France, Spain and Ireland is higher than in this country. The main point is that we have more people in work, and that includes women as well.

Manufacturing Employment

7. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the change has been both in numbers and percentage terms of those employed in the manufacturing sector in the north-west from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: Between June 1979 and June 1992, the number of employees in manufacturing in the north-west region has fallen by 399,000.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that that figure must be set against the many people who were involved in manufacturing industry? Is he aware that there have been similar falls of over 30 per cent. in output and investment? These statistics show why manufacturing industries are being destroyed in the north-west and underline why the economy is in such a mess and the pound so weak in comparison with the deutschmark.

Mr. McLoughlin: Not at all. The number of employees in manufacturing industry has been falling since 1966. There is nothing new about a reduction in the number of employees in the industry. In the United Kingdom there is a higher percentage of the work force in this sector than in Australia, Canada, Denmark, the United States, the Netherlands and Spain.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Will my hon. Friend confirm that more than 600 firms from abroad are now based in the north-west for the British market and the Common Market? It is bizarre that Opposition Members speak up in the Chamber for jobs but tomorrow they will vote against jobs.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is perfectly right. We have been successful in attracting jobs as a result of inward investment because overseas companies have found the United Kingdom the most attractive place in which to invest and create jobs. These are jobs that the Labour party's sidekick—the TUC—describes as alien to our culture, but that is not how we describe them: we describe them as extremely important and recognise that they make an important contribution to the United Kingdom generally and to manufacturing industry particularly.

Mrs. Wise: Is the Minister aware that in Preston 2,000 jobs that depend on the manufacture of trains hang by a thread? Those jobs could be saved if the Government were to go ahead with the extension of the Jubilee line. Will the Department be pressing for the extension?

Mr. McLoughlin: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend accept that, since time immemorial, the bulk of the wealth of the United Kingdom was created in the north-west, and that companies in the north-west are in very good shape and have a great deal of capacity available? If the GATT rounds are successful and if other things are put in place —for example, the vote on the Maastricht motion tomorrow night—the region can once again start to shine and create wealth.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I think that he is entirely right.

Mr. Bryan Davies: In the light of the disgraceful figures that the Minister has revealed, is there one body concerned with manufacturing industry in the north-west, or one industrialist, who endorses the Government's industrial policies?

Mr. McLoughlin: We have set up a number of training and enterprise councils, which are designed specifically to adapt to local circumstances to answer the needs of local industries. I will not take any lectures from the Opposition, who regard inward investment as something alien. We certainly do not.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend rejoice with me that it would appear that we have saved the European fighter aircraft, the finest aircraft since the TSR2, which Harold Wilson destroyed? If that is the case, it will assure a great many jobs in the north-west and elsewhere.

Mr. McLoughlin: I realise that my hon. Friend follows this subject closely. I am grateful for her comments.

Labour Statistics

8. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is 2,843,300 people.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Secretary of State now tell us the whole truth, which is that there are more than 3·9 million unemployed people if we use the original counting base that was inherited by the Government? Is the right hon. Lady not ashamed of today's revelation in "Labour Research" that state benefits for unemployed people are among the lowest in the European Community, amounting to only 14 per cent. of average earnings compared with 90 per cent., for example, in Denmark? That goes to prove that the Government are fiddling the figures and cheating the victims of unemployment.

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman will no doubt be pleased to note that the September figures show a fall in unemployment in his constituency. I totally reject his figures. He knows that we have calculated unemployment, based on payments since 1986. That is a correct and easily understandable way of calculating unemployment. These figures have been corroborated by the findings of the labour force survey. The hon. Gentleman, who follows these matters, will no doubt be delighted by that corroboration. When it comes to benefits, the hon. Gentleman should ask not about the amount that is paid but about how long payment continues.

Mr. Ralph Howell: As most unemployed people desperately want to work and in view of the success that workfare has had in the United States, which my right hon. Friend recently visited to examine that system, will she confirm that serious consideration is being given to introducing the workfare system in this country?

Mrs. Shephard: I know that my hon. Friend is enthusiastic about workfare. However, all the indications are, as he knows, that workfare is very expensive to organise. He should remember that unemployed people are not an inert mass who can be pushed around. They are all individuals. Such a provision might be suitable for some but not for others. What is important is that unemployed people should have the opportunity, if they so wish, to keep in touch with work skills. Employment action, as part of the range of measures that we have within the Department, performs that function.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is increasing concern among the Sikh community that the Government's refusal to extend the exemption regarding protective headgear to all industries is likely to increase unemployment in that community? In view of that and of the unacceptably high unemployment figures, will the Secretary of State at this late stage change the Government's attitude?

Mrs. Shephard: The regulations emanate from the European Commission. I am aware of the concern. My hon. Friend is closely in touch with people in that community, but it is a Commission regulation.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Secretary of State contrast the £26 billion that it now costs the Exchequer to fund unemployment here with the £2·6 billion that she quoted as the figure that we now spend on training? Will she also contrast the misery and despair that is felt by the millions of people who have been thrown into unemployment by the Government with the hopelessness of the training programme that her Department makes available? She will be judged by what happens during the present round of Cabinet deliberations—by whether she comes out of those deliberations not with a standstill or cut budget but with a bigger budget. Then we can begin to put proper money into training schemes, not simply for those who are already unemployed but for those who will be thrown out of work over the next 12 months.

Mrs. Shephard: Perhaps I might correct the hon. Gentleman by telling him that benefit costs to unemployed people are £7·36 billion, not the figure that he mentioned. Of course I have every possible sympathy for people who become unemployed, and for their families. It is a devastating blow. What matters is that the range of measures that we have introduced are cost effective and work fast. Two thirds of the people who become unemployed find employment within six months. A quarter of them find employment within a month. For those who do not, we need the range of measures that is provided by both the Employment Service and the training and enterprise councils. A record amount of money is being spent on a record number of measures. That is what unemployed people want, and that is what we shall continue to provide.

Qualifications

9. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures she is taking to produce a better qualified work force.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We are making significant progress in a number of areas in securing a sustained rise in Britain's skills.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for her reply. Does she agree that an increasing proportion of the work force is achieving qualifications, and that the proportion has increased dramatically in the past few years? Furthermore, does she agree that a highly trained and highly skilled work force is essential for Britain's future economic prospects?

Mrs. Shephard: I agree with my hon. Friend. We now have 2[illegible] million more qualified people in our work force than only five years ago, and 2 million more have qualifications at or above A-level. It is important, however, to maintain the effort. Investment in people, the national training targets and work on non-vocational qualifications will ensure that progress continues to be made.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the £2·6 billion training budget, to which the Secretary of State referred, adequate?

Mrs. Shephard: There is always a case for more, but it is important that we make the best possible use of the resources that we have, which we do. The £2·6 billion is administered by 1,300 business men in charge of training and enterprise councils. They are used to working with the resources that they have. On the underlying point of the hon. Gentleman's question, negotiations continue.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that more than three quarters of the working population have qualifications, compared with two thirds only eight years ago? That is principally due to the efforts of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, which is trying to improve vocational qualifications throughout industry. Will she ensure that the textile sector is the lead body of the carpet industry rather than the construction sector, so that it can award qualifications more appropriate to the industry?

Mrs. Shephard: The figures that my hon. Friend quotes are correct. I shall pay careful attention to the point that he made about the carpet industry, which I know is of much interest to him and his constituents.

Mr. Leighton: Does the Secretary of State know that many chairmen and directors of training and enterprise councils resigned because of previous cuts to their budgets? Unless she defends and increases her budget this year, there will be widespread disillusionment and disenchantment and she will undermine the TECs for the future.

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman, I think, is working on a false premise. Chairmen and directors of TECs have resigned, but mostly because they have been promoted and moved elsewhere. I remind the hon. Gentleman that such people are actively concerned in business, and that when they need to make career moves they do so. They are used to working within budgets and I know that they will make the best of whatever they are given, as they are doing at the moment.

Mr. David Shaw: Further to the excellent news that my right hon. Friend has given the House about the Government's encouragement of qualification and training programmes, can she explain why none of the present programmes was available in 1979?

Mrs. Shephard: I think I can. The extraordinary position of the Labour party is that it has consistently opposed and voted against any training measures that have been introduced since 1979. Perhaps it is not very keen on training.

Wages Councils

10. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate she has made of the likely effect on wage levels for women working in jobs covered by wages councils when considering if wages councils should be abolished.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As wages councils are a barrier to employment, their abolition would improve job prospects for women.

Ms. Mowlam: In an earlier answer on wages councils, the Minister said that the Secretary of State had not written to the Equal Opportunities Commission saying that women covered by wages councils worked for pin money. I have that letter in my hand, which states very clearly that women covered by wages councils bring only a secondary income into the family—in other words, it is not crucial, it is pin money. Will the hon. Gentleman be honest with the House and acknowledge that women's work is not marginal and should be paid a decent wage?

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's help in correcting her hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) who said that in the letter, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had talked about pin money. Only the Opposition would be patronising enough to describe people who work for a second income in the home as working for pin money. My right hon. Friend did not suggest that phrase.

I also stand by my statement to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden that 80 per cent. of wages council workers are in households with two or more wage earners. The biggest source of poverty is not low pay; it is having no job. Wages councils destroy employment.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my hon. Friend agree that wages councils, which were originally set up to protect work forces, have lived long enough to become oppressive? Not only do they tend to promote a low-wage culture, but they are often extremely rigid in their work practices, when modern women want a more flexible way to work. Is not it also true that in industries and jobs in which women predominate and in which they are not covered by wages councils, such as nursing, word processing and information technology, women do very much better and have more flexible ways in which to work?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is a doughty spokesman for modern women and I agree with everything she says. Wages councils may have been relevant in 1909, but they are certainly not relevant to the 1990s.

Mr. Dobson: How can the Minister be confident that women on wages council pay are only secondary sources of income to their families when his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), the Under-Secretary of State, in answer to questions from me yesterday, said that the Department did not know how many women who depend on wages council pay were the principal source of income? Is not it a fact that the Secretary of State's letter was based on prejudice and has not an ounce of data behind it?

Mr. Forsyth: I do not think that my right hon. Friend will take lectures about prejudice from the hon. Gentleman. According to *The Independent*, at the Labour party conference the hon. Gentleman described business people who paid their workers low wages as "thieving scum". The sooner the hon. Gentleman realises that the key to employment is creating the conditions in which businesses can make profits and generate opportunities for the work force, the better. The hon. Gentleman may describe those business people as "thieving scum". Conservatives describe them as job creators.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will my hon. Friend offer his congratulations and thanks to Joanna Foster, the chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission as she reaches the end of her five-year term of office? Will he confirm that Conservatives are committed to equality of opportunity and not to the fictitious equality of achievement which the Opposition promote?

Mr. Forsyth: I certainly join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to Joanna Foster's remarkable period as chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission and to its work.

Public Service (Employment)

11. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of public service jobs at risk over the next year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not possible to make such an estimate.

Mr. Cohen: Some people will find that an incredible answer. How many jobs of teachers, of firemen, of health workers and of local government workers do the Government envisage getting rid of? Is the figure 250,000 or 500,000, or more? Will not that make the recession worse? Will not a public sector freeze on pay be vindictive to those workers, who not only do an excellent job but who are not themselves immune from the recession?

Mr. Forsyth: For perhaps the first time in my life, I agree with Mr. Rodney Bickerstaffe, who pointed out the relationship of purchasing power to job creation in the marketplace. The hon. Gentleman should know that the higher public expenditure which he advocates can be met only by higher borrowing or by higher taxes. That would result in jobs being destroyed because of higher interest rates, or because people's purchasing power in the marketplace would be reduced.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My hon. Friend referred to wages councils. Have the Government, in their capacity as employers, agreed any pay rates for their employees anything like as low as the hourly rates equivalent to those in wages councils' orders?

Mr. Forsyth: As I am sure my hon. Friend, of all people, will recognise, I pointed out that 80 per cent. of wages councils workers were in households with two or more wage earners. My hon. Friend will appreciate the significance of that.

Earnings

12. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the west midlands are receiving half or less than half of male average earnings.

Mr. McLoughlin: Around 190,000 men, including those working part time.

Mr. Burden: Does the Minister accept that the figure is far too high? Is he aware that more than half the employees in public services in the west midlands are low paid and that, in the coming year, when the Government savage public expenditure, the number of people on poverty pay in the west midlands will increase? Will the Government change their mind and introduce a national minimum wage?

Mr. McLoughlin: There we have it—an incredible about turn. I thought that even the Labour party had learnt that the concept of a national minimum wage had received a no from the electorate. I find the hon. Gentleman's remarks odd, coming from a member of the party which voted against the introduction by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of a lower 20 per cent. tax band. Labour Members like to see people earning low wages and paying high taxes.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Chisholm: Is the Prime Minister aware of a report by Age Concern, trailed in this morning's newspapers, which reveals that 750,000 elderly people are at risk of developing hypothermia this winter? Now that the Government have launched a winter warmth telephone line, what reply will be given to the large numbers of people requiring help with fuel costs and insulation? The Prime Minister has spent £7·6 million——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is Question Time, and I expect questions rather than long statements.

The Prime Minister: I seem to recall that when the Labour Government were in power, there was no assistance with heating matters whatever. I will study carefully the article that was in the press this morning, and so will my right hon. Friend.

Q2. **Mr. James Hill:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hill: Does my right hon. Friend agree with the views expressed by the president of the Confederation of British Industry and many other leaders of industry in Monday's edition of *The Times*—that it is absolutely essential for the good of our economy that we ratify the Maastricht treaty?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with those views expressed by British business. I think that business knows that our self-interest is inextricably bound up with our membership of the European Community. I believe that our business leaders are as well aware of that as anyone, for they will know of the huge flow of trade between ourselves and the European continent.

Mr. John Smith: When the Governor of the Bank of England tells foreign journalists, as he did yesterday, that there is a vacuum at the heart of the Government's economic policy, is not that a telling revelation of the Government's economic incompetence?

The Prime Minister: Of course that is not remotely what the Governor of the Bank of England said yesterday. When he spoke of being uncertain about the real state of the economy, he echoed the words also used by the chairman of the United States Federal Reserve about the United States economy, and the thoughts of many people throughout the world about the present international situation.

Mr. Smith: Does not the Prime Minister recollect precisely what was said by the Governor of the Bank of England:

> "I feel more uncertain about the real state of the economy than at any time I can remember"?

He went on to say that that uncertainty

> "had compounded the sense of policy vacuum created by leaving the ERM."

If there is no vacuum, why does the Governor think that there is one?

The Prime Minister: I responded to that point a moment or so ago and the right hon. and learned Gentleman may care to look back at that. The Governor was making the eminently sensible point that has been echoed by other people elsewhere that it is extremely difficult to forecast at present, both domestically and in the international economy. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should understand that, as should every Member of the House.

Mr. Smith: The Prime Minister cannot dodge the fact that the Governor said that there was a vacuum at the heart of the Government's economic policy. Is there or is there not a vacuum? If there is not, why does the Governor say that?

The Prime Minister: There is no vacuum at the heart of the Government's policy whatsoever. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was one of the foremost supporters of our membership of the exchange rate mechanism at one time. He supported it when we entered it, at the rate we entered it and he stayed with it right the way through to the end. His post hoc revelations at the moment will cut no ice with anyone. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out with great clarity at the Mansion House and before precisely how the economy is managed.

Sir Richard Body: Will my right hon. Friend have time today to study the remarks of Mr. Martin Bangemann to the effect that the Maastricht treaty is a fundamental step towards a federal union? Has my right hon. Friend any reason to doubt that?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I have seen Mr. Bangemann's speech and very silly and ill-informed it is too. Mr. Bangemann, an official, had no part in the discussions at Maastricht, Lisbon or Birmingham. His speech, frankly, is wrong and my hon. Friend may be interested to know that the Commission has already made it absolutely clear that those were personal remarks by Mr. Bangemann and they do not reflect the views of the Commission. Nor, can I assure my hon. Friend, are they my views, the views of this Government or the views of any mainstream Government in Europe.

Mr. Ashdown *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. No one enjoys a robust House more than I do. However, that is going over the top.

Mr. Ashdown: Is it not the case that those who tomorrow night vote to damage Britain's future in Europe, vote to do more damage to the economy, to stop inward investment and to make sure that thousands more people in Britain pay for that with their jobs?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. There was a time when the Leader of the Opposition said that he had

> "always believed that Britain's future lies in Europe, and that we must take a confident and leading role in the . . . Community".

His idea of taking a leading role now is to hide behind the Danes or anyone else to hide the split in his own party. The reality is that this country exports £60 billion worth of manufactured goods to the European Community. It receives £17 billion worth of inward investment as a result of our membership and last year an independent survey showed that two thirds of non-European—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order so that we can hear what the Prime Minister has to say. *[Interruption.]* Order. All corners of the House must come to order.

The Prime Minister *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Skinner: That was a planted question.

Madam Speaker: Order. I call the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I think that the whole House will know that they are shouting to hide their confusion and embarrassment. I repeat that an independent survey showed that two thirds of non-European investors came to this country for jobs in Scotland, Wales, the north-east and elsewhere precisely because of our membership of the European Community.

Mr. Bellingham: Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister turn his attention today to the Maxwell pensioners, many of whom reside in west Norfolk? Will he welcome with me the announcement by our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security that an extra £100 million will be available? Does my right hon. Friend agree also that no effort must be spared in trying to locate the missing funds?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly agree with my hon. Friend about that and congratulate my right hon. Friend the Social Security Secretary on the lead that he has taken in this whole matter.

Q3. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hain: Will the Prime Minister personally halt the proposal from the chief executive of Swansea's Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to contract out more than 3,000 jobs, many of them to be relocated from Wales to England, or is he so paralysed by the Government's crisis that his response will be from "Spitting Image", "Oh dear, dunno mate"?

The Prime Minister: The best I can say about the hon. Gentleman's question is that it is worthy of him.

Q4. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the increasing pressure of bogus asylum seekers is placing great trouble not only on this country but right through Europe? Is he aware that Chancellor Kohl might seek to introduce curbs on bogus asylum seekers in the same way as we did yesterday? Is not that yet another example of other countries following the United Kingdom lead?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend on both his propositions. The number of asylum seekers arriving in Europe has more than doubled in the past three years, but only a very small proportion of them are found to be refugees as defined by the convention. There is not a problem just for this country, it is a problem which all European countries are anxious to deal with; and it is why in this country we decided to reintroduce the Asylum Bill. Other countries will be taking their own measures, as my hon. Friend has said.

Q5. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Does the Prime Minister share my concern about the future of Kenneth Clark, a constituent of mine who later this month will lose his job after 42 years' service at the British Jeffrey Diamond Mining

Engineering company in Wakefield? Is the Prime Minister aware that there is no £37,000 compensation for Mr. Clark, merely a few months' equivalent of wages? Can he advise me what I should say to Mr. Clark? What is his message to Mr. Clark and the thousands of other people who are not miners but who are losing their jobs in industries such as mining engineering directly because of the lunatic policies being pursued by the Government in respect of the coal industry?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that difficulties about employment exist not only in this country, not only in the mining industry but all around the world. The hon. Gentleman will also know the various packages of assistance that are made available, not least the remarkable assistance available through the training and enterprise councils which has been enlarged and improved by this Government.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is no greater threat to racial harmony in a country than the fear of unrestrained illegal immigration and that the measures that we introduced yesterday to restrain bogus asylum seekers are in the best interests not only of the country as a whole but of people in racial minorities already living here and of genuine asylum seekers?

Madam Speaker: Order. That question is a bit long for Question Time.

The Prime Minister: I do agree with my hon. Friend about that. There is no doubt that good race relations in this country depend on removing unnecessary and unrealistic fears. That does mean strong immigration control and it does mean that we have the right asylum policies.

Q6. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday, 3 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* the hon. Lady—to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I know that the Prime Minister suffers from some confusion, but I hope that he can tell the difference between the sexes.

May I ask the Prime Minister what answer he will give to those of my constituents working for British Rail who now risk losing their jobs because of rail privatisation? Or does he intend to treat them in the same way as the other 5,000 of my constituents who have lost their jobs in less than two years, to give my area the fastest unemployment growth rate in the north-west?

The Prime Minister: I apologise to the hon. Lady. At the outset, in the noise, I had not heard who was being called. I offer my apologies to her for any discourtesy on that point.

On the substantive point of British Rail privatisation, we are seeking with this privatisation, as with the privatisation of other formerly public services, to improve the service to the public and to ensure that it is as good as can be provided for the amount of money that can be made available to it—the right policy for the Government to follow in both British Rail and other public services.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Time is up. *[Laughter.]* Order. Will the House settle down?

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As a new Member, I have become increasingly aware of the difficulties of being called to ask a supplementary question at Question Time, and I have reflected on the fact that part of the difficulty for the Opposition is that 290 hon. Members are entitled to put supplementary questions from the Opposition Back Benches and only 250 from the Government Benches. Will an occasion present itself tomorrow evening, when 20 hon. Members on this side of the House, those on the Liberal Democrat Benches, will be supporting the Government, for you to consider them in future as being part of the Government side so that we can balance out Question Time?

Madam Speaker: It is a most ingenious suggestion that I do not think I will take up at this stage or at any other.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. There has been a very important statement by one of the Commissioners, Martin Bangemann. Could you use your good offices to ensure that a copy of it is placed in the Library before the vote tomorrow night because, from the exchanges during Prime Minister's questions today, it looks as though other Commissioners and the Government may well try to cover up the statement by Martin Bangemann that the Maastricht treaty is a step towards a federal Europe? It seems to me that Parliament should have the original statement for consideration before the debate tomorrow.

Madam Speaker: I will use my best endeavours.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I know the importance that both you and the House place on the availability of documents. I wish to draw your attention to two documents which are directly related to subsidiarity, one produced by the Commission of the European Communities and one which ought to come from the Government, which could be relevant to tomorrow's debate and which might not be otherwise known.

You will know, Madam Speaker, that at the Birmingham European Council Mr. Delors gave an exposition of this matter and press reports indicated that the Commission was producing an extensive report on the matter. On 26 October, in the Select Committee on European Legislation, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs indicated that this document had not been received by Her Majesty's Government, but on inquiring this afternoon from the Vote Office I have obtained this document, of 25 pages, dated 27 October, which is now in the Vote Office and which I believe to be relevant to tomorrow's debate.

In the normal course of events, this document would be the subject of a memorandum from Her Majesty's Government, responding to the contents. It is a communication from the Commission to the Council and the Parliament. This would be passed to the Select Committee on European Legislation for report to the House, but, of course, the time scale may not allow for that. May I have an assurance that the document will be fully available before tomorrow's debate, and that—if Ministers have time—either a Government memorandum will be published some time tomorrow, responding to the document's contents at least in part, or such a response will be made during the opening speech in the debate?

Madam Speaker: The Government are always anxious —rightly—to ensure that documents relating to our debates are made available to hon. Members ahead of time. The documents are extensive, and require a good deal of attention. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for raising the matter.

Let me draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the Prime Minister's answer to a question on the same point. He said:

> "The Commission's paper on subsidiarity will be deposited today in accordance with the usual procedures. There are no current plans for wider distribution."—[*Official Report*, 2 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. *30*.]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the four Questions on the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

INSURANCE

That the draft Insurance Companies (Amendment) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

PUBLIC HEALTH

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Lead in Ducks and Geese) (England) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—[*Mr. Boswell.*]

Question agreed to.

Elimination of Poverty in Retirement

3.35 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to move,

> That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require local authorities and health authorities to monitor the condition of their retired population; to eliminate standing charges on gas, electricity and water; to exempt pensioners from licence charges and telephone rental; to extend pensioners' concessionary fare schemes; to make provision for the calculation of old age pensions by reference to average earnings; and to appoint a Minister with responsibility for retired people.

As I am sure you are aware, Madam Speaker, this is the eighth time that I have tried to introduce such a Bill. I have done so because I believe that one measure of the way in which a civilisation treats its people is the way in which it treats its elderly people. We have read press reports today that describe the plight of elderly people who are dying needlessly from hypothermia in the winter. We have also heard the Government's response.

There was a time, not so long ago, when the Government claimed that the average income of retired persons' households had risen by a third since they took office in 1979. We do not hear so much about that now. The Government worked out the figures by adding together occupational pension schemes and the income from shares and other investments accruing to a small minority of pensioner households.

The vast majority of pensioner households rely on the state old-age pension to maintain themselves. They rely on public services to provide themselves with health, housing and transport. In short, they rely on the rest of the community. The tragedy is that, in the past few years, provision by the rest of the community has been woefully inadequate. The Government have also exerted enormous pressure on individuals to invest in their working lives, either in occupational pension schemes—and the Maxwell pension scandal has shown the danger posed by the way in which many such schemes are administered—or in personal portable pension schemes. The performance of those schemes also brings the Government's strategy into question.

The Bill—which is supported by millions of pensioners—asks for something more than that. It asks for a real increase in the state old-age pension. When the Government took office in 1979, pension law—set down by a Labour Government in 1975—stated that, every year, the state old-age pension should be increased in line with the increase in the retail prices index or in line with average earnings, whichever was the higher. In 1980, the Government broke that link, substituting a rejigged RPI which has cost every pensioner in the land around £15 per week. Since the Government took office, £25 billion has been stolen. The value of the state old-age pension as a proportion of average earnings has fallen from just under 21 per cent. to rather less than 16 per cent., and it is set to fall still further.

On top of that, the fact that health authorities around the country are closing hospitals and the centralising of facilities for secondary care in huge general hospitals make it difficult for pensioners to go to those hospitals and to visit relatives there. As local authorities—beset by rate capping and charge capping—are forced to cut services at the behest of a Government dedicated to market forces, it is the old and vulnerable who suffer. It is they who suffer because of cuts in leisure facilities and social services, and, often, the privatisation of the bus services means that they get an inferior public transport system. All those things make life worse for pensioners.

In the rejigging of the retail prices index some years ago the Government succeeded in hiding what I believe to be the true cost for pensioner households of the way in which the retail price system works. The average increase in the retail prices index for the first quarter of this year was 4·1 per cent. for the population as a whole. For a two-person pensioner household it was 6·3 per cent. These figures are taken from the Department of Employment. That shows how pensioners' living standards are consistently falling.

My Bill seeks to make eight points which I believe are within the spirit of those who campaigned for a state old-age pension at the end of the 19th century and gained it initially in the Budget of 1908. They campaigned for society as a whole to care for its retired people and to provide them with a decent standard of living. The eight points that I propose in the Bill are as follows.

The first is the appointment of a Minister for pensioner policy to co-ordinate all aspects of Government policy as they affect the retired population of this country, whether health, housing, social security, transport, education, leisure or the environment.

Further, all local authorities should be required to produce an annual report on the services they are providing for their retired population and to report when they cut services. Many services desperately needed by those not necessarily able to articulate their views to local authorities are at risk of being cut. In London there is a great fear that the pensioners' bus pass will go, as one authority after another tries to get out of operating what is a valuable and important scheme.

Health authorities should be required to report annually on the services that they provide and on the health of their retired people, their life expectancy and the chronic and other conditions from which they suffer. Too many elderly people die from hypothermia; too many are living in damp flats; too many are living a lonely life with nothing to look forward to but premature death when they should be able to look forward to retirement in comfort after a lifetime either in work or at home looking after other people.

The poll tax is now recognised to be a totally iniquitous form of taxation, yet we have a form of poll tax in the standing charges levied on pensioner households for gas, electricity and water. Those charges are greater for those who use the least. The real cost of electricity and gas for a pensioner household is on average 11 per cent. of its weekly income; it is less than 5 per cent. for the rest of the population. The abolition of standing charges, making the extremely profitable private enterprise utilities pay for them instead, would be a major boon for pensioners. Telephone rentals operate in the same way.

Some years ago, in early 1987, my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) tried to introduce a Bill to abolish the television licence for pensioner households. The payroll vote was wheeled in in limousines and the Bill was lost. This Bill seeks to achieve what my hon. Friend was trying to do.

The travel scheme operates in some cities but often not in rural areas. We need a national travel scheme. Other countries can afford it and it would allow retired people the chance to travel to see relatives throughout the

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

country. Otherwise, being stuck at home becomes a form of imprisonment, with the moving wallpaper of the television their only comfort.

All that I have suggested would improve the lot of pensioners. But, at the end of the day, it is the level of the state old-age pension that is important. The national pensioners convention has campaigned, many trade unions have campaigned and my own party has campaigned for a much larger state old-age pension. We could afford it in view of the tax handouts that have been given to the very rich.

My Bill proposes that in future state old-age pensions should be increased to half average earnings for pensioner couples and one third for single pensioners. This country can afford it. It can also afford to increase them every year, in line with the rise in earnings or prices, whichever is the greater, as was provided for in the Social Security Pensions Act 1975.

This is a ten-minute Bill and I know of all the difficulties associated with such Bills. I hope that the House will understand that millions of people are watching what we are doing. Millions of pensioners, after a lifetime of work, want something more than scraping around in queues for EEC butter, or looking around for remnants at jumble sales or car boot sales. They want dignity in retirement. With the support of many inside and outside the House, the Bill, if enacted, would go some way towards directing national expenditure to where it belongs—to those who most need it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mr. Neil Gerrard, Mr. Tony Banks, Mrs. Audrey Wise, Mr. Alan Simpson, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Bill Etherington, Mrs. Alice Mahon and Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn accordingly presented a Bill to require local authorities and health authorities to monitor the condition of their retired population; to eliminate standing charges on gas, electricty and water; to exempt pensioners from licence charges and telephone rental; to extend pensioners' concessionary fare schemes; to make provision for the calculation of old age pensions by reference to average earnings; and to appoint a Minister with responsibility for retired people: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 76.]

Orders of the Day

Housing and Urban Development Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: I must inform the House that between 6 and 8 o'clock I have no alternative but to limit speeches to 10 minutes as pressure to speak in the debate is considerable.

3.46 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The principles underlying the Bill are those of choice, standards and opportunity: the choice and opportunity to own one's home; the right to decent standards for council tenants; and the opportunity to revitalise our cities. Those principles are at the heart of the Government's philosophy for housing and the inner cities.

Part I of the Bill fulfils our manifesto commitment that long leaseholders of flats and high-value houses should have the right to buy the freehold at a fair market price. That is a major step towards the removal of the landlord-tenant relationship, which has made the leasehold system so unpopular for more than a century.

Long leasehold is a form of ownership, comparable in most respects to freehold ownership, but it suffers from two drawbacks compared to freehold. First, a lease is a wasting asset. A new long lease costs virtually the same as the equivalent freehold, but its value declines inexorably as the term expires, which makes a lease increasingly difficult to mortgage and has knock-on effects on the property market and population mobility.

The second problem is that leaseholders are generally considered owner-occupiers, but legally remain tenants. In flats, control remains with the freeholder, but all the upkeep and insurance costs are paid by the leaseholder. The Consumers Association recently found that nearly half of all leaseholders reported serious problems with their freeholders, including difficulties in getting in touch with landlords; failure to carry out repairs; overcharging for services; and the misuse of funds.

Part I of the Bill seeks to deal with those problems. It must be sensible that the people with the greatest financial and personal interest in a property should have the right to control it.

Our proposals mark one more stage in the process of enfranchisement. Leasehold enfranchisement was considered as far back as 1884-85 by the Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes and by a Select Committee in 1886. The first Bill to seek to provide a right of enfranchisement was introduced in 1884.

A Conservative Government instituted the most significant reform of our land tenure system since the reforms of Edward I in 1290—the Law of Property Act 1925. The next step in the process was again taken by a Conservative Government when the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, gave leaseholders the right to a statutory tenancy once the lease had expired, which helped leaseholders, but did not go far enough in giving them control. The Conservative party then promised enfranchisement in its 1966 election manifesto. Parliament subsequently accepted the principle in the Leasehold

Reform Act 1967. That Act gave most long leaseholders of houses the right to enfranchise, but it did not tackle the problem of flats.

In 1974, the Conservative Opposition successfully moved amendments to increase rateable value limits and thus extend the scope of the 1967 Act for houses. We now believe that the time has come to extend the right to enfranchise to flat owners.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that owners of houses and flats who wish to improve their property in ways that are entirely congenial with surrounding property are prevented from doing so by the lease owners, who oblige them to use the lease owners' surveyors and architects at considerable expense, plus VAT? Does he further agree that such alterations could easily be supervised under the existing planning laws?

Mr. Howard: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point, with which I agree, and she underlines the importance of not confining these rights to flat owners. For the reasons that I have given, chapter I of part I of the Bill gives most long leaseholders—I am dealing first with flats and will later come to the point made by my hon. Friend—the right to purchase collectively the freehold of their building.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I accept the principle and intent of the Bill, but my understanding of clause 5 is that it would give a head lessee on a low rent with a long lease the ability to enfranchise in a block which he owned, and that he could do that even though he was not the tenant of any of the flats in the building. I cannot imagine that it was ever the policy intent that a head lessee should be in that position. Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that that is so, and agree to consider the drafting of the provision in Committee?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is broadly speaking right, and I have no doubt that we shall discover in Committee that there are many points where finely balanced arguments exist as to how we prevent anomalies of various kinds arising. My hon. Friend has alluded to one such difficulty. There are others, and they will be discussed extensively in Committee.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that one of the biggest anomalies is the question of fair compensation—he used that phrase—because it is now widely accepted that when the deal is done—it is known as a marriage deal—there will be a substantial profit to the leaseholder at the expense of the freeholder? Surely Conservative party policy should not condone robbery. Will my right hon. and learned Friend examine the matter afresh in Committee or rename the measure the Building Societies (Robin Hood) Bill?

Mr. Howard: I am sorry that the first intervention with which I must disagree comes from my hon. Friend. I do not accept that the fair compensation clauses in the Bill do anything other than what they purport to do, which is to provide fair compensation. No doubt that, too, will be discussed exhaustively in Committee. The provisions of the Bill in that respect do not warrant the criticisms that my hon. Friend levelled at them.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale) *rose*—

Mr. Howard: I will give way to my right hon. Friend, but then I must make progress.

Mr. Jopling: Is the Secretary of State aware that many of his hon. Friends are astonished that the present Government, of all Governments, should be seeking to force people to sell their property and have freely made agreements broken by the will of the House? Is he further aware that many beautiful squares and streets in this capital city may no longer be maintained as they are? Will he bear it in mind that the concept of a fair market price, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) referred, will be nothing of the sort and gives great offence to many of us?

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) raised several questions in that intervention. I have already replied to the point that he described as the most important. I do not accept his strictures and I ask the House to reflect on the fact that it is impossible to reform the law of property without affecting existing interests. If one accepts that, from time to time, reforms will be needed, one must also accept that that need will affect existing interests. I accept that it is important that any interests that are so affected should be the subject of proper compensation. I contend that the Bill provides for proper compensation. My right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare clearly take a different view and the details of that matter will no doubt be canvassed at considerable length in Committee.

As I was saying a considerable time ago, chapter I of part I gives most long leaseholders of flats the right to purchase collectively the freehold of their building. To qualify, flat owners must have a long lease—with an original term of more than 21 years—at a low annual rent in a building in which at least two thirds of the flats are let on long leases. A majority of at least two thirds of those qualifying leaseholders must agree that they wish to enfranchise. Properties in which more than 10 per cent. of the floor area is in commercial use, and conversions of four or fewer flats with a resident landlord, will be excluded.

Chapter II gives long leaseholders of flats in properties that are not eligible for enfranchisement, because, for example, less than two thirds of the flats are on long leases or more than 10 per cent. is in commercial use, an alternative individual right to extend their leases for a 90-year term at a peppercorn rent. That will tackle the problem of diminishing leases.

Chapter III extends the right to acquire the freehold to those living in higher value houses. When those in flats, regardless of value, and those in the vast majority of houses have the right to enfranchise, I do not believe that we can justify the anomaly of excluding high-value houses.

As for compensation, the leaseholders will pay a fair market price for their landlords' interest. That will comprise the investment value of the freeholder's interest in the block plus at least 50 per cent. of the so-called "marriage value"—the extra value that comes about from bringing the freehold and leasehold interests together into one set of hands. Leaseholders will, in addition, pay all reasonable legal costs incurred by the freeholder.

That is a much more equitable basis than that which the Labour Government used in 1967 for houses with low

[Mr. Howard]

rateable values. I therefore hope that both sides of the House will welcome this extension of freedom and choice to another substantial sector of home owners.

Concern has been expressed—indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale expressed it a few moments ago—about the proposals' "heritage" implications for some of the fine areas of central London. That is why chapter IV of the Bill provides for landlords to apply to the leasehold valuation tribunal for the approval of an estate management scheme. A scheme will be approved and registered as a local land charge if it is in the general interest that an estate should retain powers of management in an area to maintain the appearance and amenity, and regulate development of that area. I know that many large estates have traditionally managed whole areas in London and elsewhere to high standards. The provision will ensure that they can continue to exert that benign influence.

The public sector housing provisions contained in part II of the Bill——

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Before the Minister leaves part I, and as he has not mentioned commonhold, will he explain why it is not mentioned in the Bill? Does he recall that, more than a year ago, the Minister for Housing and Planning gave a clear pledge that a Bill to introduce commonhold would be introduced as soon as parliamentary time allowed? Why has that not happened?

Mr. Howard: The position is entirely as explained by my hon. Friend some time ago. A provision will be introduced to establish commonhold as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman consider this Bill an appropriate vehicle in which to bring in commonhold?

Mr. Howard: No. The responsibility for commonhold rests with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. No doubt in due course such provisions will be introduced, but time does not permit that now.

Part II of the Bill contains the public sector housing provisions and the rent-to-mortgage scheme. The right-to-buy provisions have been one of the major achievements of the Government. The right to buy has enabled nearly 1,500,000 tenants to become owner-occupiers since 1979. It has irreversibly changed the perceptions of tenants about the choices that should be open to them. The opportunity to own a home is one that we now intend to extend to a further group of public sector tenants through the rent-to-mortgage scheme.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): The Government have presented the right to buy as a matter of high principle, but it is not a principle which is universally applied. Before 1988 the vast majority of people in social housing had the right to buy because they were secure tenants, but since then, with the advent of private finance in the social housing category, a new group of assured tenants has been created, and assured tenants do not have the right to buy. Does that show that the introduction of private finance is a higher principle for the Government than the right to own; or does it show that the main purpose of the right to buy has in practice been to undermine the role of district councils as providers of social housing?

Mr. Howard: No, I do not share the hon. Gentleman's conclusions. We need a balanced approach to the provision of social housing. It is extremely important that we encourage the private sector to make its contribution to that provision. The housing association movement, together with the private sector finance which it has so successfully levered into the provision of social housing, has an important part to play.

Under the rent-to-mortgage scheme, tenants will be able to buy their homes by spending the same amount on a mortgage as they do on rent. The sum that would have been rent will finance a mortgage for an initial payment with which a tenant can buy his home. The balance of the purchase price will be covered by an equity mortgage from the landlord. It will not have to be paid off until the purchaser sells up and moves. The rent-to-mortgage scheme will therefore give tenants the chance to buy their own homes without increasing their outgoings.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Secretary of State will be aware that local authorities own considerable amounts of accumulated capital receipts which the Government prevent them from spending on new build. Given the calls for a boost to the economy, especially to the construction industry, and the problem of homelessness, may we look forward to some good news soon about the use of those capital receipts?

Mr. Howard: I hope that that intervention from my hon. Friend—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hon. Friend?"] I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that I am right to beg his pardon in this instance. In any case, I hope that his intervention shows that he accepts the proposition expressed so emphatically by the present leader of his party during the last election campaign: that questions of the release of capital receipts have considerable macro-economic implications. They must always be taken into account when assessing the extent to which receipts can be released, and the matter will continue to be examined in the context of its macro-economic implications.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Howard: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, who was so conspicuously sat upon during the election campaign by the leader of his party when he ventured to step out of line on the issue of capital receipts.

Mr. Soley: I have been following the Minister's trips around the country when he has mentioned this incident, but he gets it consistently wrong. It did not take place during the election and it was not about capital receipts. It was about whether talks had taken place to bring the public sector borrowing requirement definition in the United Kingdom into line with the European definition. We want to know whether under article 105 of the Maastricht treaty the Government have already brought the PSBR into line with the European definition. If they have, does it mean that they can distinguish much more clearly now between capital and revenue investment?

Mr. Howard: Article 105 is not yet in force. The hon. Gentleman will have to wait a while before we come to deal with that sort of definition in the way in which he has suggested. It is undoubtedly the position—I understand the hon. Gentleman's sensitivity—that the intervention that he made on this matter during the election campaign and the implications for the public sector borrowing requirement of the treatment of capital receipts turn on the point that I made earlier. He had promptly to disown his intervention in the campaign, for which he had to apologise at the insistence of the present Leader of the Opposition. Those are the facts. I think that I must now press on.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose*——

Mr. Soley *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

Mr. Hughes: The Secretary of State made an important point about the financial consequences for those who avail themselves of the rent-to-mortgages scheme. He said that they would not be worse off in terms of their outgoings. He will be aware that one of the major complaints of those who purchased under the right-to-buy scheme is that they have been saddled with excessive and unexpected capital or service charges. Can he give an undertaking that while the Bill is passing through the House he will deal with the concern of local authorities that do not have money to carry out repairs and the concern of those who bought under the right-to-buy scheme who find that they cannot keep up their payments because of bills that they never expected to have to face?

Mr. Howard: There are safeguards in the provisions, as I think the hon. Gentleman will accept. It will be made clear to anyone who contemplates taking advantage of the provisions that we are discussing that exercising the right to buy involves greater responsibility for the cost of repairs. That is an important matter and something which anyone who is contemplating taking the step will need to take into account.

As I have already said, we remain committed to the extension of home ownership. We fully recognise, however, that individuals who remain tenants in the public sector have the right to expect high-quality service from their landlord. Part II therefore also contains important new measures for them. Public sector tenants have the right to improve their own homes and to invest in them. They have the right also to expect a decent level of service from their landlord.

The citizens charter promised to examine the existing right to repair. We want to simplify and strengthen procedures for the most urgent types of minor repair affecting health, safety or crime prevention. The Bill introduces powers to establish a new right of repair. Tenants will have the right to get urgent minor repairs carried out quickly and with a minimum of bureaucratic complication where their local authority has failed to undertake them properly. I believe that this will make a real difference in meeting the problems that public sector tenants encounter in their daily lives, which most often cause the deepest frustration. I believe that it will be a significant improvement.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I welcome the Secretary of State's remarks about the rights of public sector tenants. I want to ask him about a group of tenants who appear to have been omitted from the Bill. I refer to tenants who are covered by housing action trust schemes.

As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, there has been much unhappiness among potential HAT members about the lack of any guarantees that at the end of the operation of an HAT the tenants will have the right to opt for a return to a local authority landlord. Further, there are worries about whether local authority landlords would have sufficient money available to them to buy back the properties concerned if they wished to do so. As I understand it, strong guarantees are being given by Ministers, particularly by the Minister for Housing and Planning, that as soon as an opportunity arises these matters will be taken on board and made the subject of legislation. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman promise us that he will at least consider amendments along the lines that I have indicated?

Mr. Howard: The short answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question is yes. When I was Minister for Housing almost three years ago I first gave the undertaking to those who became tenants of housing action trusts that they would have the right to revert to council ownership, should they so desire, at the end of the HAT period. Those undertakings have been repeated by my hon. Friend. It would be appropriate, as I understand it, to amend the Bill to provide statutorily for the right to which the right hon. Gentleman referred.

Very often, tenants of local authorities spend their own money improving their home. In our manifesto, we said that we believe that it was right that they should have some compensation for that expense if or when they eventually moved away. Clause 109, therefore, provides for a scheme to be established to enable secure local authority tenants to claim compensation for home improvements. Tenants will, I am sure, welcome this further encouragement to develop more of a stake in their property.

I come now to our proposals on the delegation of housing management. Our purposes here are twofold. We want to pave the way for the introduction of competitive tendering as a spur to efficiency in housing management, and we want to give tenants real and direct influence over the management of their homes. Local authorities should have nothing to fear from competitive tendering. Where they are best able to provide the services, the competitive framework will enable them to continue to do so, but where those services can be better provided by others it must be in the interests of tenants that they should be. However, as we have always emphasised, compulsory competitive tendering must go hand in hand with an enhanced role for tenants. The present tenants' veto power on management delegation is no longer relevant in a competitive framework.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Why?

Mr. Howard: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman why, if he will contain himself.

In its place, local authorities will have new obligations to consult their tenants fully on the way in which their homes are to be managed. Tenants will also have a new role in monitoring the performance. Some tenants, however, may want to go further. Our Bill therefore provides a new right to manage for tenant organisations. Local authorities will be required to pass over the—

[Mr. Howard]

management of estates to tenant organisations, where tenants are able and willing to take it on. The proposals thus represent the most important extension of the rights of tenants to influence the management of local authority housing ever put before the House.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): As a Member of Parliament who represents a Scottish constituency, may I ask whether this legislation covers Scotland? I thought that the tradition was that changes to the law affecting Scotland were normally the subject of a Scottish Bill. Changes to the law affecting Scotland have been tagged on to the end of this Bill. Is that normal, is it a run-of-the-mill procedure, or is it a change of policy by the Government? Will matters affecting Scotland be tagged on to the end of all Bills, or is it a question of doing away with the Scottish Office altogether?

Mr. Howard: It is none of those things. It is a perfectly normal practice. Scottish provisions are entirely integral to the Bill as a whole and form an important part of it. I shall be saying a word or two about the Scottish provisions in a few moments.

Mr. Raynsford: On the compulsory competitive tendering issue, and tenants rights, it is important that the Secretary of State should be reminded of the answer that he gave to me only last week. He was asked, in anticipation of this issue being raised, how many tenants were consulted by the Government about their proposal to introduce compulsory competitive tendering. The answer was very simple—none. Will the Secretary of State please tell the House why there was no consultation whatsoever with tenants if, as the Government claim, they are supposedly acting in the tenants' interests?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman overlooks in his question the fact that the proposals as a whole were put out to consultation. It was open to absolutely anyone to reply to that consultation in the course of that exercise, and many organisations did so.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Can the Secretary of State tell us during the debate how many of the tenant organisations that responded to the document on compulsory competitive tendering said that they were in favour of its being a compulsory principle that should apply to all local authorities? I am still a member of Southampton city council, an authority whose housing management was judged by the Government last year to be well ahead of the field. Is the Secretary of State aware that preparation for CCT is enormously expensive and that that expense falls, in the largest part, on local authority tenants? How can he be so confident that it is right to place that cost on local authority tenants who, as yet, have shown no interest in their local authority being forced to put its services out to tender?

Mr. Howard: Because local authority tenants will benefit from the savings of compulsory competitive tendering. That is the short answer to the hon. Gentleman.

We are also using this opportunity to ensure that local housing authorities can provide the full range of welfare services to tenants who have special needs and to enable them to account for the cost of those services in their housing revenue accounts if they wish. These powers are being taken urgently following a recent Court of Appeal judgment that called into question the legitimacy of such provision. They are designed to avoid disruption to the delivery of the welfare services on which tenants with special needs depend so heavily. They will be introduced on Royal Assent and will apply retrospectively to protect authorities from further challenge.

Clauses 118 and 119 of the Bill will restore a power to contribute to loan charges arising from expenses incurred by local authorities before 1 April 1989 in assisting owners of defective housing. This power was inadvertently repealed by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The intention is that local authorities should be reimbursed the full amounts that would have been due to them if the former power had not been repealed.

In summary, the housing parts of the Bill are designed to give greater control of homes to the people who live in them, by enfranchisement, choice of purchase or a greater say in the management of their property. I know that millions of householders will welcome that extension of their right to choose.

Chapter II of part II contains provisions on housing in Scotland. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke), who asked a question a moment ago, did not wait for me to deal with Scotland. Most of the chapter's provisions stem from commitments in the tenants charter for Scotland and several of them mirror provisions that I have described for England and Wales. Taken together, they will strengthen and improve quality and choice in housing for public sector tenants in Scotland.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): It is rather strange that we are debating a major part of a Bill relating to Scotland, yet no Scottish Office Minister is on the Bench. The rent-to-mortgage scheme has been in operation in Scotland for some time. Local authorities have sold houses to Scottish Homes, whose tenants have been able to convert their rents to mortgages. How many tenants in Scotland have taken up the opportunity of this scheme?

Mr. Howard: An encouraging number of tenants in Scotland have taken advantage of the proposals. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, who is clearly bursting with enthusiasm to serve on the Standing Committee which will consider the Bill, will have an opportunity to explore the matter in great detail with the Scottish Office Minister who will be a member of the Committee.

Mr. Straw: Will the Secretary of State confirm that he has not the first idea how many tenants have taken up the offer in Scotland, and that of the total of 110,000 tenants eligible to apply only 200 have done so?

Mr. Howard: The news from the front is indeed encouraging and should reinforce the House in its determination to treat any quantified estimate of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) with much caution. To the end of September, the number of tenants in Scotland who have bought under these provisions is not 200, as he suggested, but no fewer than 544—more than 100 per cent. higher than he suggested. I am sure that the House will remember the inaccuracy of the hon. Gentleman's claim when he makes similar claims in future, as he doubtless will.

I turn now to part III of the Bill. There are 150,000 acres of vacant land in the towns and cities of England. Added to that, there is land outside urban areas which has been left derelict by mining or by other industrial uses.

There are many reasons for that desperate waste of a scarce national resource. Industrial and urban change—often desirable in its own right—can leave physical scars. Land is often difficult to assemble in crowded cities. Ownership may be fragmented and uncertain. Infrastructure and access may need to be improved.

Whatever the cause of the problem, we cannot afford the waste it represents. Our cities need land for houses. They need land for shops and places to work. They need open space and a good environment if they are to be pleasant places in which to live. Only then will they attract the life and investment so vital to their regeneration.

The urban regeneration agency to be created by part III will be given the task of bringing that vacant and derelict land back into use. It will focus on the reclamation and regeneration of land, but it will operate very much with its eye on the impact of that land on the wider regeneration of the area.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Secretary of State accept that one of the lessons of urban development corporations is that although development is a good idea, if we do not set out in legislation in whose interests the development should take place, the normal result is that it does not take place in the interests of the local resident population or of the local work force? May we please make the objects of the agency such that in future in areas where there are to be urban redevelopment programmes, local people and employment for local people come first?

Mr. Howard: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's point. The extent to which the objects of an urban development corporation or of an urban regeneration agency can be achieved in the interests of local people depends significantly on local people themselves and on the part that they are prepared to play. If, for example, a council such as the London borough of Southwark turns down the offer of a place on the urban development corporation operating within its area, the input of the local authority into the workings of the corporation will be far smaller than might otherwise have been the case. That is the way in which these matters can best be dealt with.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I have given way twice to the hon. Gentleman, so I hope that he will forgive me for not giving way to him again.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, for 14 years I have pioneered the Conservative campaign to involve the Government in getting rid of some of the public vacant land which exists in many of our towns. I congratulate the Government on responding after 14 years.

May I have two undertakings this afternoon from my right hon. and learned Friend? First, I hope that he will involve the private sector in a big way in providing the additional money because, as I understand it, there is no additional money coming from the Government. Secondly, will he consider issuing a directive that land that is vacant, derelict and dormant in the public sector should be utilised first for housing before using the green-field sites outside the urban areas for housing development? In that way, we would give a priority to filling in the urban areas before we destroyed the green fields outside.

Mr. Howard: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for his long campaign and for his undoubted work over a substantial period to encourage the Government to take action in those matters. On his two specific points, I certainly confirm that the urban regeneration agency will give great priority to the levering in of private sector finance. The record of UDCs in making use of private sector finance is second to none. The URA will certainly want to continue in that tradition. I am sure that the URA will have an important part to play in achieving the objective of using urban land to make it less necessary to use open land in the countryside for development.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Does the Secretary of State accept that the problem of blighted and underused land is not exclusively confined to England but besets other parts of the kingdom, too? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman be recommending to his colleagues who have responsibility for other jurisdictions within the kingdom that they adopt similar measures?

Mr. Howard: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland shares the objectives that we seek to achieve through the Bill in England, and will consider the most appropriate way of achieving them in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): I welcome part III of the Bill, which deals with a matter on which I have campaigned for some time. Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that urban regeneration is a long-term process, and will he give the agency freedom from Treasury restrictions so that it can use money as patient money—money invested now at no interest to give returns in the long term?

Mr. Howard: It would be a little rash of me to give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks in quite the terms that he asks. I pay tribute to the work that he, too, has done on these matters, particularly before entering the House. I freely acknowledge that, and I have no doubt that we shall want to consider carefully the points that he has raised. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not give him quite the assurance that he seeks.

The agency will take over three separate land-related programmes—English Estates, derelict land grant and city grant. Those initiatives already have many successes to their credit. For example, since 1980, £28 million of derelict land grant has helped to reclaim the 180 hectare site of the former iron and steel making works in Corby. Half a million square metres of floorspace have been constructed and nearly 15,000 new jobs have been created. The £7 million contribution made by English Estates to a joint venture with ICI at the Belasis Hall technology park in Billingham has brought much-needed white collar and service industry employment to Teesside.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Howard: In a moment.

A £7 million city grant in support of four projects at the heavily contaminated Round Oaks steelworks site in Dudley attracted nearly £30 million-worth of private sector investment.

[Mr. Howard]

I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), who speaks on these matters for Teesside.

Mr. Bates: Has a decision yet been reached on the location for the headquarters of the new urban regeneration agency? If not, may I wholeheartedly commend to my right hon. and learned Friend the north-east of England—and Teesside, in particular—as a shining example of what can be achieved by Government-sponsored urban regeneration programmes?

Mr. Howard: No decision has yet been made about the headquarters of the agency, but on this, as on all other matters, before taking a decision, we shall listen carefully to my hon. Friend's powerful voice for Teesside. My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the example that Teesside provides.

The urban regeneration agency will build on the successes that I have described. It will be able to support the whole process of reclamation and development of vacant and derelict land. It will be a single point of contact and will have the powers and ability to see the job through from start to finish. It will be a body with the skills to maximise the potential of the schemes that are put to it and to seek out new opportunities of its own. It will be a centre of expertise for all those involved in land reclamation and development.

We consulted on the agency over the summer and received wide support for the principle of our proposals.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Howard: No. I must make progress, or I shall be accused of taking far too long.

Of course, the consultation exercise also raised some points of concern. Some in local government feared that they would be marginalised by the URA. Let me assure the House that I intend the agency to work hand in hand with local authorities. We are already receiving requests from local authorities for the agency to work with them. I will want the agency to work with willing partners wherever possible. I hope and believe that that will be the norm.

Many of those who responded to the consultation exercise stressed the importance of existing derelict land grant and English Estates programmes outside urban areas. For instance, much of the present work of derelict land grant falls within coalfields and other former mining areas. The agency will have to establish its priorities in the light of guidance to be issued to it, but the Bill will allow it to operate on vacant, unused, derelict and contaminated land outside urban areas.

The agency will operate at all times within the framework of the planning system and planning policy guidance. The local authority will normally retain full planning powers. However, it is important that an obstructive local authority is not able to prevent the agency from tackling an important area of dereliction. That is why the Bill enables me to designate areas where the agency will possess development control on the UDC model. Designation orders will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Within those areas, the URA will still work within the framework of the planning system and will be expected to take account of local authorities' development plans and regional planning guidance unless there are very good reasons for doing otherwise.

The House will already be aware that Lord Walker of Worcester is to be the first chairman of the agency. I can think of no better person to oversee that work. He has long experience of urban renewal and a track record that is second to none. I am confident that under his guidance the agency will get to work quickly with local authorities and the private sector to bring forward imaginative new schemes for regeneration and renewal.

I said at the outset that the Bill was about choice, standards and opportunity. It gives 550,000 owners of leasehold flats and houses the choice to buy their freehold. It gives 1·5 million council tenants a new choice to buy their homes. It also gives them and the remaining 2·5 million tenants the right to decent standards of repairs, management and maintenance. It brings new opportunities to those living in our deprived urban areas. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.31 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Britain today faces a worse housing crisis than at any time since the immediate aftermath of the second world war. There is record homelessness, record repossessions, record bankruptcies of building firms, record numbers of building workers on the dole and record numbers of families trapped in homes worth less than they paid for them. There is record and rising demand for affordable homes to rent and a record and dramatically falling number of homes being built for rent. There is also a record slump in public investment in housing which has been slashed from its level 13 years ago by more than 50 per cent. in real terms—by £6,000 million a year—as a deliberate act of Tory policy.

That is the worst housing record of any Government in living memory and it contrasts starkly with the speech of stupefying complacency and supercilious self-congratulation that we have just heard from the Secretary of State.

The Government have neither the ideas nor the will to match the needs of the moment and the Bill shows why. It has 162 clauses, 21 schedules, 234 pages, 130,000 words, but not a single line in the Bill will build a single home. Not a single subsection will house a homeless family. Not a single section will lead to a revival of the housing market or put a single unemployed craftsman back to work.

The Bill speaks volumes for the poverty of imagination of the Secretary of State and his Government. It is therefore first a tragically missed opportunity and that alone would be reason to vote against Second Reading. However, there is worse in the Bill. In the doctrinaire pursuit of the privatisation of council housing management, the Bill takes away a central right of tenants to choose who should manage their estates.

Under the provisions of the Housing Act 1985, which was passed, by the way, by the Government, tenants had the categoric right to veto changes in the management of their homes. Section 27 of that Act states that the Secretary of State shall not give his approval to a change of management if a majority of tenants of the houses to which the agreement relates do not wish the proposal to proceed. That provision has meant that tenants' ballots have had to be held on any changes of management. If the tenants have voted against, their will has prevailed.

Under the Bill, those rights of ballot and of veto are to go—abolished by the Secretary of State. In their place, as we heard from the Secretary of State a few moments ago, comes a piece of condescending gobbledegook by which tenants will be informed of any change of housing management and can then

> "make known to the authority their views"

on the proposed changes.

But there will be no ballot and no veto.

The reasons for the removal of those rights of ballot and of veto are simple if chilling. In housing, as in virtually every other aspect of government, the Conservative party has only one policy—privatisation. It does not matter if the prescription is completely inappropriate if it leads, as with the Secretary of State's former pet scheme, water privatisation, to higher charges and prices. It does not matter if the privatisation leads to the loss of thousands of jobs and the destruction of scores of mining communities, as happened with electricity privatisation. It does not matter if the privatisation will ride roughshod over the wishes of the people in whose name it is supposed to be carried out—the tenants—as it will with the scheme in the Bill.

For the Tory party, privatisation has become a god. Privatisation now comes before all—before common sense, before financial probity, and certainly a long way before tenants' rights.

Nothing is to get in the way of yet another seedy scheme of privatisation from the Secretary of State. As we can see from his speech, the Secretary of State is very sensitive to the charge that he is taking away tenants' rights, but he has had precious little to say in explaining why he has done that. In the press notice which he issued on the Bill he did not say a word about what he was doing to tenants' rights. Instead, he left it to his officials who put out what was rather hopefully described as a factsheet which blithely claimed that the

> "tenants power of veto over the delegation of housing management"

was "inappropriate".

Given that explanation, I pressed the Secretary of State on why it was inappropriate. I wrote to him. When he replied, the Secretary of State explained in some detail how the system of contracting out would work. He went on to say:

> "In the circumstances I am sure that the vast majority of tenants will see the continued existence of an obligation to consult tenants by ballot as no longer relevant."

What arrogant, arrant nonsense from the Secretary of State. How can he be certain if he is not going to allow tenants to express their will? As my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) claimed, is he not aware that overwhelmingly the tenants' associations which commented on the consultative document have opposed the loss of their right of veto? If the Secretary of State is as sure as he claims in that letter, why does he not trust the tenants and ask them by ballot in the only certain way of finding out? Why indeed is the Secretary of State yet again treating council tenants as second-class citizens? Under the Bill, private leaseholders are to be given the right to choose who should manage their blocks of flats at exactly the time that the same right is to be removed from council tenants.

I will tell the House why the Secretary of State is taking away the right of tenants by ballot to choose who should manage their estates. He will not let tenants vote because he knows that his schemes for the privatisation of council house management are so inherently unpopular that they would be rejected across the country in one ballot after another on one estate after another.

I spoke about the record of the Secretary of State. There is another record that the Secretary of State will achieve by the Bill. Along with water privatisation and the poll tax, he will go down as the Conservative Minister who took away tenants' rights, and we shall not let him forget it.

Let me turn to the issue of right to repair. No. 6 of those oxymoron, Department of the Environment "factsheets", attempted to explain away the loss of tenants' rights. Factsheet No. 3 in the same series tries but fails to give details of the new right to repair which, as the Secretary of State said, is another feature of this Bill. Everyone—hon. Members, councillors, and, above all, tenants themselves—has every right to expect a high standard of repair service and speedy remedies if things go wrong. That is not at issue. What is at issue is whether the Government have the remotest notion of how to achieve that shared and laudable end, and whether the right to repair in this Bill will be anything more than yet another ill-thought-through proposal which fills a page in the citizens charter but helps scarcely a single tenant.

The House, after all, has been here before. In 1983——

Mr. Maxton: That is right.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has a long memory and he says that that is right. He will remember this—he spoke in the debate.

In 1983 Ministers introduced a right to repair into the Housing and Building Control Bill, with a fanfare of publicity and many overblown claims. I notice that the Minister for Housing and Planning is looking sheepish about this, and well he might, because when we complained, in the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, that the then scheme was "half-baked", the then Under-Secretary responsible for housing—and, my word, how he has risen up the scale in the nine years since—none other than the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), now the Minister for Housing and Planning, sought to rubbish our criticisms of the scheme by

> "doubting the commitment of some Opposition Members to the concept of a right to repair scheme."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B,* 10 November 1983; c. 601.]

Yet we were right and he was wrong.

Three years after the introduction of this much-vaunted scheme and after £40,000 had been spent on publicity for the scheme—most of it in the run-up to the 1987 general election, by some strange coincidence—just 75 tenants had received £7,300 compensation under the scheme. It was, in other words, a dead duck. The scheme has been such a failure that Ministers have even stopped collecting figures on it.

Mr. Maxton: In Scotland the position is even worse than that because there the Government introduced the legislation with secondary legislation required to bring it into force. So far the statutory instruments required to bring the legislation into force have not been laid.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out that, as always, the situation in Scotland is worse than

[Mr. Straw]

that in England, not least because in Scotland there is a form of imposed colonial administration on the good Labour voters there.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Reference has just been made to the attitude of Opposition Members to the right-to-repair legislation in 1983. Is my hon. Friend aware that at the same time, when consulted, the local authority associations, both Conservative and Labour, both the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of District Councils, told the Government that they supported the principle of the right to repair but that the scheme would not work? They offered a scheme which was one page in length compared with the Government's 16 pages, and they simply said that the tenants would not understand it. Will my hon. Friend reflect on whether the Government this time round are doing more to consult local authority associations or take any more notice of them than they did on the last occasion?

Mr. Straw: I am sorry to disappoint my hon. Friend, but they are a bit like the Bourbons: they learn nothing and they forget nothing, these Conservatives. There is no evidence whatever that the Minister, for example, has learnt anything from his past mistakes.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) said, my hon. Friends at the time quoted at length what the local authority associations on both sides were saying and gave extensive examples of how the Government's proposals for a right-to-repair scheme would not work. At every stage the Minister for Housing and Planning, then the Under-Secretary, dismissed our complaints and amendments and said that his scheme would work. It worked as an excuse for publicity for the Tory party, paid for by the taxpayer, prior to the general election, but it worked in no other respect and it has flopped.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): I wonder whether the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) would at least concede that there would be no need for Parliament to legislate on the right to repair if his friends in local government repaired the housing in the first place?

Mr. Straw: If life were perfect, there would be no need for this place to be here, and no need for the Tories to be here. Of course we need schemes to remedy problems when they arise, and that is not an issue between the sides, but our objection to the scheme that the Under-Secretary brought forward, with the full approval of Government Members, in 1983 was that it would not work; and we are at least as sceptical on this occasion about whether this scheme will work.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Will my hon. Friend agree with me that one of the reasons why right-to-repair schemes will not work is that they are not backed up by the necessary revenues in the housing investment programmes which the Government have cut year on year, and that is one reason why we have all the problems that are being mentioned today?

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right. In my judgment and experience, it is Labour authorities that deliver a decent repair service, and Conservative authorities and private landlords represented by Tories who deliver a lousy service.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak) *rose*——

Mr. Straw: No. I have just taken five interventions on the trot, so the hon. Gentleman must excuse me.

In the factsheets that the Department of the Environment officials dished out when the Bill was published, there is in every other factsheet describing the measures in the Bill a section entitled "How will the scheme work?", but there is no such section on the right to repair, explaining how this scheme will work, so the answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Attercliffe is that I do not know how the new scheme will work and I doubt very much whether Ministers themselves know how it will work. But I warn the Ministers that from what little we have been able to glean it looks as though the scheme could turn into a bodgers' charter, with unending scope for argument between tenant, council and contractor, and plenty of opportunity for the scheme to become a nice little earner for unscrupulous contractors working in concert.

Let me give one example on emergency repairs. Under the scheme each tenant must be sent a work order form along with a list of approved contractors who can be contacted if the job cannot be done in a specified time. But how will this improve the standard of service for emergency repairs where a 24-hour service is required? Who will issue this work order form in the middle of the night when the water is gushing down the stairs? How long must the tenant wait before getting another contractor out of bed—two hours or 24?

The 1983 scheme was abandoned because it was, in the words of the consultative document,

"excessively bureaucratic and had a low take-up".

But how will this scheme be any less bureaucratic than the one it replaces?

Turning to the question of rents to mortgage, there is perhaps no better example of the irrelevant, not to say perverse, priorities of the Government than the proposal for a rents-to-mortgage scheme at this time. With thousands of people facing repossession, why has not the Secretary of State come forward not just with a rents-to-mortgage scheme but with an effective mortgage-to-rents scheme of the kind that we in the Labour party have proposed so that owners about to be thrown out of their homes can convert their tenure to a rental one during the recession?

We have heard many claims about the right to buy. The Secretary of State did not say that the right to buy is virtually non-existent at present; the number of people seeking to buy homes at present has dwindled to 17,000 in the first half of this year.

Mr. George Howarth: They would like the right to sell.

Mr. Straw: As my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) says, what former tenants would like is the right to sell rather than be trapped in the homes that they once wanted to buy.

Given the collapsed state of the housing market and the large number of low-income purchasers in serious difficulties, we must question whether now is the time to launch the scheme nationwide. Compared with renting, the rents-to-mortgage scheme that the Secretary of State suggests offers a very poor deal for the tenants. Rents-to-mortgage purchasers will not have repairs done by the council, will have to pay for their own buildings insurance, and will be ineligible for housing benefit, but they will face repossession if they do not keep up with their payments. This scheme will only potentially be of interest to those tenants who cannot afford to buy their homes under the right-to-buy scheme. The Secretary of State is attracting people to take on financial responsibility from exactly those groups who ought to be counselled against the idea of purchasing their own home at a time of such financial uncertainty.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart and I pointed out to the Secretary of State, where the scheme has been piloted it has not been a success. The Secretary of State had better ask his officials for another billet doux. I can tell him, however, that 5,000 sales were predicted under the scheme in Scotland, with 1,000 occurring in the first year; only 200 were achieved. I can also tell him that, according to parliamentary answers, £800,000 has been spent by the Scottish Office—mostly before the election, surprise surprise—on publicising the scheme: £4,000 was spent for each sale. That is a disgraceful example of the Conservative party's use of taxpayers' money to publicise party-political propaganda.

The scheme has not been a success in England, either. In Milton Keynes, just 67 sales have been completed; in Basildon, in my home county of Essex, just 264 of the 6,000 eligible tenants applied to take part in the scheme. Only 39 have completed sales. I should have thought that, given the scheme's palpable failure in England as well as Scotland, the Secretary of State would devote his time and resources to a rather more important way of reviving the housing market.

The proposals for leasehold enfranchisement take up well over half the Bill. The Secretary of State treated us to an interesting historical ramble, from Edward I to the Law of Property Act 1925, which is burnt on the brain and breast of everyone who has ever had to take law exams. He was, however, his usual disingenuous self when he implied that the Conservatives were in power in 1967. It was the Labour party that steered through the 1967 legislation giving leaseholders of houses the right to buy their freeholds. As we saw from the display on the Conservative Benches, it did so in the face of intense opposition from Conservative Members who represent the landed interest in the House.

I am sorry to see that the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), who opposed the Secretary of State, have not had the courage or the courtesy to stay for the rest of the debate. Let me inform them, however—and let me also inform the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls)—that, as the Register of Members' Interests has not yet been published, I hope that Conservative Members who are accepting paid consultancies from landed interests such as the Duke of Westminster will declare their interests before speaking in the debate, and that they will tell us how much money they are taking.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman talks of interests that ought to be declared. Perhaps he, like me, has a lease on a flat in a block in London and will be able to enfranchise it as a result of the Bill. I do not expect my landlord to be deprived by my not paying the market rent. Does the hon. Gentleman expect to deprive his landlord?

Mr. Straw: I assure the hon. Gentleman that, if I had a lease that was about to be enfranchised by the Bill, I would have declared my interest. I have no such lease. It is interesting to note, however, that the hon. Gentleman did not tell us whether he had received a paid consultancy. Perhaps he would like to do so now.

Mr. Nicholls: I shall declare my interest at the time that is laid down in the rules of the House.

Even if the hon. Gentleman has no lease to enfranchise, many of his hon. Friends have such leases. The hon. Gentleman is trying to avoid answering my question by casting innuendo. When he forcibly takes property from other people, does he expect to take it for less than it is worth?

Mr. Straw: I did not catch all of that, but I took it to be rather less than a fulsome denial of the charge that I levelled against the hon. Gentleman. Of course, we all understand that there are special demands on his purse: he has to take taxis when the rest of us would walk.

I take it from what the hon. Gentleman said that he is indeed a paid consultant. We look forward to finding out later in the debate who is paying him, how much he is being paid, and why he is acting not as the voice of his constituents in Teignmouth but as the voice of some landlord in London.

Mr. Nicholls: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman wants to open up a debate about hon. Members on both sides of the House who have been in the predicament in which I have found myself. He might find it particularly instructive, bearing in mind some of the people who have sat on the Opposition Front Bench.

Let me ask my question for the last time. If Opposition Members will be entitled to enfranchise their leases under the Bill, does the hon. Gentleman think it right that they should be able to do so at less than the value of the freehold? I have asked that question three times now. I shall declare my interest at the time that is laid down by the rules of the House. Will the hon. Gentleman tell me whether he approves of taking property from people at less than its market value?

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman's question contains a prior assumption that I do not accept. I will answer his question when he tells me how much he is receiving to speak on the Bill, and from whom he is receiving it.

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): I am a leaseholder with no pecuniary interest, apart from an interest in the flat I occupy. It is in a block, and many of us are worried about what will happen to the Bill. Although—as can be seen in the Register of Members' Interests—I have no pecuniary interest, both leaseholders and freeholders are anxious about how the legislation is progressing. Let me make it absolutely clear that I have no vested interest. Nevertheless, there is no reason why we should not debate the issue.

Mr. Straw: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. Opposition Members are also anxious about some aspects of the Bill, and I shall deal with them shortly.

As I said, it was the Labour party that first introduced into legislation the right of leaseholders of houses to enfranchise their leases. It was also the Labour party that, much more recently, first proposed the extension of that right to flat dwellers, in evidence given in 1987 by my hon.

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Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) to the Aldridge committee on tenure for flat dwellers. As my hon. Friend said when the Government first announced the acceptance of the committee's recommendations in July 1991,

> "At long last we have a definition of the Prime Minister's philosophy: Majorism equals plagiarism."—[*Official Report*, 12 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 1240.]

It does not equal much else nowadays.

We welcome the proposals in the Bill, as far as they go. As they have so little support among Conservative Members, it may come as a relief to the Secretary of State to learn that we shall be supporting them in Committee. The Bill, however, has three serious defects. First, it excludes many leaseholders for no good reason—for instance, leaseholders in blocks where more than 10 per cent. of the space is non-residential. The Secretary of State and his Minister—and perhaps the Secretary of State for Wales when he winds up the debate—should explain the introduction of that arbitrary 10 per cent. limit.

Secondly, the so-called "additional low rent test" is already providing unscrupulous landlords with a loophole to escape the Bill's provisions. That is a matter of particular concern in inner London, and it has already been raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). In, for example, the de Beauvoir estate in Hackney, the ground rent was deliberately set at just £100 above the limit so as to fall outwith the Bill. In the Cloudesley estate in Islington, a ground rent has been set at just £4 above the limit of two thirds of the rateable value, again to avoid the low-rent test. I understand that there are many similar examples on the Grosvenor and Cadogan estates. The Secretary of State may wish to bear that in mind when the owners of those estates next try to pretend that, in opposing the Bill, they have only the interests of tenants at heart.

Thirdly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) pointed out in an intervention in the speech of the Secretary of State, the Bill fails to implement the Aldridge committee's proposals for commonhold tenure for flat dwellers. An important survey by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation recently confirmed that landlords in England are engaging in widespread abuse of their legal responsibilities towards not only those who rent flats but the owners of leasehold flats. The system of tenure is inherently unsatisfactory, as I think is widely recognised by hon. Members.

The Law Commission proposals contained in the Aldridge committee report would not have solved all these problems but would have been a major step forward. As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich reminded the House, the Minister said in July 1991:

> "Legislation to implement the proposals will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time for it can be found."—[*Official Report*, 12 July 1991; Vol. 191, c. 1240.]

We have to ask again why these proposals are not in this Bill. The legislation is already in draft form; the Bill has been drafted. There is parliamentary time available. Indeed, there has never been a Government with so little in the way of new ideas and so much time on their hands. For the Secretary of State to suggest that this Bill had to be introduced by the Lord Chancellor is poppycock, and he knows it. The Lord Chancellor does not sit in this House and a Minister of the Crown must introduce the Bill in this House whoever has introduced it in the other place.

Is abandoning commonhold the price that Ministers have had to pay to such Conservative grandee landlords as the Duke of Westminster to curtail their opposition to the leasehold enfranchisement parts of this Bill? We suspect that it might be.

In Committee we shall move to include commonhold in the Bill and to amend the long title so that we can. Will Ministers oppose us? If they do, every owner-occupier who is a leaseholder will understand that the Secretary of State's commitment to commonhold in July 1991 was no more than a cynical pre-election sweetener, to be abandoned, like so many other Conservative promises, almost before the ink was dry.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Will the hon. Gentleman accept, since I represent many of those who will gain from this legislation, that what they want is the leasehold reform element of the Bill? They recognise that the commonhold proposition, which is a different form of tenure, will be very complicated and may well involve a Bill of some 130 or more clauses, which can quite properly follow later in this Parliament.

Mr. Straw: Given the length of the Bill already and the fact that there is agreement across the Floor of the House about the importance of commonhold—or at least there was in July 1991——

Mr. Howard: There still is.

Mr. Straw: In that case, why the devil did the right hon. and learned Gentleman not make that clear before this? Why did he not make a statement when he was holding his press conference on the Bill that commonhold remains an important commitment of the Government and there will be a Bill? I have not read of his saying anything of the kind, nor has anybody else.

Mr. Howard: I am very happy to say those words now. It is a measure of the desperation of the hon. Gentleman that he is making an issue of something on which there is no controversy or doubt. We remain committed to commonhold. We will introduce it later in this Parliament in exactly the way suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), to whom, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), we owe so much for their campaigning for the measures at present before the House.

Mr. Straw: Yes, we owe a great deal to them, as we do to my hon. Friends the Members for Hammersmith and Greenwich. I think that tenants in London know that they owe a good deal more to my hon. Friends than they do to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's hon. Friends.

I am glad to have that undertaking from the Secretary of State, but I would point out that it was we who had to extract that statement, not he who volunteered it.

I turn, finally, to the urban regeneration agency. When, with regard to Westland, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the former Secretary of State for the Environment, stormed out of the Cabinet in protest at other Ministers making decisions without consulting him—a position of principle which he evidently forgot just a few weeks ago—he spent part of his time writing his manifesto to become leader of the Tory party, entitled

"Where there's a will". On page 169, drawing on the success of the Labour creation of the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies, he recommended an English development agency. He said that we needed an English development agency, a

> "national urban renewal agency to promote, co-ordinate and drive forward the many local development initiatives in which the Department of the Environment is engaged."

He went on to say, uncharacteristically, that this was to be an institution which would be localist in character. He said:

> "The EDA must be the start-up motor, taking out of the hands of government the main initiative for bringing local authority, private and voluntary interests into partnership for joint renewal schemes."

But the right hon. Gentleman had to convince his colleagues of the merits of an English development agency. In this, as with so much else these days, he did not manage that well.

The urban regeneration agency in this Bill is the result, a rather ineffectual mutation of what the right hon. Gentleman had in mind. Far from being localist in its approach—and I listened carefully to what the Secretary of State said—it shows every sign of being strongly centralist. Reserve powers are to be taken to replace local authorities' own planning and local assembly powers. We will examine this proposal with great care in Committee, but it seems to me that the Government have learned none of the lessons of their perpetual whirligig of one so-called initiative after another in their inner urban policy.

Over half of all the public money expended on the 11 urban development corporations has been spent in London docklands—well over £1,000 million out of a total of £1·9 billion. But the sweeping powers given to the London Docklands development corporation, its failure to involve local authorities, especially in the early days, and, above all, its refusal to take proper account of the impact of its decisions on local communities has meant that it has wasted many millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on inappropriate prestige projects and has created remarkably few jobs for local people.

If the Secretary of State wants the URA to work, he will need—to use his own words—to make sure that it works hand in hand with local authorities. I am glad that he said it and I applaud him for doing so. If that is so, may we ask for assurances that membership of the agency will be broadly based and will include councillors from all parties, and that it will concern itself with creating real jobs, with providing social housing and community facilities, as well as with building empty office blocks?

Then there is the issue of resources raised by the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). How much will these be and where will they come from? All we are told in the Bill is that the agency is

> "expected to achieve more regeneration from the resources available to it."

So, after all this, will the agency turn out to be another pre-election wheeze that will fail like so many of the schemes that have preceded it?

Aside from some strong criticism of the detail of this Bill, our overriding case against it is that it will do virtually nothing to ease the crisis in housing which is now engulfing this nation and which is a potent symbol of the collapse of this Government's economic and social policy as a whole.

How different it was meant to be. Just eight months ago, the right hon. Member for Henley, then the Environment Secretary, said:

> "Housing sales under the Conservatives are picking up. All this would change if there were a Labour Government. The recovery in the housing market would be devastated just as it gets under way."

Eight days later, the Prime Minister asserted:

> "We're going to make life easier for people buying their own homes. Our policies will mean a stronger housing market. Labour's policies would destroy the housing market."

But it is the Conservative policies that have destroyed the housing market, that have led to the largest ever fall in house prices and, with them, the assets on which the very survival of so many small businesses is based. It is Conservative policies that have put 450,000 building workers on the dole; and it is Conservative policies that, insanely, have locked up £5 billion of council house sales receipts when homeless families are crying out for new homes, when building workers are desperate for jobs and when the construction and materials industries are desperate for orders.

If the Secretary of State wanted to do something serious and constructive for housing and urban regeneration, he could do so today. He could, and he should, unlock that £5 billion of unused council house sales receipts, allow their phased release, direct them to areas of greatest need, let local authorities start to build new homes and buy empty ones already built, take action which at a stroke would get the housing industry moving, regenerate our urban areas and do something for the hundreds and thousands of people in poor housing or in no housing at all.

If the best that the Secretary of State can do for housing and urban regeneration is this paltry Bill, which will not build a single home, will not save a single family from repossession, and will not put a single extra pound into our inner cities, he will be justly condemned for creating a housing crisis of the most monstrous proportions and for then wilfully refusing to take any effective action to end it.

It is for those reasons that we shall vote against this Bill in the Lobbies tonight.

5.9 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) strangely managed to strike a high moral tone. To me and to my right hon. and hon. Friends it came across as a sort of lofty detachment, or superior wisdom and enlightenment. Achieving that impression was worthy of a character from Dickens. Think of the extent of the contortion required for the representative of Labour-controlled local authorities to give that impression —it is nationally understood that their stock in trade in uncollected rents, unrepaired dwellings, and unresponsive stonewalling to requests for the right to buy. He is the spokesman of one of the most unloved and unlovely figures in English social life—the petty and tyrannical municipal landlord. The hon. Member for Blackburn was dressed up as an angel of light, but if he is such an angel, my right hon. and learned Friend's Bill is a universe of suns shining upon the firmament of housing.

The hon. Member for Blackburn urged us to declare our interests. I may be moving from the ridiculous to the sublime, but I declare my interest as the spokesman of the Church Commissioners in my role as the Second Church Estates Commissioner.

In the benign and accommodating presence of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, I shall comment on landlord and tenant aspects of the Bill which

[Mr. Michael Alison]

bear directly on the Church Commissioners. About 8 per cent. of the commissioners' total asset portfolio is in residential property, and 4 per cent. of that is in leasehold property in London, which amounts to about £100 million worth of residential assets.

My right hon. and learned Friend may know that the Church Commissioners' Hyde Park estate—containing about 1,300 units—is a model of its kind, reflecting an harmonious and uniform appearance and well-managed units of residential property, offering high standards and quality of life to leaseholders, with high maintenance and repair standards.

Many other charities—the Smith's Charities is one—deliver high standards of property management to leaseholders, while contributing to their charitable beneficiaries' long-term interests by a parallel long-term retention of the freehold property interest.

Part I of the Bill will effectively drive the Church Commissioners and other similar charities out of their traditional role in residential property investment and management, because they will lose the right to retain a freehold element.

At a time when it is Government policy and the general consensus that the rental housing market should develop rather than be an exclusively freehold market, is it not paradoxical that the Bill should actively and directly deter charitable organisations, such as the Church Commissioners, from building, owning and leasing residential property? Purpose-built blocks of flats will only be built for freehold ownership or short-term tenancies. What other blocks will be built?

I shall keep my speech brief and sum up my arguments. As owners of substantial amounts of residential property in London, the Church Commissioners are opposed to the principle of part I of the Bill, which, together with the proposed commonhold legislation, will prove one further deterrent to landowners to invest funds in residential accommodation. The introduction of such legislation will further diminish landlords' abilities to retain intact their residential estates, with all the associated loss of control over the uniform and harmonious appearance of some areas of London, and over the residents' quality of life. The repair and maintenance of buildings will inevitably become haphazard under the new regime, if it is carried out at all.

If my right hon. and learned Friend cannot be deflected from the principle of part I of the Bill, I hope that he will consider some modifications. First, dwellings that are eligible for enfranchisement should be occupied by tenants who have been owner-occupiers of the units for five years, and are not merely recent arrivals or fly-by-nights, seeking to cash in on the measures being introduced.

Secondly, the enfranchisement provision should not apply to leases held by companies. We are talking about social improvements and social factors, which are irrelevant to the commercial interests of company leaseholders. This might be a draconian change, but I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will at least contemplate the exclusion of charities from the application of part I of the Bill.

On the qualifying proportion of leaseholders required to trigger the enfranchisement mechanism, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will consider an increase. In the experience of the Church Commissioners as leasehold managers, considerable pressure can be brought to bear by a small minority of lessees, intent on exercising a statutory or landlord-granted right of enfranchisement, on lessees who are timid or reluctant to agree to join in, often the more elderly and unsure. The Church Commissioners suggest that, to qualify for enfranchisement, 75 per cent. of the flats in a building should be held on a long lease, rather than two thirds, and 75 per cent. of the leaseholders should signify their desire to enfranchise, rather than two thirds, before the procedure is set in motion. That is all the more relevant because of a disturbing sentence in the briefing note that I received from the Country Landowners Association, which states:

> "under the proposals a minority of leaseholders could displace the landlord (where two thirds of leaseholders elect to enfranchise a block where only two thirds of flats are on long leases). The majority would be ruled by the minority".

If there were 100 tenants in a block, only 66 per cent. of whom were on a long lease, two thirds of them—44 out of 100—would trigger the mechanism, and that is unsatisfactory.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will consider the general and specific issues that I have mentioned in a criticism of a Bill which is like a shaft of light on many areas of municipal darkness, which are the heritage of the clumsy, unimaginative and in many ways tyrannical municipal housing of the post-war years—the heritage of the Labour party.

5.20 pm

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I move from the housing aspect of the Bill to part III, which deals with the urban regeneration agency. The agency appears to be the Government's major, if not sole, initiative in dealing with the problems of the inner cities. Viewed in that context, and in the present economic climate, with nearly 3 million people unemployed, I find that deeply disappointing, highly irrelevant and a misdirected use of scarce resources.

It is particularly disappointing when we compare the proposal as it appears in the Bill with the way in which it was originally developed. We have here, in effect, a measure to encourage commercial development by the private sector, pump primed by the public sector. It may not be an original concept, and while few may disagree with it, it is nothing like the vigour originally shown by the then Secretary of State for the Environment who has since been astutely moved to the Department of Trade and Industry with a restricted budget and suitable minders.

The President of the Board of Trade, fresh from his wilderness years, saw the value of a large development agency along the lines of the Scottish and Welsh agencies, an agency having within its remit all the urban programme responsibilities, the urban development corporations, certain aspects of the responsibilities of the Department of Trade and Industry and perhaps even parts of the responsibilities of the Department of Employment.

Such an agency would have been a powerful weapon in the fight against urban dereliction, working closely along the lines of the Welsh agency with local authorities and the private sector. It would have created a feeling of urgency and brought hope to the millions of people in the inner cities who face the fierce realities of raising families on unemployment benefit.

A commitment of that type, to an agency working harmoniously with local authorities, might have led to a move towards regional agencies in which local authorities and the Government might have come together to work out sympathetic and sensible policies to deal with the various regional problems that are faced in different parts of the country.

Perhaps the fear of such an evolution in policy forced the Government to retreat, and we are left with a feeble proposal. On the basis of what might have been, rather than what is proposed, I am deeply disappointed, remembering that this is the sole inner city initiative by the Government. It amounts to pump priming derelict land. No wonder the Government have tacked it on at the back of the Bill.

I said that the Bill was irrelevant. We have before us a measure the effect of which is to tempt the private sector on to sites which are at present, because of dereliction, uneconomic. Does any hon. Member know a developer who is willing to invest against the present economic backdrop, even on a prime site? If such a developer can be produced, he will have an immediate invitation from me to come to Leeds. The lack of volunteers tells me that there is knowledge in the House that developers are not queuing up for prime sites. So why the urgency to attract them to derelict sites?

I am not seeking to score debating points—*[Interruption.]*—because this is too serious a matter. I repeat, this is the only inner city initiative by the present Administration, despite the poverty and unemployment there. I am anxious to explain just what life is like in the inner cities.

Mr. Hendry: I am wondering where the hon. Gentleman has been. I urge him to look, in the city that he represents, at the work of the task force and at some of the initiatives, costing £4 billion throughout the country, that the Government are taking in the inner cities. A tremendous amount of work is being done by way of urban regeneration. This measure represents a new initiative on top of that. Does the hon. Gentleman not know that?

Mr. Mudie: I am aware of all that has been happening. For example, I am aware of the urban development corporation that was imposed on Leeds and of the Department of the Environment report that claimed that 5,000 jobs had been created in that city. Is the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) aware that nobody can find those 5,000 jobs? Is he further aware that that UDC operates in secrecy and that some time ago, when the chief executive was asked about those 5,000 jobs, the reply was to the effect that the information was confidential? I am well aware of what is happening in our inner cities.

Mr. Hendry: Will the hon. Gentleman come with me to Clarence dock in Leeds and view the incredible resurgence of that area? Much of the difficulty with urban development corporations has been the refusal of co-operation by Labour local authorities, which are worried because they are faced with a Government who are determined to take action.

Mr. Mudie: I will cheerfully accompany the hon. Gentleman to Clarence dock, but first let me acquaint him with a little history. As a former leader of Leeds city council, before the UDC was a twinkle in Nicholas Ridley's eye, I invited the regional director of the Department of the Environment to Clarence dock. He accepted my invitation and I stood on the canal side pointing out to him the opportunities for development throughout the area. I also pointed out what Leeds city council was doing and listed the planning opportunities and permissions. Although we were undertaking all of those operations and had a £45 million partnership with private sector firms, Nicholas Ridley imposed a UDC on us. Bearing all of that in mind, I will cheerfully accompany you to Clarence dock.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the hon. Member that when he uses the word "you" in that fashion he is really referring to me.

Mr. Mudie: Not in my wildest dreams could I hope to walk along Clarence dock with you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Can the Secretary of State justify the legislative time, ministerial energies and the expenditure of the Department's budget on an issue such as this when, as I have explained, there is no shortage of sites in our cities? Although I concede the scale of dereliction, I urge the right hon. and learned Gentleman to accept that the voices in the inner cities are asking not for the reclamation of derelict land but for employment.

Mr. Steen: While, in the hon. Gentleman's view, the urban regeneration agency may not prove successful, its aim will be to revive and bring back derelict and vacant land. By building factories and houses, employment will be created. I hope that that is the way in which we shall succeed.

Mr. Mudie: I could not have made myself sufficiently clear. Over the years, Leeds city council has cheerfully worked with the Government and the private sector on the concept to which the hon. Gentleman refers. My argument is that at this stage, with the market in its present state, something different is required. If I were in government with scarce resources at my disposal and had to deal with poverty and unemployment in the inner cities, I would not see any urgency, because of the availability of prime development land, in placing the reclamation of derelict land at the top of my list of priorities.

I said that the Bill misdirected scarce resources, and hon. Members will appreciate what I mean. If the President of the Board of Trade had had his way and had been given some ability to be flexible in the expenditure of those scarce resources, the breadth of the initiative would have permitted the movement of funds to whichever parts of the agency were most relevant, in the light of circumstances, in the inner cities. Indeed, funds might even have moved between Departments on a more sensible basis, however scary that may sound to civil servants.

At least £250 million is now committed to an area which the reality of the inner cities suggests is irrelevant. If urban aid programmes have the objective of alleviating poverty in inner cities by enhancing people's job prospects, motivations and skills, scarce money is not being spent in an appropriate matter at the present time.

The Government's unwillingness and the inflexible way in which they feel unable to countenance a move from capital to revenue spending mean that the programmes are set and run even when circumstances change and expenditure is no longer relevant.

[Mr. Mudie]

Unemployment is growing, and people who have jobs are increasingly worried about the permanence of those jobs. On a longer time scale, there is a serious awareness that if and when we come out of the recession, we must avoid skill shortages choking off growth.

Because of the number of jobless people in the inner city —often three times the number in the outer suburbs—and the need to ensure that we have a sufficiently skilled work force to protect future growth, it would be more sensible to direct the £250 million away from the less urgent land reclamation to a person-oriented programme of employment and training.

I commend to hon. Members an article in *The Guardian* last Thursday by Edward Pearce—*[Interruption.]* I hear an hon. Member scoff. I hope that he does not do so before he has read the article. In that extremely sensitive article, Edward Pearce described several cases in the south-east concerning ordinary people who have worked in businesses, raised families and been caught up in unemployment. I do not wish hon. Members to think that I am going over the top. Those good people, who have worked hard and raised their families, have committed suicide because they could not face the stress, pressures and realities of unemployment. That is happening throughout the country.

I appeal to Ministers not to be handcuffed by departmental programmes that are no longer relevant but to change the use of that money and bring hope to the millions of people in the inner city who face a hard future.

5.32 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I mean no discourtesy to the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) in not commenting on the urban regeneration part of the Bill. He will understand that, given the fact that there are 162 clauses, there is rather a lot to get one's teeth into in the brief 10 minutes allowed to us. Other hon. Members will no doubt wish to comment on those matters.

I wish to mention three points raised by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) who, unfortunately, has just left the Chamber. The first relates to commonhold law. Had the hon. Gentleman taken the trouble, as I have, to discuss the matter with my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, he would know that a complex Bill presently on the stocks is to be introduced. Having discussed the matter with the Lord Chancellor's representative in the House, I feel that it would have been inappropriate to mix it with the Bill. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), I am certain that our constituents want leasehold reform first and most.

Secondly, it has escaped neither my notice nor that of my hon. Friends that, when my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) specifically asked the hon. Member for Blackburn whether the Labour party thought that it was proper to take property from owners without paying the correct market value, he declined to reply. I construe from that that the Labour party pursues the policy, as it has indicated in the past, that it does not believe in paying the market price when appropriating—or misappropriating—property.

Thirdly, Conservative Members will take no lessons from Labour Members about the maintenance of municipal housing when the Labour party has a track record of neglect and decay. Labour-controlled authorities throughout the country still maintain thousands of properties that could be occupied by the homeless.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gale: No, because I have only 10 minutes and I wish to make progress with my speech. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will make his own speech in due course, as I know that he is an expert on the subject.

I welcome this massive Bill, which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has taken such care to introduce. It comprises much-needed reform in housing and urban development. I shall confine my remarks to just one part of the 162 clauses—that which deals with management audit, clauses 67 to 75. Will my hon. Friends on the Front Bench pay particular attention to the provisions for management audit? It is a sad fact, known to every Member of the House, that bad landlords exist in the private as well as the public sector and that, far too often, those landlords seek to evade their obligations to their tenants under existing legislation. I am thinking in particular of their obligations to provide proper accounts of service charges and to allow sight of insurance policies on the properties that they own.

Sadly, the people who suffer from such bad management abuse are those who buy the leasehold property that is most common throughout the country —first-time buyers of small flats and, at the other end of the scale, people buying retirement homes, which may be the last major purchase of their lives.

I wish to refer to three instances of constituents' personal experience. In doing so, I shall be careful not to breach the privilege of the House. I do not wish to name names here that I would not name outside the House and I should therefore make it plain that each of the three companies have, so far as I am aware, operated within the law. That is why a change in the law is so appropriate and vital.

A private retirement block in Birchington, called Bierce Court, was built by Lovells the builders. That company decided to engage under contract, for the management of that property, AMSA Management, a company run by Mr. Anthony Apponyi, who likes to be described as Count Anthony Apponyi. That superb development should be the greatest joy and asset to those who bought leases and retired to that private development. It should not be the source of anxiety and distress that it has become for some people. However, in September 1989 the leaseholders of that property discovered that the management company, AMSA, had misappropriated funds and used them for purposes other than the maintenance of the building. Fortunately, they found out in time and, in due course, Mr. Apponyi and his company were required to refund £22,000 of my constituents' money. That is just in one block.

It is not surprising that the leaseholders of that block no longer trust AMSA Management and would like to appoint other managers to their property. But under existing legislation it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for them to remove the managers appointed by the original builders. In the minutes of their recent annual general meeting, they say:

> "A few weeks ago members of our committee inspected the records of our Bierce Court AMSA bank account. These records could have easily been parcelled up and sent to Bierce Court for inspection, but with their usual sense of confrontation, AMSA insisted that the committee members made the journey to Maidenhead"—

from Birchington in Kent—

> "where the cash book, bank statements and receipts file were kept . . . A major factor which arises is that in spite of Mr. Apponyi's continual exhortations over the years for residents to pay service charges annually in advance"—

so that the management company can acquire higher interest, the "sinking fund"—the residents' fund—has at all times been in a low yielding account. That is the kind of bad management to which residents have been subjected.

The records of the Haven block in Margate in my constituency are held by a company in Weymouth. The management company has said that any tenant is free to go and see those records provided that they are prepared to travel to Weymouth. However, they must then find somebody in when they get there to show them the records.

A group of properties in Margate and Herne Bay in my constituency has caused particular anxiety. I want to quote from a letter which will probably strike a chord with hon. Members because it is the sort that we all receive. My constituent writes:

> "When we purchased the flat, the lease was certainly not explained to us to its full extent by our solicitor, and so at the time we did not realise the problems with regard to the maintenance we would encounter.
>
> Our landlord, the lessor of the property refuses to send receipts for maintenance and ground rent payments from us, also we have never had a copy of insurance for the property either and this causes us great concern.
>
> We have had very little repair work carried out on the building (consisting of four flats), in fact work has been carried out on only one occasion and the large amounts of money demanded is very high and out of our control. Plus the fact our bedroom wall is still soaking wet with damp and smells disgusting.
>
> The maintenance problem has got really out of hand—we have to keep borrowing money to pay it—if not the lessor can repossess our home and we are up to our necks in debt because of it. Last year we paid a total of £1,679·87 . . . and have just had to find another £300 just after Christmas, of course borrowed again—what else can we do? As a last resort, we may have to stop paying the mortgage, it seems our only choice. But who wants to be evicted and lose all we have worked for.
>
> We plead for your help, as we are sure that we are not the only people in the same situation."

Unfortunately, we all know only too well that they are not the only ones in that position.

This company, Marlborough Holdings, owned the properties and then sold them to a holding company called Latchguard. Marlborough now manages this company. It will not surprise Members to learn that the directors of Latchguard are P. M. Bazin and G. Bazin, operating from 14 Winterhill way, Burpham, Guildford in Surrey, and that the directors of Marlborough Holdings are P. M. Bazin and G. Bazin, operating from the same place.

I have told the House enough to suggest that bad landlords—they will give the good ones a bad reputation, too—will continue to try to evade whatever legislation the House seeks to impose. I believe that we must ensure that the management audit is within the cost reach and the legal reach of leaseholders. We must provide protection against excessive service charges. And we must give leaseholders the right to change management contracts easily. If we can achieve that, many first-time buyers and many retirement leaseholders will sleep more easily at night.

5.42 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): Perhaps I should declare an interest in that I have a lease on a flat not far from here, but I have no wish to buy it because it is one of the noisiest places in which I have ever tried to sleep. If I have yawned once or twice in this debate, it is not because right hon. and hon. Members have been boring me: it is because last night was especially noisy.

My Liberal Democrat colleagues and I broadly welcome many aspects of this Bill. We also have several worries which we will seek to express by tabling amendments in Committee.

I was grateful to hear the Secretary of State give a commitment to commonhold, for which he says legislation will be presented in this Parliament. We look forward with interest to the arrival of that Bill.

Part I of the Bill, concerning leasehold reform, is to be welcomed, but we are extremely worried that the aim of enfranchisement will be hampered by the number of hurdles put in front of leaseholders seeking to buy the freehold. These hurdles represent obstacles as big as those to be found on Cheltenham racecourse—and believe me, they are big.

The leasehold system is an anachronism. It gives all the benefits to the freeholder and most of the costs to the leaseholder. Reform is long overdue. I am sure that Conservative and Opposition Members will agree that this is one area where we can learn from our European partners, in reforming a system that is unique to England and Wales.

Leaseholders pay virtually the full market value for their property, meet all the repair and maintenance costs, pay for all improvements and yet have only the rights of a tenant, as the Secretary of State said. It is no wonder that up to two thirds of all leaseholders are at any one time in dispute with their freeholders over maintenance issues.

On top of this, leaseholders see the value of their lease decline over time despite a massive personal investment. The system is contrived so that a very small number of freeholders get enormously rich on the back of a large number of leaseholders.

To return to the obstacles: reaching the 67 per cent. enfranchisable qualification will not be easy. The leases must be over 21 years, the ground rent must be low and no more than 10 per cent. of the block must be commercial. We want to know how these criteria were arrived at, why they have been set so high, and why there is a low-rent test when the only difference between a long and short lease is simply the length of the lease.

Perhaps the Secretary of State for Wales could outline the thinking behind these criteria in his reply. These provisions were not mentioned in the Department of the Environment leaflet on enfranchisement in July 1991, and they will have a particularly devastating effect in London where there are many people with long leases granted after 1991, with a ground rent of £1,005 per year—for the sake of £6 they have been disenfranchised.

Any block with four disenfranchised flats disenfranchises the other six. If over 10 per cent. of the floor space is commercial, then the entire block cannot be enfranchised. That means that if just the ground floor of a block is commercial, there have to be at least nine storeys above it for the block to be enfranchisable.

I would like to know what research has been done by the Minister to discover how effective these measures will

[Mr. Nigel Jones]

be. How many blocks of flats will be enfranchisable? Surely not all of them; more like three quarters, a half, or perhaps just one quarter?

The Enfranchisement League estimates that there are 1,500,000 leasehold properties in England and Wales. These proposals will mean that probably only 500,000 of them will be enfranchisable. I would like to see amendments ensuring a much higher proportion. I am also worried about extending enfranchisement to social landlords. I would also like some reassurances that council tenants will have their rights maintained if their block is enfranchised, and that councils will continue to have freedom of nomination into enfranchised blocks.

I and my colleagues from Scotland have had considerable trouble over the part of the Bill concerned with Scotland. It seems discourteous to Scottish Members that this piece of legislation should be included in what is essentially an English and Welsh Act. I should have liked the Scottish part of the Bill to be a separate Act. Had there been two Bills instead of one, the Liberal Democrats would have been minded to vote against the Scottish measure. It is a sign of the Government's weak position north of the border that they are once again relying on English votes to push through legislation that is specific to Scotland.

We welcome the ban on Scottish councillors having housing nomination rights—a corrupt practice that should have been ended years ago. We have the same objections to rents to loans as we have to rents to mortgages—namely, that the scheme is completely inappropriate to the current crisis in the housing market. What the Government should have considered are mortgage rescue schemes to end the tide of repossessions—35,000 in the first six months of this year—rather than pursuing outdated 1980s dogma.

Liberal Democrats oppose compulsory competitive tendering for housing management and will seek to amend the parts that pave the way for this. People's homes are not grass verges or dustbins; they are their security and base. Decisions about CCT should be made by the landlord—the council—in consultation with the tenants, not by the Government.

Liberal Democrats consider it outrageous that people's homes can be transferred to new management without their consent. People must have a say in the management of their homes, yet contract negotiation is by law a secret item for local authorities that is discussed behind closed doors. People must be allowed at the very least to make representations to their local council about the future of their homes. We shall seek to introduce that right by means of amendments in Committee.

The creation of an urban regeneration agency has been welcomed by many bodies, including the Institute of Housing. With the experience of the Urban Development Corporation during the 1980s, however, Liberal Democrats have reservations that stem from the lack of any formal role for local authorities and the powers that the agency will have.

We welcome the simplification of the grant-giving structure, but we are extremely concerned that yet another Government-appointed quango will not take local wishes into account. The agency is vested with draconian powers that will enforce local authorities to make land available. Much of that land, especially in the depths of a recession, could be sold on the cheap. As a result, local authorities would lose valuable assets.

We are concerned about the emphasis that is placed on commercial development. We would not wish to see sites earmarked for housing being taken over by a Government agency and turned into industrial estates. We must ensure that there is balanced development, which means a mix of industry and housing, and that housing developments meet local needs, not Conservative dogma. We shall table amendments in Committee that, if accepted and implemented, will have that effect.

In summary, the Bill has good points, but of more significance are the omissions. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said that a housing Bill in 1992 should give priority to providing homes for the homeless. It is estimated that 100,000 new homes are required each year, yet the Bill contains nothing that will help us to reach that target.

We know that about 1 million people face negative equity—in other words, their homes are worth less than the sum which they have on mortgage. The Bill does not address that issue. In fact, it contains provisions to accelerate home ownership. The Government have adopted that approach instead of considering ways of protecting existing home owners through mortgage rescue schemes and shared ownership.

The Bill contains nothing that will deal with the problem of increasing repossessions and, finally, it outlines steps to reduce local authorities' influence on housing by paving the way for compulsory competitive tendering. A Government who were intent on facing the real issues would outline steps to release the billions of pounds which are tied up in housing capital receipts, which would allow local councils to begin house-building programmes. That would enable us to make a start on reaching the target of 100,000 new homes each year. We would be able to house the homeless and confidence would be restored in the housing market, thereby aiding economic recovery.

5.52 pm

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): There are hundreds of thousands of people who have cause to welcome the Bill's Second Reading: almost everyone who lives in a leasehold flat. There are tens of thousands of others who also have cause to welcome this Second Reading: those who live in a leasehold house who hitherto have been unable to enfranchise the lease and buy the property. There are hundreds of thousands outside London—we must not think of London and leaseholders being completely coterminus—such as those who have apartments on the south coast and those who suffer under leasehold law in Wales, who will also benefit from the Bill's provisions.

The Bill will likewise be welcomed by those who provide housing finance. The banks and building societies, for example, have found that lending on leasehold is unsatisfactory. It is a form of lending that ends up so often in argument or uncertainty or in the courts. Thus it is that the banks and building societies have been among some of the most forceful and articulate supporters of the reform.

I feel that we shall see more investment in inner city areas as a result of this reform. There will be more investment in run-down mansion blocks. I disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison)

—who made an elegant speech—because mansion blocks in my area have become run down. The freeholder is so often absent. However, once the leaseholder knows that he or she will be in possession in perpetuity, there will be a much greater willingness to invest in what would otherwise be tawdry mansion blocks.

Most of all, the Bill will be welcomed by Back-Bench Members. Indeed, it would have been welcomed by them down the ages. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State reminded us that the cause of leasehold reform began in the 1890s. During my time in the House I have introduced two ten-minute Bills and one full-day motion on leasehold reform, and I have always been supported by Back-Bench Members on both sides of the Chamber. If, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you see the shadowy figure of Sir Brandon Rhys Williams coming hot foot into the Government Lobby this evening, you will know that he just could not keep away.

The surprise, perhaps, is that it has taken so long to reach this stage. I say to those who have reservations about leasehold reform—especially those who represent the great London estates—that this is hardly a surprising or sudden piece of legislation. It has been a long, long time in coming.

Leasehold is particular to England and Wales. The Scots would not have it. There is no country in Europe that has a system of leasehold apart from a dozen blocks, I understand, somewhere north of Copenhagen. Yet the cities of Paris, Frankfurt and Madrid, for example, can hardly be said not to have sufficient investment in flat-dwellings. In fact, there is investment in those cities that we do not see in the United Kingdom.

There were countries apart from England and Wales that had leasehold law, and they reformed it. America, Australia, New Zealand and Canada all inherited English leasehold law with the colonial law of the 18th century. As things progressed with the passage of time each of those capitalist countries examined leasehold law and said, "No, this is not a satisfactory form of land tenure in the 20th century, and it certainly is not one that will be satisfactory in the 21st century." Each of those countries has done away with leaseholds.

It is worth noting that there is only one advanced urban environment in the world, apart from parts of England and Wales, that has a system of leasehold, and that is Hawaii. That stems from its colonial past. It is worth noting also that Hawaii, even as we speak, is considering legislation to do away with leasehold and to introduce the right to buy.

Those who seek to suggest that the English and the Welsh leasehold system is uniquely qualified to provide a happy form of tenure have perhaps a difficult case to make. Surely it is essential to have an urban environment in which flat dwellers own property. It is only in England and Wales that we find the leasehold system.

As I have said, the reform that is set out in the Bill is to be hugely welcomed. It will be the more welcomed now that we have it on the record that commonhold is to come along to create a new system of land tenure for flat dwellers. The Bill is the teeth of leasehold reform; in effect, it is the first bite. It will be followed by commonhold, which will be set out in a Bill with changes in the law of land tenure. For that reason, as we heard from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, it will come from the Lord Chancellor's Department. It is in its first draft. It is immensely complicated. But it is not controversial. It is not yet ready to come before the House. We have heard, however, that it will come before the House. When it does, London's flat dwellers will convert to commonhold, as in other great cities they have converted to condominiums—for example, in New York—and to co-operatives, as in Australia and New Zealand.

The Bill is but the first part of a "double-whammy" that will greatly improve the lot of city dwellers in England and Wales. As such, it is something of a tempting byway to go down to begin to talk about bad landlords versus good landlords. The Bill is not motivated alone by the desire to put bad landlords out of business. It is motivated by the desire to have a form of land tenure that will suit us well into the next century. Therefore, although I have been a resident of the Grosvenor estates for 42 out of my 46 years, I am not in any sense motivated, in pushing for leasehold reform, by any sense of animus or dislike of those impeccable landlords.

I do not have an interest to declare. During that time I have seen no fewer than three leases washed away from my parents and myself. I am now a statutory tenant. When one looks at the great London estates one has surely to admit that they have been good landlords. We do not need to improve our case for leasehold reform by criticising those who do their job well. That is not the basis upon which this necessary and proper reform rests.

When the Bill is considered in Standing Committee we shall wish to consider a number of points. I was pleased to hear that under chapter IV, the first proposition, the Government have done their best to make sure that the great estates in the centre of London will be preserved—that Lady Thatcher, living in a house in Belgravia, will not be able to paint her house blue, should she wish to do so, because the planning laws will not permit it. I think that we can all feel a great sense of relief about that.

However, I want to be doubly reassured. I take seriously those who say that in undertaking this reform we might diminish the conservation areas of central London and that we might make those areas that we know and love look, somehow, tattier, less uniform and less well kept. If an amendment is tabled in Standing Committee that seeks to improve yet further on the assurances that we have been given by the Secretary of State, I and, I am sure, others will want to look seriously at it.

No Conservative Member approves of leasehold reform for the reason that it might give an unfair financial advantage to one person over another. Yet, as the Secretary of State put it very clearly, one cannot change the property laws without that change affecting somebody's interests. England and Wales have been one country—with almost all property belonging to someone—since the arrival of the Normans in 1066. None of us is driven by the desire to see the Bill lead to property confiscation. That is an important point.

I am often most embarrassed by those of my supporters who say, "Yippee, we're going to have leasehold reform, which means that when I sell my flat I'll get an extra £10,000 or £50,000 thrown in for free". That is not the purpose of the Bill, any more than its purpose is to distinguish between good and bad landlords. However, the Second Reading of the Bill puts the Government's stamp on a crusade that has been going on for, as we heard, nearly 100 years, a crusade which is owed to London and to Londoners and which, from this night onwards, will create a better system of tenure for hundreds of thousands of Londoners who live in leasehold flats and houses.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I must remind the House that there will be a 10-minute time limit on speeches between 6 and 8 pm.

6.4 pm

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): I am grateful to have this opportunity to speak in the debate on a Bill which will deeply affect so many residents in east Lewisham. I shall concentrate my remarks on two aspects —the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering and the rent-to-mortgage scheme.

It cannot be emphasised too much that the Government are in serious danger of tempting people, through their rent-to-mortgage scheme, into home ownership that they cannot afford. We have already heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) that the pilot schemes that have been set up are hardly models of outstanding success. We also heard that during the last year there was a miserable take-up, even in Basildon, where there were about 31 sales.

The particular irony of the scheme is that the right to buy will still be a better deal for tenants who can afford it. The people who are therefore likely to be tempted into the rent-to-mortgage scheme will be the most vulnerable and the least able to cope. I refer to people on the lowest incomes. I am surprised that the Government do not realise just how irresponsible the promotion of such action is when one takes into account those who are financially vulnerable at a time of recession and falling house prices.

I hope that the Minister will explain why the Government are introducing a Bill that will cost tenants more than the existing right-to-buy scheme. Can he explain why the right to a rent-to-mortgage scheme is not available to tenants who have a preserved right to buy after the transfer to a new landlord? Can he also explain the resulting inconsistency in the legislation?

We are particularly concerned about the fact that the Government are determined to follow an ideological path to extend home ownership to low-income households while there are record arrears and repossessions this year. We have already said, and we shall say it again and again, that what is needed in Lewisham, throughout London and across the country is more investment in affordable rented accommodation so that young people, those on the homeless register and others can be housed close to their families and communities.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: If we are looking for cash, does the hon. Lady not see that one place to look might be towards uncollected council house rents? I understand that London is at the top of the tree when it comes to uncollected council house rents.

Mrs. Prentice: That is certainly not the case, either in Lewisham or elsewhere. Lewisham council works closely with its tenants and has a very good record, a matter to which I shall turn in a few moments.

It would have been better if the Government had introduced a Bill to release capital receipts from council house sales so that homes for rent could be built, thus enabling us to house the growing number of homeless people in our cities and, I dare say, more and more homeless people in rural areas and get our construction industry back to work.

What is ironic about the Bill is that it is not supported by many Conservatives in local government. The Association of District Councils said that

> "it doubts whether at a time of rising homelessness, increasing numbers of homeless families in temporary accommodation, unprecedented levels of mortgage arrears and repossessions and the continuing need for affordable housing, it is appropriate to introduce a scheme which results in the further erosion in the supply of social dwellings."

The ADC goes on to question whether it is sensible to encourage low-income households to take on the responsibilities of home ownership, even at a time of falling prices and low inflation. Therefore, the Government's own side say that the Government have got it wrong.

Another peculiar aspect of the Bill is that the rent-to-mortgage scheme is essentially a deferred-purchase scheme, which, having spent some years in local government, I thought that the Government abhorred. They certainly never supported deferred-purchase schemes for local authorities. Will local authorities be compensated by allowing an interest-free loan to count as a notional capital receipt for the purposes of borrowing consent under housing investment programme allocations? Will local authorities have first refusal on the resale of property?

Compulsory competitive tendering and housing management are further examples of central Government eroding local democracy. The Secretary of State made great play of choice, especially when he mentioned leasehold reforms, yet he is prepared to remove the council tenants' choice. When the Government parade their subsidiarity credentials tomorrow evening, will they blush with embarrassment and hypocrisy at not countenancing the smallest measure of subsidiarity in the United Kingdom?

Tenants have consistently voted to remain with their local authority, so the Government have decided to remove their votes. They are not even to be consulted. Across London, tenants' and residents' associations have consistently opposed the Bill. When the Secretary of State was asked about the response that he had received, he failed to admit that tenants and residents associations in London have opposed part II of the Bill. Why should not tenants have the right to ballot before compulsory competitive tendering is applied to their estate? What price the citizens charter now?

The Bill is ill-conceived, inconsistent and woefully inadequate in addressing the serious housing problems that we face not only in London but across the country. I hope that Conservative Members will put those issues to the fore tonight and join us in voting against the Bill.

6.11 pm

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate and to welcome the Bill, which I see as an important continuation of the policies that the Government have pursued to provide a diversity of choice in home ownership and to tackle the problems of urban regeneration.

Before welcoming the setting up of the urban regeneration agency, I wish to consider the right to repair —a fundamental right that I am glad to see being enshrined in law. Many councils, such as High Peak borough council and Derbyshire Dales district council, have an excellent record for repairing their housing stock. Sadly, however, that is not true everywhere. We see the most appalling examples of dereliction in some of our great cities, where too often Labour-controlled local authorities have not bothered to put the interests of their tenants first. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) said, the problem does not stem from a lack of money, because Labour local authorities are owed £430 million in uncollected rent. If that money had been collected, it would have been possible to tackle many of the problems on those council estates.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hendry: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not give way because of the constraint on time.

Creeping decay is evident on too many council estates, the knock-on effect of which is a vicious spiral of unemployment and of people not wishing to live on them. All too often, when one enters a city with a sign saying "You are entering a nuclear-free zone", one is also entering an enterprise-free zone, a job-free zone and a hope-free zone. Too often that has been the legacy of the Labour party in local government.

I want to consider not so much whether there has been conflict between local and central Government but whether there can be partnership. In that regard, I recognise and welcome the establishment of the urban regeneration agency. It is a frightening statistic that there are 150,000 acres of derelict land in our cities. That problem must be tackled. Many of us in rural constituencies do not want further9over-development of our green-field sites until those inner-city areas have been brought back into use. That is not an example of nimbyism; we take that view because it is in the interests of those great cities that there should not be great tracts of derelict land.

I do not believe that one can distinguish between the interests of urban and rural communities. We depend on one another, and I want to see our great industrial cities recreated as powerhouses of enterprise, industry and growth. I hope that the Bill will help to achieve that.

Local authorities cannot achieve that on their own. They must work in partnership, because they often do not have the resources to tackle the scale of the problem. That is where the urban regeneration agency can play such a productive role. I hope that it will do so in a spirit of partnership, but I recognise the need for the compulsory purchase option, because where it cannot work in partnership the issues are simply so great and important to the people who live in urban communities that they cannot be ignored.

The URA will act as a catalyst. I hope that it will bring together a wide variety of skills and expertise way beyond its resources by working in partnership with local authorities and the voluntary and private sectors. I hope that it will attract plenty of people from the private sector to help in its operation, because they have direct experience of securing such achievements. That spirit of partnership will make a fundamental difference to the way in which our urban regeneration policies work.

I am concerned that perhaps the Bill does not pay enough attention to housing needs, but the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was quite wrong to say that they had been overlooked. The URA can bring together tracts of land for development. I am sure that developers will take account of the circular from the Department of the Environment, which calls for social and affordable housing for people who live in the communities.

I want us to do more to tackle the imbalance in the market, because in London alone there is 30 million sq ft of empty office space, yet there is a dramatic housing shortage. Developers know that they will not be able to let those buildings as offices for five or 10 years. Let us see whether it is possible, on a short-term basis, to change their use so that they can be used not necessarily to house families but perhaps for student or hostel accommodation. I know that developers would be willing to consider that if planning restrictions allowed them to do so.

The urban regeneration agency is rightly beginning with a restricted ambit. If it can show that it can tackle problems effectively, I hope that it will be allowed to move on and tackle more generally the problems of urban regeneration. One of the present difficulties is that so many initiatives, units and agencies are operating that people are confused about which to go to first. Sometimes one can understand that people who have an idea that they want to develop may give up because they do not know where to get support from. If the urban regeneration agency shows that it can master this skill, let us see it develop into other areas as well.

I believe that that policy lies at the heart of the extension of the policies which have been pursued in recent years. We are now seeing policies of inclusion, which tell people, "It is not because you are rich that you are a part of our society or because you have a business of your own but because you are a person". We must tell people, wherever they live and whatever their aspirations, that our policies will help them. That must be the thrust of our urban regeneration initiative and I welcome the Bill as a step in that direction.

6.18 pm

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I will make a few comments on part III and its associated schedules. On Thursday 18 October, the Prime Minister received an open letter from Sheffield chamber of commerce. It said:

> "Your Government gives every appearance of having no policies or strategies which will help this country out of the economic morass into which it is sinking at an increasing rate."

Some 250,000 people filled the city of London in the rain on the following Sunday to express their concern.

During the hubbub of the first somersault by the President of the Board of Trade the following Monday, I heard him refer to part III as part of the solution to what he was doing with the coal industry. He suggested that the urban regeneration agency would make things all right for the miners who, he declared, would lose their jobs.

If it is true that there is an economic crisis, we have a sinking ship. When a ship sinks, it sends out mayday signals to boats in the vicinity. Thank goodness such ships do not send out mayday signals to Ministers in this Government. Rather than use the boats in the vicinity, Ministers would say that they did not like the colour of their crew. They would intend to save the sinking ship by refitting a different boat and appointing their own crew before seeing where the problem might be. That is a recipe for delay and disaster.

It is interesting that a favourite word used by consultants in economic regeneration is "flagship". We

[Mrs. Helen Jackson]

know that the flagship of flagships is the London Docklands development corporation which has lapped up more than half of all development corporation moneys over the past few years. Yet the surrounding boroughs in that part of London are still at the bottom of the employment league. That is hardly success in urban regeneration.

I know from my work in Sheffield in 1986-87 that we had a partnership committee—partnership is not new—on which we had representatives from the private sector, from higher education, from the trade unions and from the community. We agreed unanimously—but mistakenly as it turned out—to ask the Government for more resources to reclaim derelict land in the lower Don valley area of Sheffield, which would be organised and co-ordinated under the direction of our partnership committee. The Government did not like the colour of that and said that they would give us a development corporation.

As a result of that decision, it was not until three years later, in 1990, that any substantial programme of land reclamation was undertaken by the development corporation. The rest of the time the scheme was land and property led. We put sites on the market and waited for developers. We hoped that next week or next month, somebody might come and put some money into the area. We did not carry out the crucial reclamation work which was necessary, nor did we go in for crucial consultation and winning the support of the people in the deprived areas of Sheffield.

The same will happen with the urban regeneration agency. I imagine that matters will proceed as follows. Under schedule 16, it is clear that the Minister will appoint a minimum of six people—probably men—to the agency. They will not have the chance to elect a chair, because the chair, Lord Walker, has already been chosen for them. The six, seven or eight people will then decide to appoint staff, which will take a few months. They will then, as other hon. Members have said, decide where to locate their headquarters, whether Teesside, Leeds, central London or the docklands, and they will buy some premises. A few months later, the staff in post will decide that they need to appoint some consultants to advise them where best to start their work. The consultants will ask existing civil servants, existing local authorities, existing partnership committees and existing officers who try to get urban regeneration off the ground what is the best thing to do first.

The consultants will be well paid.

Sheffield development corporation spent £2 million on consultants in the first two years. It is not surprising that the organisation that has been most fulsome in its support for part III is the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors which stands to gain most from the setting up of the new body.

There is nothing in the objectives of the agency that suggests that the ridiculous process, with its deliberations and proceedings, will be open to public scrutiny. The agency will have to give an annual report to the Secretary of State, which will be available to Parliament, but there is nothing in the Bill about the proceedings being open to public scrutiny, as our partnership committees and our local authority committees are.

There is nothing in schedule 16 about how the work of the agency will be linked to the major finance programmes of the European Community. As the Conservative party is making so much fuss about the debate tomorrow, one would think that the Bill would make some reference to the structural funds of the European Community and to the need to link to them. Of course, the Government have abolished the regional bodies in England that could have made sense of the work. Although the process may work in Scotland and in Wales, it will not work in England because the regional bodies have been abolished. No link is suggested in the Bill, which is a point that should be redressed. There is also little in the Bill to link part III with housing, with social programmes, with training, with employment, with trade or with job plans.

I do not know why the Secretary of State does not have faith and confidence in the existing civil servants at regional level or in the existing staff in the local authorities who have been well trained in the work of urban regeneration for many years. They, through hard experience, have learnt to ensure that inner-city finance goes to the people most in need and that is maximised for those in areas of poverty.

My guess is that the Secretary of State does not go to such organisations or such people, because he knows that he will not like what he hears. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) pointed out that he would hear that land and property-led regeneration in the middle of a recession does nothing for the lives or jobs of the people living in urban areas.

What helps those people are employment initiatives based in the community. What helps them are employment and training initiatives led by the black and ethnic minority communities. What helps them are improvement area initiatives, and upgrading shops and small businesses. What helps them is support for existing businesses, which the agency is not about. What helps them are quality projects which will boost new industries——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

6.29 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak on the Second Reading of this important Bill.

I begin by declaring an interest as a member of the Law Society, although I derive no pecuniary benefit from my membership—quite the reverse. The Law Society has pressed for the landlord and tenant provisions of the Bill to be separated from its public housing provisions. The society proposes that the landlord and tenant provisions should be dealt with by legislation in its own right. Apparently, the Law Society is confused as to why the two elements should have been combined. Surely we can see the reason for that, however: the Government are determined to defend and extend individual rights effectively in the face of opposition from vested interests, whether in the public or in the private sector, and those vested interests include both the major landlords' interest and the municipal housing authority interest.

The Bill deals with a variety of matters, but I propose to confine my remarks to the rent-to-mortgage scheme and the proposals in relation to compulsory competitive tendering. On rent to mortgage, it is interesting to note that what we have heard from the Opposition merely replicates some of the observations made by the

Association of Metropolitan Authorities and others. In essence, they all say that this is not the right time. It is rather like the story of Napoleon and Josephine—it is a good idea but apparently not tonight. In fact, the measure is sorely overdue. Rent to mortgage has been on the political agenda since 1978, when Lord Walker first proposed——

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evans: I am sorry. My speech is subject to the time limit, so I am sure that the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) will forgive me for not giving way.

Lord Walker introduced the proposals in 1978 and, 10 years later, battled hard against a Government who at that time were not prepared to go beyond the pilot schemes that have been referred to. I am glad that, at long last, the rent-to-mortgage scheme is to be enshrined in legislation.

I was interested to note that we heard nothing from the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman about the situation in Wales. We had figures for Scotland and England, but no figures for Wales. Again, I declare an interest: before I came to the House I had the honour of being the deputy chairman of Housing for Wales, the equivalent of the Housing Corporation and I was closely involved in the establishment of the pilot scheme in Wales. I am pleased to say that yesterday, representatives of the Development Board for Rural Wales told me that half the organisation's tenants have expressed an interest in the scheme and that a number of the inquiries regarding rent to mortgage eventually proceeded on the basis of the right to buy. Taking those two schemes together, about 10 per cent. of the board's tenants have taken advantage of that Government scheme, which has been very worth while.

The record of the Labour party and its friends in the local authorities on housing management is especially poor. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) seemed unaware of that. As my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) said, it was declared earlier this year that some £430 million was outstanding in council rents. The hon. Member for Lewisham, East seemed unaware of the fact that 12 of the 20 worst offending councils were in London. Those figures show massive incompetence on the part of many of our local housing authorities. If they do not show incompetence, they show, as one newspaper pointed out, the most unsavoury sort of political collusion between councils and tenants—a sort of political payola. Such councils are unfit to be in charge of managing public housing and, in my view, the Government's proposals are long overdue.

The hon. Member for Greenwich will know that, in 1985, Alice Coleman published a book called "Utopia on Trial"—the result of a five-year study of public housing funded by the Joseph Rowntree Trust. It was claimed when the book was published, and subsequently, by Professor Patrick Nuttgens, that it represented the most sweeping condemnation of local authority housing management ever produced. It was an effective verdict on 40 years of municipal socialism in housing management. All the results suggested that local authorities had failed disastrously in terms of management as well as design.

Those observations were followed up by the Audit Commission in its report the following year. The Audit Commission suggested that local authorities needed to brush up their performance in two respects—better maintenance and better management. According to the commission, it was not—as we so often hear from the Opposition—a matter of money. The commission said that standards of housing management give cause for concern where large sums of money have been spent on growing bureaucracy rather than better services for tenants. That is the crux of Conservative Members' argument.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evans: Perhaps I could further——

Mr. Raynsford: The hon. Gentleman is afraid to give way.

Mr. Evans: If my speech were not subject to the time limit, I should happily give way. The hon. Member for Greenwich will be interested to hear—he may even have read the article—that, in 1987, David Donnison, writing in *The Guardian*, said:

> "Local government . . . is very bad at most of the things the housing service has to do. It is good at meeting needs; bad at meeting demands—particularly the demands of people coming from other towns. It is good at giving its staff a hearing; bad at listening to its customers. It is good at keeping rents down—even when centrally funded housing benefits protect the poorest tenants—but bad at repairing and maintaining people's homes efficiently."

That is what sustains the gulf between the approach of the Government and that of the Opposition to housing management and illustrates the desperate need for the Bill.

As Alice Coleman said in her book, for 40 years the Labour party had sustained a Utopian view of housing. It is Labour Members who should be experiencing a sense of social failure. The housing schemes of the 1970s and 1980s were ineffectual and a huge waste of public money.

Mr. Raynsford: Come on.

Mr. Evans: Those are not my words; they are Alice Coleman's words, as the hon. Gentleman well knows. The Utopians have had their day—40 long years of it—and it has become increasingly clear that their social engineering has not worked. The answer lies in minimum regulation and maximum consumer choice. The Bill will provide that, and I urge all my hon. Friends to support it.

6.37 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I should like to reduce the temperature of the debate somewhat and return from the realms of fantasy to which the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) took us and come back to the subject of housing and urban regeneration.

The Bill and ministerial utterances must be judged against the background of a severe housing crisis, and the extent to which what the Government try to do addresses the problems. It is a twofold crisis. First, there is the crisis facing those living in inadequate housing and the homeless. The second crisis has a profound effect on our economy—the debt overhang, the problems of the construction industry and the lack of confidence in the housing market. All those matters need urgently to be addressed not merely because many people are suffering as a result of them but because an economic recovery can take place only once they have been addressed. It is against the background of those important questions that we should judge the Bill.

[Mr. George Howarth]

I will deal with the better part of the Bill first. I welcome —almost without qualification—the long-overdue reform of leasehold. The Minister for Housing and Planning will confirm that my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and I, with some of our colleagues, up to a year before the general election were willing to participate and co-operate in bringing forward legislation in that regard. Although the provision is overdue, it is welcome.

I hope that the Minister can, when he replies to the debate or in Committee, give a convincing reason why the commonhold proposals could not be incorporated in the Bill. We have a partial resolution of the problems facing leaseholders when we could have had a comprehensive bite at the issue and resolved the problems for the next generation and longer. As it stands, we have not completed the process.

Part II of the Bill deals with compulsory competitive tendering, social housing and housing management. The Bill compounds mistakes that the Government have made possibly since 1979-80, but most certainly since the mid-1980s. The Government mistakenly assumed, probably because very few Conservative Members represent urban areas—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] Well, those who do represent such areas clearly walk around with their eyes closed.

The Government mistakenly assume that people who live in urban areas regard Labour-controlled local authorities with deep loathing. Ministers ignore the fact that in areas such as mine, in the London boroughs and elsewhere, the electorates return Labour councils year after year. They do not do that because they think that those councils are doing a bad job. They are aware of the difficulties facing the councils as a result of central Government funding policy in relation to housing and other policy areas. However, the electors believe that the councils are generally doing quite a good job.

As a consequence of the Government's misunderstanding of what is happening in urban areas, they take a completely false approach to housing in inner city areas and in areas such as my constituency. The Government believe that they can impose an outside agency which bypasses local government and that that will solve the problem. The Government seem desperate to continue that approach although the evidence is that no one wants those agencies and, where they have been offered, people are unenthusiastic about them.

Such an approach gave us housing action trusts and, in the Housing and Planning Act 1986, produced the voluntary transfers. None of those has taken off. There is no huge groundswell of support for them from tenants' organisations and residents. The Bill represents the next step in that it takes away a tenant's right to decide how a landlord is chosen, who it is, in what circumstances and what regime the landlord should apply. Tenants will not be consulted and there will be no ballot.

The Government assume that housing management is an evil force in urban areas and that it must be supplanted by something that they dream up through compulsory competitive tendering. That is far from the truth. In areas such as mine, tenants understand the difficulties facing local authority housing departments. They sometimes become frustrated, but they do not want an external agency to run their housing for them.

We must also consider the process of the urban regeneration agency, which seems to be a modern form of colonialism. As the Government have no electoral foothold in the urban areas, they have decided to send in Lord Walker in the guise of a latter-day Clive of India to set up a form of colonial administration. It is interesting to contrast what is proposed with what has already been carried out.

The ludicrously self-styled President of the Board of Trade set up the Merseyside development corporation and I am glad to see the Secretary of State for Wales, who represents a Merseyside constituency, on the Government Front Bench now. After a few years, that well-known socialist Professor Patrick Minford resigned from the Merseyside development corporation board saying that it had had an overall negative effect on jobs.

It is possible that the Merseyside development corporation could become the agent of the urban regeneration agency under the Bill. The corporation is not interested in industrial development or a working waterfront. Whenever proposals have come forward in that regard—the Secretary of State for Wales will be aware of the saga of Hamilton Oil—the corporation has stood in the way of those proposals. When the chief executive of the corporation was asked recently what achievement he was most proud of, he identified the fairy lights on the parish church at Pier Head. It is clear that the corporation is not working. We want a working port, but instead we get pretty schemes which do not bring employment in their wake.

The Government should take stock of those schemes and what they have achieved so far before repeating the same mistakes. The Government seem to want to shuffle the pack every few years and create new agencies which simply repeat the failures of earlier agencies.

My main concern lies with the major housing crisis in this country and we must consider what will happen if the Bill reaches the statute book in its present form. The Bill will do nothing to help the homeless. It contains no provision to help the homeless. It will do nothing to remove the debt overhang. It will not create a realistic mortgage rescue package, which is desperately needed. The Bill does nothing to reform the inappropriate system of housing finance which has grown up in recent years. Hon. Members are aware that something needs to be done urgently about the housing finance system, but that issue is not addressed in the Bill.

The Bill does nothing to recycle the capital receipts into schemes which would provide for the homeless and provide employment for the unemployed in the construction industry and thus start the process of moving the economy once more. I should like——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Butterfill.

6.47 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): May I first apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House for having missed the opening part of the debate due to my service upstairs on the Trade and Industry Select Committee. However, I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this important debate.

I welcome the proposals in the Bill to improve the rights of tenants and to create urban regeneration agencies. Those measures are long overdue and they are well conceived. However, I have some concerns about the proposals for leasehold enfranchisement. Although in general I welcome the proposal that we should reform the leasehold system, there are certain aspects of the proposal that need to be improved and on which I and many other hon. Members have received representations from the Law Society, English Heritage, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, of which I am a member, the Association of Land-Owning Charities and many others. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider tabling reasoned amendments in Committee to meet some of the concerns that have been expressed by those bodies.

At the moment, the scope of the Bill in relation to leasehold enfranchisement excludes charitable housing associations, and that is right. However, it does not exclude land-owning charities in general. There is a long and honourable tradition of housing provision by land-owning charities. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will consider generally excluding land-owning charities because, otherwise, they are convinced that their work will be inhibited. Most hon. Members will have received a communication from the Association of Land-Owning Charities in which it states:

> "The overall effect of the Bill on our members would be to reduce substantially the money which is available for charitable purposes."

That is not my right hon. Friend's intention. I am sure that he wishes land-owning charities to be able to continue their good work, and therefore I urge that point on him.

Also, I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider the representations that he has received from English Heritage that such is the importance of certain areas of our national heritage that they too should be excluded from the scope of enfranchisement. In those cases there would have to be an automatic right to a new long lease, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider that areas which are of themselves conservation areas with a very high proportion of listed buildings, perhaps as much as 20 per cent., should be excluded from the scope of enfranchisement and dealt with differently.

Many heritage organisations support that view and it seems to have a lot of merit, as otherwise those areas might fall into the disrepair and disharmony that we have seen in certain parts of London. It is not adequate to say that we could arrange for schemes of management. If landlords in those areas lose their financial incentive to maintain their estates, I cannot see what further incentive there would be for them to enter into management agreements. They are very specialised areas and only a small area of exception would be required under the Bill, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider it seriously.

The other matter of concern relates to the qualifying provisions. I am rather surprised that the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 and the present proposals differ slightly. In the 1967 Act, enfranchisement was restricted to the principal private residence of the individual concerned and it is not so restricted in the proposed legislation. Unfortunately, there has been quite a lot of evidence that there is already speculative purchase going on by investors in that form of property—people out to make a quick buck. I am sure that it is not my right hon. Friend's intention to enable them to do that. Therefore, those who have second homes and those who are pure investors should be excluded from enfranchisement. It should be restricted to principal private residences. In the case of blocks of flats, that might mean that we have to drop the qualifying majority. I should be quite happy for that to happen, but I do not think that we should be in business to give speculative profits to investors.

I am concerned that the compensation as presently proposed is anomalous. First, the compensation differs between houses and flats. Under this proposal, houses would have the higher level of compensation that was available under the 1967 Act, but they would not enjoy the additional compensation benefits that are proposed under this legislation. Therefore, a landlord who was being acquired by his tenant, if he owned a house, would be disadvantaged compared with the landlord of a flat. I am quite sure that that is not what my right hon. Friend intends.

Secondly, the level of compensation differs according to whether one is being acquired by a tenant or by the state. It is right that the state should have rights of acquiring people's property. We have rightly said that if that happens the owner of the property is compensated by getting 110 per cent. of the value plus the right to any redevelopment value occurring over the next 10 years. That is not provided for in this legislation. They should sit on exactly the same basis from the point of view of compensation.

Similarly, even if we cannot provide for 110 per cent. of value under the proposals, we should compensate the landlord in some way for his loss. In many cases, he will be the reluctant party to the process. Therefore, if there is a marriage value—that is, the difference between the value of the property in one ownership, freehold and leasehold together, and the value of the two parts—the whole of that marriage value should go to the person who is the reluctant party, namely the landlord. It should not be divided between the two because it should not be our business to try to give a profit to the tenant. The tenant should acquire what he needs to acquire, which is the freehold interest, for its fair value. The marriage value should go to the landlord.

There is another point that I am afraid that we cannot provide for, and that is that a landlord such as a pension fund which is compulsorily acquired—they are not all private individuals; many are pension funds, for example—by tenants has to reinvest that money. The costs of reinvestment can include stamp duty, legal costs, agents' fees and so on. They could be 4 per cent. or 5 per cent. That is a loss to the pensioners who are supported by that pension fund. I do not think that we have addressed sufficiently in the compensation aspects of the Bill the costs to those who are genuine investors providing housing which meets a public need.

I hope that some consideration will be given to making this legislation much more comprehensive. At the moment, the 1967 Act is left in place; we do not replace it with this legislation. A consolidating Bill would have been preferable—one that took in all the 1967 Act and put everything on an equal basis. At the moment, we have quite a number of anomalies between the two measures. Also, as Opposition Members have suggested, we could address the commonhold situation. I feel strongly that that part of the Bill has been brought forward fairly hurriedly and it could have been better presented if we had been able

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to present an overall consolidation measure. I very much hope that further consideration will be given to that point in Committee.

We need to impose a time limit for enfranchisement. The Association of Land-Owning Charities has clearly said that it feels that it is wrong that the right to enfranchisement should go on indefinitely, thus enabling tenants to pick a time when market conditions best suit them and most disadvantage the landlord. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider imposing a time limit after the passing of the Bill for the exercise of enfranchisement rights and also set out clearly—again, the Bill does not do so at the moment—that leases that are granted after the passing of the legislation will not qualify for enfranchisement. It is clear that that replaces the present situation. Anybody who takes out a new lease after the passing of the Bill would know exactly what the situation should be.

Those are a few brief points. In general, I welcome the Bill. I hope that my right hon. Friend will feel able to meet some of my concerns.

6.57 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): The contributions of my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) and of the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) have brought us back to reality after a period in which I feared that the debate was losing touch with reality. Perhaps that is not altogether surprising, given that the debate started in a rather curious way with a Secretary of State who revealed a most astonishing approach to history—an approach which he shares with Joseph Stalin. In other words, his ideological position was such that he found it impossible to accept that the major leasehold reform initiative of 1967 was introduced by a Labour Government.

That sense of fantasy also spilled over to several Conservative Members, whose view of local authority housing is clearly conditioned by the briefs that they receive from Conservative party central office. It must be extremely difficult for them to face reality when Labour councils are returned repeatedly in many areas of the country and will go on being returned. Unfortunately, Conservative Members find it uncomfortable to recognise that reality. We had another touch of unreality——

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raynsford: Unlike the hon. Gentleman's colleagues, who declined to give way, I shall do so—but briefly.

Mr. Streeter: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the same principle that he has outlined also applies nationally? The people of this country have continued to return a Conservative Government for the past 13 years and it looks very likely that they will continue to do that.

Mr. Raynsford: As the hon. Member must be aware, the result of the last general election was very far from an endorsement of Conservative policies; their majority was dramatically reduced and, as they all know only too well, if an election were held tomorrow most Conservative Members would lose their seats.

The other touch of reality lacking in the debate is that some Conservative Members, sadly not now in their places, have a quite extravagant view of the possible effects of this piece of legislation. The hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) forecast that hundreds of thousands of leaseholders would benefit, and we read something similar from him in *The Sunday Times* last Sunday. In reality, as the Government Front Bench will know all too well if they look at the experience of previous legislation—the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 is very instructive—only a very small number of people can get through the immensely convoluted [illegible] complicated processes involved in taking advantage of those procedures. The Government are in for a nasty shock if they are expecting hundreds of thousands of people to avail themselves of the provisions.

The Opposition welcome the principle of leasehold enfranchisement—we should have liked to see it accompanied by the introduction of commonhold, and we regret that it is not—but in reality the scheme being put forward will frustrate the wishes and aspirations of a substantial number of leaseholders, who will simply be unable to get through the process.

Let us consider some of the obstacles. First, there are the eligibility criteria. We have the requirement that no more than 10 per cent. of the floor area of any property can be non-residential. I do not know why the Government have chosen that figure. In the 1987 Bill, they took 50 per cent. as the figure—a far more sensible one which allowed for circumstances where flats are above shops and where a substantial proportion of the floor area of the property will not be residential. Why they propose a 90 per cent. residential requirement I do not understand, but it will restrict leaseholders in properties where there are shops on the ground floor. As has already been pointed out, it would require nine floors of flats above to make the building eligible, and this will not apply in many cases.

Secondly, there is the resident landlord test. Where a landlord resides in the property and it is a converted one, not a purpose-built one, it will not be eligible—obviously in relation to the size of the property, as the Minister pointed out from a sedentary position. As the Consumers Association survey indicated, this could exclude something like 5 per cent. to 6 per cent. of total properties. That is a significant number to be ruled out.

We then have the requirement about low rent. Here again, we have heard evidence of new leases being granted with ground rents just above the £1,000 limit in London, or £250 outside, which will make them ineligible. So already we have a series of eligibility criteria which will provide obstacles.

We then turn to the procedures. Not only must two thirds of the properties in the block be occupied by eligible leaseholders, but two thirds of the eligible leaseholders must trigger the process. Why two thirds? In the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, a simple majority was the trigger. Why are the Government going for a harder test this time? Why are they creating more obstacles in the way of leaseholders taking advantage? We deserve to have some answers on this.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) will know that the 1987 Act was triggered in cases of bad management by freeholders. That is a totally different background to the legislation now before the

House where, as we have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), there is no presumption that the freeholder is bad.

Mr. Raynsford: The procedure is designed to eradicate a situation which the Government regard as unsatisfactory. The Secretary of State said in his introduction that the leasehold is an anomaly and something that we must change, so why put that obstacle in the way? There was no 66 per cent. requirement in the 1987 Act, which also applied to other circumstances and not just to bad landlords; it was a measure designed to deal with the problems encountered by leaseholders, and there are manifest problems at the moment which need remedies.

Then we have the procedures themselves, the provisions for notices and counter-notices, and for landlords to object on a series of grounds: first, whether the tenants are eligible; secondly, if the landlord claims that he is going to redevelop the property in the next five years, it could be a ground for obstructing and stopping the application; thirdly, if the landlord claims that he cannot manage or maintain certain properties quite separate from the ones subject to the application he can require the applicants to buy those as well, which could put major financial obstacles in their way. We also have the whole valuation process, which will be complex and difficult for many leaseholders to get through. It would therefore be very rash for Conservative Members to assume that there will be a rush of people in large numbers taking advantage.

I look forward to having an answer to a question that I posed recently, but to which I have received no reply, on the number of people who have taken advantage of part II and part III of the 1987 Act. I suspect—here I must sound the same warning as was sounded by the Committee which considered that legislation—that the procedures are too complicated and difficult and that it is unlikely that many will benefit from them.

Turning briefly, because my time is limited, to the second part of the Bill, we are dealing here essentially with a rag-bag of measures which have little or no relevance to the reality of Britain today but are simply Conservative ideology. The rents-to-mortgages scheme has been tested in four areas of the country—Scotland, Wales, Milton Keynes and Basildon—and has been given a decisive thumbs-down in every area. If the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) believes that the time has come for this, I only hope that if he ever sets up in business he will do his market research more thoroughly, because if the time has come for rents-to-mortgages we are dealing with a bizarre interpretation of reality.

The right-to-repair initiative, as we have already heard, has been a disastrous error, the statistics had to be withdrawn as the figures were so embarrassing—only nine people availing themselves of it in the past year. But here is a serious point. The scheme failed because it was introduced by regulation; it was not subject to scrutiny in the House—*[Interruption.]* I say "serious" in comparison with the rents-to-mortgages scheme and the right-to-repair scheme which are fantasies of Government ideology. The regulations were not subject to the scrutiny of the House, and they produced a monstrous and ineffective scheme which failed. I warn the Government that they are in danger of repeating that failure by once again going on the same route and not including details of the scheme in the legislation; they are simply trying to legislate to give themselves powers to introduce such a scheme, and they could well be opening the door to a similar disaster in the future.

The whole issue of the delegation of management is fatally flawed by the decision to take from the tenants the right to a say about compulsory competitive tendering. There could be no clearer indication of the Government's hypocrisy with regard to the Bill than the fact that, while talking about helping tenants, they are acting to reduce the tenants' right to have any effective say over the management of their homes.

The Bill will do very little to tackle the real housing problems. It is a smokescreen from a Government who have failed lamentably to meet the country's housing needs. It is a smokescreen designed to give the impression of activity, and it will not provide the answers that are desperately needed by the homeless and by people living in appalling conditions and waiting for better homes.

7.7 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I do not intend to follow the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford). He was very technical and I think that my hon. Friends want to hear something more simple. I am, therefore, going to give a much more simple speech.

Talking about facts and figures, I am sure that the House would like to know that I have just missed a record by seven minutes. I have been here for 18 years and I have never spoken in a Second Reading debate before seven o'clock. I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you were unable to call me eight minutes ago; I would then have beaten that record.

We have been talking about figures. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) mentioned that it was a hundred years before leasehold reform came to the House. I am glad to say that the part of the Bill that I want to talk about—economic and urban regeneration—has taken only 14 years. Successive Governments, Labour as well as Conservative, always talked with great interest about vacant, dormant, derelict and under-utilised land in public ownership, but it was not until today that something has been done about it.

We have seen the results of the lack of interest of successive Governments because green-field sites on the edges of cities have tended to be eaten away and, rather like a doughnut, the inner cities, whether they be Liverpool or Plymouth, have had an emptiness in the centre which years ago had jam in it. They built new towns such as Skelmersdale outside Liverpool, and Ivybridge outside Plymouth in my constituency, instead of filling up the empty hole in the inner city.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in 1981 the Secretary of State for the Environment, then my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), pointed out the need to find out where all the vacant land was. He set up a register—which, although we all welcomed it at the time, was really a delaying tactic: a way of not doing anything. He employed a good many civil servants, costing the country a quarter of a million pounds a year, to map out all the derelict vacant land. To their horror, the civil servants found more than 100,000 acres.

Opposition Members do not realise that one of our aims in privatising public vacant land was to take land off the Government register. Every time a public utility was privatised, the vacant land attached to the company

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concerned came off the register. About 120,000 acres went off the register during the 1980s, not because it was marketed or sold but simply because it was privatised. The Government then decided that it would be too costly to keep the land registers going. They closed them centrally, disposed of the quarter of a million pounds' worth of civil servants and transferred the responsibility to district councils. If questions are asked nowadays about land registers, no one has a clue where the land is.

It is especially welcome that, despite all that, the Government have decided to establish an urban regeneration agency. I pay tribute to two of the co-authors of a book that I wrote three years ago. One is Clive Darlow, who has been involved in strategic land planning and urban renewal for some 25 years; the other is Jonathan Harris, a chartered surveyor and senior partner in a major London practice. We managed to cobble together a unique idea, which we called PLUMS. As a result, the Conservative party included our proposal in its manifesto. It is a pleasure to see the Ministers who are present today, and to know that at last the Government are to tackle a problem that many hon. Members have been highlighting for 14 or 15 years. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will comment on it when he winds up the debate.

Let me deal with some of the problems. The urban regeneration agency is a quango. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House do not like quangos; I was a quango hunter in my younger days, and I was rather sorry to see that another has appeared. The urban regeneration agency is unique, in that it is a peripatetic quango. It will not be based in Teesside or Tyneside, or in London; it will move around. It is rather like a camera with a lens which zooms in on public and private vacant and derelict land. I think that the Secretary of State can say something when the land is private. It identifies the land and says, "We are going to get our teeth into that."

The agency, however, also uses an odd animal called English Industrial Estates, which—surprise, surprise—is another quango. Here we have quango upon quango, operating a zoom lens. The Bill, however, contains a catch: it states that the urban regeneration agency can set up yet another quango—an urban development corporation. A peripatetic quango, working through an existing quango, can set up a third quango. That is an interesting possibility for the Guinness Book of Records.

I think that we should hear a little more about the powers of the triple-headed quango. Clearly it will be full of public officials and civil servants; no doubt it will be caught up by the Treasury, and there will be problems and rules and regulations. The good news is that Lord Walker, dressed as St George, will try to slay the quango dragons.

That quango power is based on compulsory purchase orders. I can tell the House in confidence that I talked to the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury before he became Prime Minister, and decided to test the idea on him. He said that he liked the idea of privatising or auctioning off public vacant land, but did not like the idea of compulsory purchase. The idea presented in PLUMS was that public vacant land in regions should be moved into a private company, and that the public authorities should be given the value of the land at the time of the compulsory purchase. The private company in the regions would market the land; as it was sold off, we would give the public authority not only the market value but the increase in the value.

This quango, however, takes the land away—through English Industrial Estates—and does not give the public authority any additional value when it markets and sells the land. Moreover, it is unlikely to market or sell the land, because it is using the public sector. No new money will come to the quango; the existing money is simply put into a bag and handed around. There is very little private sector involvement.

I was pleased when the Secretary of State said, in answer to my intervention, that we would attract private sector involvement. The key to our PLUMS idea was the proposal that we should privatise and market public land and then share the proceeds and profits with the public authorities from which we had taken that land. Under the peculiar arrangement in the Bill, there is quango upon quango—with a third quango possibly involved—with plenty of public officials involved, but no private money. I think that we should be told something about the private money element, and about how the peripatetic quango will operate.

I have given the House a thumbnail sketch of my reasons for welcoming the establishment of the urban regeneration agency. If it is to market and sell land that has been locked up for hundreds of years, however, it will need the commitment and involvement of the private sector. The private sector will be needed to package and organise the pieces of land that are to be marketed and sold. Although, like everyone else, I have the greatest confidence in Lord Walker, I am by no means confident that the establishment of another quango will do the job.

I think that setting up the urban regeneration agency is a first-rate idea. I hope, however, that the Secretary of State for Wales—for whom I have the highest regard—will satisfy the House that that public agency will do the job that we all think it should do.

7.16 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I wish to speak mainly about housing in Wales, particularly in rural Wales. Although the Bill contains some welcome aspects, including the proposals for leasehold reform, part II will be damaging in some respects, and at best will be irrelevant to the needs of Wales.

Great anxiety is felt about the effects of the proposed compulsory competitive tendering on housing management. It is highly unlikely that any housing association will bid for the work: if the Government doubt that, I suggest that they ask the officers of Tai Cymru how many housing associations they think will be interested. Housing associations have made heroic efforts to cope with their rapidly changing role, and with an increasing burden of work—not least in housing management. I cannot imagine that they would want to add another dimension to that work.

Unless council departments succeed in retaining their function, and unless tenants' organisations take over, it is highly likely that contractors from outside Wales will obtain the work. That has already happened with a school cleaning contract in Dyfed. English companies will come in and take the work. That means, at best, uncertainty of employment for the staff of the existing departments, who may well lose their jobs. It also means inferior working conditions, if the normal pattern of events develops. Even more significant, profits will be siphoned out of the area, resulting in the impoverishment of the local economy. There will be increasing centralisation of economic power and wealth.

No one whom I know—including those in the housing association movement—believes that there is any reason to think that the management of council houses will be any more efficient or sensitive as a result of compulsory competitive tendering. In fact, it is likely to be much less efficient and sensitive.

I have already mentioned, in an intervention, the inconsistency that I find in the emphasis on the right to buy for council tenants, who of course are secure tenants, and the fact that housing association tenants, who are increasingly assured tenants, do not have the right to buy. I should like to hear the Secretary of State's justification for this inconsistency. We may have heard an honest reason for this difference from the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) in his remarkable attack on local government's record in housing management. He revealed quite clearly that, in his opinion, local government is not fit to be in the business of housing management. I, and other Opposition Members, I am sure, and certainly members of my own party, disagree. We know from experience of the excellent work that councils do in housing management in many parts of Wales.

My main criticism is that this Bill does nothing to provide the integrated housing policy needed in Wales, and, I dare say, elsewhere too. It will do nothing to tackle the problem of homelessness. I must emphasise that homelessness exists in rural areas; it exists in the idyllic-seeming western rural Wales just as it does in urban areas.

In Ceredigion, for example, by the end of this financial year, the district council will have spent a quarter of a million pounds, probably, on bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless people—enough to build eight to 10 houses. The statutory homeless will be taking up something like 30 per cent. of the lettings in this coming year, reducing provision by that much for other applicants, including young families who need houses.

The current strategy has very serious deficiencies. I refer, for example, to the way that renovation grant policy is in something of a shambles. Ceredigion district council estimates that it will need about £3·4 million to meet the demand for renovation grants in 1992-93, and it is highly unlikely, the council fears, that the Welsh Office will allow sufficient funding to meet that need. Preseli district council has had to freeze its renovation grant programme, with very serious effects for small builders and architects who are currently dependent on that work. There has been a serious underestimate of the demand for renovation grants and councils have been left high and dry as a consequence.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I have made available this year an additional £18 million for Wales, making £400 million over the three-year period, with £190 million being available this year for home renovation grants.

Mr. Dafis: All I can say is that the district councils in my constituency are now facing real difficulties and will be approaching the right hon. Gentleman on this matter. I am asking him now to take this on board and give it very serious consideration. There are serious deficiencies in this area. Some people might say, too, that these large sums of money might be used in more fruitful ways if there were a proper integrated housing strategy.

Meanwhile, Ceredigion district council is unable to fund the desperately needed renovation of pre-reinforced concrete housing—that is, the PRC housing that remains in the public sector—while, of course, the PRC housing that has been bought under the right to buy has obtained public funding for renovation. That is another inconsistency. Again, I appeal to the Secretary of State for Wales to treat sympathetically applications for special funding for tackling the PRC problem in my constituency and elsewhere.

Councils are unable to intervene—this is a key point —to purchase some of the 2,000-plus holiday homes in Dyfed. In some villages in western and north-west Wales, as much as 40 per cent. of the housing stock are holiday homes. Large numbers of them are currently for sale; they are vacant. These houses are potential homes for local people. Councils do not have the capacity, the funding, the means to purchase, to renovate and let to local people. I believe that in rural Wales intervention in existing housing stock should be at the heart of policy. Inability to act in these key areas exists despite the fact that Ceredigion has £6 million of capital receipts from the sale of council houses, of which it is able to spend in this year only £280,000, I believe.

We desperately need an integrated housing policy for Wales. Renovation grants, of course, can play a useful part in such a strategy, but we also need such things as the designation of land within settlements—this is a planning matter of course, but it is relevant—for exclusively local ownership, and not just the land on the periphery of settlements, which is what the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment, I believe, have proposed in relation to this function. We need adequate funds for the preservation of existing council-owned housing stock as well as sufficient new building to clear the staggering waiting list in rural Wales and elsewhere.

The Bill does nothing to facilitate the development of such an integrated policy. I doubt very much whether we shall ever have such a strategy in Wales until we have a democratic Parliament to design it and bring it into existence.

7.26 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I greatly welcome this Bill—as, I believe, will all my constituents—particularly those parts of it which deal with leasehold reform. Leasehold tenure is long overdue for reform and I pay a high tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), who has been pressing very hard over the years that he has been in the House to bring this reform forward. He has done so with the support of practically all inner-London Members, because the major abuses in the leasehold system have been in inner London.

We have heard a great deal this evening about the good landlords, and there are undoubtedly some very good landlords who have run their estates over the years very effectively and looked after their leaseholders in an exemplary manner. Unfortunately, there are also a great many bad landlords, and their number is increasing. It is not difficult to see why. The leasehold system started a

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great many years ago and was designed for people who wanted a form of tenure very different from that required by people buying houses or flats in London today.

What has changed is that during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s we have seen the conversion into leasehold properties of a great many homes which used to be rented, in particular in my own constituency of large Victorian and Edwardian mansion blocks. These used to be rented and were run on a secure tenancy basis perhaps, but as those tenancies fell in they were converted into leaseholds for the existing tenants, or were sold and converted into leaseholds. There was also the conversion into flats of houses which had previously been in multiple occupation and again this was done on a leasehold basis, for the simple reason that there was no other satisfactory form of tenure available. So developers had to convert and then sell on a leasehold basis.

The developer had no interest, very often, in retaining the freehold, so the freehold was sold separately to the block. Throughout London, and not merely in my constituency, freeholds are being traded as commodities. Some people buy them and run them satisfactorily, but frequently they are bought by people who perceive that ownership of a freehold and the rights that it confers is a way to make money out of the people who are unfortunate enough to find themselves with a leasehold tenure in a property. The way in which people make money out of freeholds is straightforward: by inflating the service charges and the maintenance and repair costs; and by adding on charges for managing the builders' contracts. There are innumerable ways to make money legitimately out of owning the freehold of a leasehold block of flats.

Too often freeholders have tended not to do the work that leaseholders have paid for, although as my old opponent the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) said, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 introduced some protections, but it did not work satisfactorily and was not easy enough to implement.

I am glad that the Bill goes a long way towards remedying the defects and putting power in leaseholders' hands so that they are able to force the freeholder to justify himself, especially when he provides an unsatisfactory or costly service and are able to buy him out. The best form of tenure is for leaseholders to own the freehold. They will then be able to decide the level of maintenance that they want and the level of service that they are prepared to pay for.

That is by far the best system, but it is not without its problems. We must recognise that it does not always work perfectly when leaseholders own the freehold of a block. I know of several blocks in my constituency where the freehold is owned, and that has led to difficulties among the leaseholders, who disagree about how they should manage the company that owns the freehold. That makes it more important and urgent that we introduce the commonhold Bill, which will reduce some of the present difficulties of freehold companies in leasehold blocks. I urge my hon. and right hon. Friends to table that Bill as soon as possible, as it is the twin of this Bill and is urgently needed.

I am glad that the Crown Estate has said that it will go along with the provisions in the Bill. In my constituency the Crown Estate owns the freehold of several mansion blocks and it would be wrong if the estate did not accept that the tenure of those blocks should be treated like any other landlord's tenure, according to its normal practice. I am grateful that it has shown that intention.

The big problem is the rule on 10 per cent. of the property being commercial. That percentage is unduly restrictive in many London blocks of flats. In my constituency, there are few blocks with shops on the ground floor which have sufficient floors above to satisfy the 10 per cent. rule, and I urge my hon. and right hon. Friends to reconsider. That percentage will exclude many people who should be included, and will give rise to abuses by freeholders. Frequently, Edwardian and Victorian mansion blocks have old coal cellars underneath them. Where shops have been in commercial use on the ground floor, the cellars have not been used. By bringing the coal cellars into commercial use, for storage, the amount of the block in commercial use can be increased to well above 10 per cent. That figure is too low and I urge my hon. Friends to change it to 25 per cent. Ideally, it would be 50 per cent., as that is a more reasonable figure.

Heritage is often mentioned as though London's great conservation areas are all owned under the leasehold system by great estates, but that is far from true. Many historic parts of London have traditionally been owned on a freehold basis and continue to be. The Ladbroke estate, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, is one of the great mid-Victorian developments. It has always been owned freehold and has not suffered from any of the problems which have been outlined this evening. I do not believe that a change from leasehold to freehold would cause any great problems. People who own their property look after it better than people who own only the freehold and do not have an immediate residential interest in it. The maintenance of the great estates would improve under the Bill, rather than be threatened.

Another problem concerns the position of council tenants who have exercised their right to buy. Some blocks in my constituency contain a significant proportion of people who have exercised that right and I am sure that that is replicated throughout the country. We must consider the effects on them if they live in a block that will be affected by the Bill, which is in the middle of an estate where the roads and surrounding land are owned by the council. Will my hon. Friends consider that seriously and find out whether they need extra protection?

Apart from those problems, the Bill is greatly welcomed and I look forward to its quickly becoming law.

7.36 pm

Ms. Ann Coffey (Stockport): First, I must draw the Minister's attention to the housing problems that we face. In my constituency, 7,000 people are on the waiting list. Before some hon. Member jumps up and says that Stockport is a Labour authority, it is not, and it has been commended on its housing management by the Department of the Environment, but it still has 7,000 on its waiting list. Those people are waiting to exercise their right to choose to rent, except that they do not have a choice.

The position in my constituency is similar to that in others and it is a result of the right-to-buy scheme and the fact that local authorities have not been able to replace housing that they lost through tenants exercising that right.

It is interesting that the tenants who exercised their right to buy tended to be in the better-off areas of the town, which has limited the choice of rented property for the remaining tenants. The 7,000 people on the list are part of the hidden homeless. They are camping out with relatives and friends, waiting months and often years for accommodation.

As Opposition Members know, most of our time is taken up trying to resolve housing problems that are insoluble—because there simply is not the accommodation—and listening to heart-rending stories of young families who have to live in intolerable circumstances for a long time. The fact that they are hidden does not make the problem more acceptable; the situation is intolerable.

I sometimes mention the possibility of the private rented sector to young families, but two problems are associated with that. First, the cost of a deposit is high and unaffordable. Secondly, if they live on income support and are entitled to housing benefit, there is sometimes a difference between the rent officer's assessment of what they should pay and the rent charged by the landlord. Because of that difference, the housing benefit does not cover the rent, unless the local council wishes to subsidise it out of the poll tax. As the Minister will appreciate, that is not an option which many local authorities could exercise, or would wish to, given the present financial situation.

Many of my constituents feel that the Government have little commitment to providing a rented sector. Many people want to rent accommodation, both council and other types. Other European countries have a higher proportion of rented accommodation, mainly because of the obsession of the British Government with house ownership, which they regard as a panacea for every problem. I accept that home ownership should be on offer, but many people do not want it. There should be a healthy rented sector, public and private, and on both counts the Conservatives have failed to deliver.

I am at a loss to see how putting housing management out to competitive tendering will help the situation in Stockport. There is nothing wrong with my local housing management, and the Department of the Environment will testify to that. But how can any housing management cope with the problem of 7,000 people wanting to rent property that does not exist? The problem is an inadequate supply of housing, not the way in which housing managers are dealing with the problem.

My hon. Friends and I support tenants' organisations and it is important for such bodies to help solve outstanding problems. But how will tenants' organisations becoming involved with management cope with the overall problem? How will they be any better at managing houses that are not available? They cannot provide vacancies if the accommodation does not exist.

The Bill refers to welfare services being provided from within the housing revenue account. As the Minister knows, the housing revenue account must balance. If welfare services are provided from that account, the result must be increased rents or a slowing down of the process of repair. Either way, some other aspect of the housing revenue account is bound to suffer.

While it is important for welfare services to be part of housing provision—that must be so, with the increasing elderly population who are living longer in the community—including all the support services, I caution against the notion of looking automatically to the housing revenue account to pay for those services. They should properly be provided and paid for by the council and taxpayers as a whole, rather than the burden falling on the rent payers; otherwise they will be paying several times over for those services. They will pay as renters, as poll tax payers and as taxpayers in general. Such a state of affairs would not be fair, and many additional problems would arise, particularly if the Minister insists on the revenue housing account being balanced.

We in the north-west have a crisis in home renovation grants. Resources available for renewal area programmes, strategic and planned, are being dominated by the demand-led mandatory system. A survey of 13 authorities in the north-west, which includes east Lancashire and Greater Manchester, shows that they are all affected by demands beyond the level of resources available. Although authorities in the north-west have submitted genuine bids for finance, last year they received only 30 per cent. of their bids. So despite additional allocations, all authorities have been obliged to take measures to suspend grant approval this year so as to remain within their budgets. That is not a satisfactory state of affairs because we in the north-west have some of the oldest properties and housing that is desperately in need of repair and maintenance. That work must be done if the sector is to be maintained up to standard.

A problem in the north-west is the construction of the capital controls system, which fails to ensure that resources targeted for urban renewal are used for that purpose nationally. The distribution of grant for urban renewal activities should be based on the indicators which underscore the conditions and needs in the north-west. Overall, the capital control system needs better to reflect the purpose for which specified capital grant was introduced, and its distribution should better reflect need, performance, local housing strategies and, in particular, committed renewal area plans. Authorities in the north-west region find funding the 25 per cent. contribution difficult.

When renewal areas were introduced under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, many authorities, particularly in the north-west, fully supported the proposals concerning the assessment of comprehensive urban renewal strategy and the production of renewal area proposals. In the first year of the new capital controls system, a nationally top-sliced amount was set aside for renewal areas. That top slice was available only in the first year and has not been repeated.

The system of mandatory right to grant to deal with unfit housing conditions is fully supported by the north-west authorities, but to balance the scarce resources in the most effective ways, perhaps authorities should be given more discretion to balance the available resources between demand-led grants and renewal areas.

The capital control system could be revised better to target resources to authorities that tend to use them for urban renewal purposes. The existing arrangements for bringing forward future years' borrowing approvals does not address the increasing difficulties that authorities have funding their contributions. In an overall uncertain resource climate, such a mechanism is not viable long-term——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I now call Mr. Waterson.

7.46 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): The introduction of the Bill gives me pleasure and disappointment. It gives me pleasure because it appears to be the answer to the prayers of hundreds of my constituents who suffer under the leasehold system. It gives me disappointment because I see the debate being hijacked by a small number of landlords in London.

The activities of the great estates and their agents to protect their relatively small number of properties is diverting attention from the 2 million or so people who live in leasehold properties in England and Wales. I will leave the debates on the great estates to other hon. Members. I am anxious to tell the House about the effects of the leasehold system on my constituents.

Many south coast towns contain a large proportion of leasehold flats. My constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) have some of the largest concentrations. My hon. Friend, who is in the Chamber listening to the debate, has asked me to associate her with many of the points that I shall make, and I am happy to do so.

Anyone in England or Wales who wants to buy a flat has no other choice than to buy leasehold property. My hon. Friends the Members for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) and for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), and the former hon. Member for Dulwich, Mr. Bowden, have done much in this sphere and deserve to be congratulated.

Many of my constituents live in leasehold accommodation. When I was first selected as prospective candidate, I was struck by the number of problems that people brought to my attention concerning leasehold blocks of flats in Eastbourne, usually because of a breakdown in the relationship between the freeholder and the leaseholders.

There are the problems of service charges and maintenance. Even though the individuals have paid for the property—a 99-year lease is virtually a full freehold value—they still have no control of their homes. That leads to two main problems, the first being the difficulty of getting anything done. It can be a nightmare, despite the regular charges for service.

An elderly lady came to see me almost in tears because she and other residents in her block had been trying, without success, to persuade the managing agents to do something about the structure and external appearance. When I say that the agents concerned were based in Manchester, hon. Members can easily appreciate some of the problems of communication.

Leaseholders must finance the total cost of any repair or refurbishment work undertaken by the freeholder. It is deplorable that the people who pay the bills should have little or no say in what work is done or how much it costs. A group of tenants contacted me recently to complain about a 30 per cent. increase in management charges in a single year. With inflation at its present low level, that is simply not acceptable for people living on a pension.

Freeholders may say that the best way to counter those management problems is by tightening up existing controls, but many freeholders ignore or subvert the current legal provisions. The only way to stop the frustration and suffering of millions of people is to give them control of their own homes and let them decide how they wish to spend their money. In short, the Bill is another step on the road to a proper, property-owning democracy.

The second of the two main problems faced by leaseholders is that of a decline in his or her asset. Flats are becoming an increasingly important part of the country's housing stock, yet currently, and uniquely to England and Wales, one can buy only a leasehold and not a freehold. Most building societies will not give a mortgage on a lease of less than 25 or 30 years. Thus the largest investment which millions of people ever make in their lives is the only asset whose value is guaranteed to fall over time. A dangerous equity time bomb is ticking away.

The leasehold flat is largely a post-war phenomenon. In the next 10 years or so, the devastating effect of declining assets will start to become all too obvious. In places like Eastbourne, there is a worrying combination of older people, often living on limited incomes, a wasting capital asset, and aging buildings with ever-increasing repair and maintenance bills.

At the end of the lease, the freeholder takes back the full value of the property and all improvements with no compensation to the leaseholder who has financed it all. Effectively, the freeholder is having his cake and eating it.

The leasehold system is viewed with incredulity by every other country in the western world, including Scotland. It has brought huge benefits to a small number of people, literally at the expense of many millions.

Some hon. Members have suggested that the proposals are anti-Conservative and amount to theft of private property. It is worth dwelling on that point. The leasehold system is a unique form of property ownership. With the owner-occupier and private rented sector, the freeholder holds the full value of the property, as is the case with virtually every other form of property ownership. But leasehold is different. It is a mutation of property ownership that cannot be compared with anything else. It is the only system in which the owner sells a large proportion of the property's value at full market value and then has it all revert to him.

The Bill is not about confiscation, which is where something is taken from someone with no recompense. The proposals are clear: the freeholder will receive full market value for the property as well as a share of the marriage value. Tales of confiscation are unfounded scare stories.

The question that is being asked is wrong. It should not be whether we should interfere in this perverse system of property ownership but how we ever allowed it to develop in the first place and why we have done nothing about it before. Like other hon. Members, I regard the Bill as a halfway house. I hope that the Government will find time early next year to introduce legislation on commonhold, which is complementary to the current proposals.

The issue of leasehold reform is not just an interesting philosophical debating point. To people living in leasehold properties, it is their whole lives, their homes and their security. They will thank us for introducing the Bill and others for amending it, where necessary, to ensure that the Government's intentions are met. But they will forgive none of us if we let them down.

7.55 pm

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The Bill is particularly relevant to my constituency. Almost three quarters of my constituents live in social housing or accommodation that is not owner occupied. They know only too well the frustrations of being forced to rely on others for the maintenance of what are homes to those who live in them but what, all too often, are seen as mere investments or statutory obligations to those who manage them.

Like many other hon. Members, I welcome the Government's recognition of the need for reform in a number of areas affecting housing and urban development, but I regret that those measures have taken the Government almost 13 years to introduce and I regret even more the fact that they go only halfway to dealing with the issues that need to be tackled.

For the 30 per cent. of my constituents who currently lease the properties in which they live, the right to buy their freehold or extend the lifetime of their lease will undoubtedly be welcome. The freedom and independence that a freehold provides should undeniably be granted to those who, in many cases, have spent decades investing in their properties. Moreover, at a time of plummeting house values, the financial uncertainty caused by a lease nearing expiry provides an additional and unnecessary cause for concern.

However, that is one part of the Bill in which the Government have introduced half-hearted measures. First, there are too many grounds for exclusion from the right to buy the freehold and, secondly, in common with other hon. Members, I regret that the Government have missed a golden opportunity to include commonhold in the Bill. The distinction between owning one's flat collectively and owning it as an individual may seem trivial to those who drafted the Bill, but it is not a trivial distinction to those who want full ownership of flats that are as important to them as full ownership of a house is to owner-occupiers.

The Government have an obligation to enable as many leaseholders as possible the right to possess and manage their own accommodation, but they also have an obligation to protect those who, through no fault of their own, may find that the desire for self-ownership stretches them beyond their means. That is why I am deeply worried about the concept of rent to mortgage.

In the borough of which my constituency forms a part, almost 2,000 families live in temporary accommodation. The court that deals primarily with home repossessions in my constituency has seen an increase in repossessions of 117 per cent. in the past year. Against that background, it is madness at a time of deepening recession to encourage those on lower incomes to take out mortgages, especially when such mortgages would remove their rights to repairs and housing benefit and their right to move to other rented property. The effect of a rent-to-mortgage tenant defaulting and eventually becoming the victim of repossession would be to double the homelessness problem. Councils would find themselves with an increase in the number of homeless families directly comparable with a decrease in the amount of accommodation available to house them.

I referred to the Government's obligations. One obligation is to ensure that tenants who live in council property have the right to have that property properly maintained, managed and promptly repaired. A number of clauses deal with those issues, in particular those that deal with the right to repair, the right to improve and the provision of welfare services. Few people would argue that tenants who do not receive prompt repairs should not be compensated or that those who have carried out improvements that increase the value of their property should not enjoy the benefits of that increased value if they move to another property. Surely no one would argue that those who live in sheltered housing should not enjoy the provision of an on-site warden.

However, none of the clauses that deal with those issues are adequate if they do not stand alongside a recognition that the resources provided by the Government to local government are insufficient to provide the standard of repairs, maintenance and management that residents require. Tenants do not want compensation for shoddy workmanship; they want good workmanship the first time round. They do not want apologies, having waited weeks for jobs that should take hours; they want the work done on time. Council tenants have the right to expect that, but they will not have that unless the Government begin to put back some of the billions of pounds that they have systematically removed from councils of all political persuasions in the past 13 years.

We hear much from the Government about rights: rights of individuals, rights to make their own decisions, rights to control their own lives. Indeed, as we have seen, much of this Bill concerns itself with the extension of rights for leaseholders. Therefore, it is inexcusable that this Bill proposes to remove the rights of council tenants to decide who is in control of management of their homes.

The situation is unambiguous. At present,

> "the Secretary of State shall not give his approval if a majority of tenants of the houses to which the agreement relates do not wish the proposal, (i.e. a change in management of their homes), to proceed".

In this Bill that right is withdrawn. What possible excuse can there be for a Government who purport to argue for choice and independence removing that independence from council tenants? It is they, not the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister, who live in these homes. It is they, not the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister, who will live daily with the consequences of the scheme for compulsory competitive tendering. And it is they, not the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister, who should have the right to decide whether any change in management should proceed.

There is much in this Bill that is to be welcomed, but there are also many areas where it goes much too far, and many areas where it promises much too little. Most importantly, it does little to reinforce the Prime Minister's stated intention to ensure a classless society. It gives private housing companies excessive rights, leaseholders half rights, and council tenants no rights at all.

If the Government wish this Bill to receive the full support that some of its clauses deserve, they will have to listen much more carefully to the voices of those over whom it will have the greatest influence.

8.1 pm

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) welcome the Bill, even though she had considerable reservations—rather different, I fear, from the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). I

[Mr. Mark Robinson]

listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's speech and by the end of it I had begun to wonder whether we were discussing the same Bill. His attack on the Bill was an unguided attack on Government policy, and I was disappointed that his speech bore little relation to the details of this complicated Bill.

I pay tribute to my former Member of Parliament, Sir Brandon Rhys Williams. I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), who has done so much to ensure that this legislation came before the House.

Hon. Members on both sides undoubtedly have reservations about parts of the Bill. I was pleased to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State say that he was prepared to consider sensible amendments to loopholes as they emerge in Committee. I endorse the enfranchisement proposals, and I look forward to their being complemented when the legislation that we have been promised as commonhold comes before the House. I understand that that is an extremely detailed and complex piece of legislation, so it is right that it should form a separate Bill—this one is detailed enough.

I should like to concentrate on two areas—first, the welcome proposals for long leaseholders of flats, together with the estate management provisions set out in chapter IV; secondly, the work of the proposed urban regeneration agency in England, as set out in part III.

What attracts me to the proposals in chapter I is the opportunity for long leaseholders of flats to join together to purchase freehold and intervening leasehold interests. That will help many people whose blocks of flats have fallen into disrepair because of bad management. Good landlords will be safeguarded by the two thirds principle, even if that proves difficult to achieve at times. In essence, the Bill provides an incentive to both tenants and landlords to look after their properties.

I have seen many well managed and many badly managed estates. Those who doubt the ability of tenants to look after their properties underestimate the power of ownership. A visit to Hong Kong can be a salutary experience. There tenants manage their own estates, arrange common services, include shopping areas and provide an environment in which people want to live. That is borne out by the queues outside letting offices and the long waiting lists for the best estates. That is in sharp contrast with some estates in England.

What is lacking here? Often the problem is a lack of imaginative design, of pride of ownership, and of community spirit—all ingredients which can be provided even if the original fabric looks unpromising at first. I have seen priority estates projects, especially in the Principality of Wales, which have been transformed in a way that was not thought possible at the outset. This is why I welcome the provisions in chapter IV, which allow landlords to apply to the leasehold valuation tribunal to seek approval of estate management schemes.

I believe that the urban regeneration agency is an important development. Recent years have shown how successful urban regeneration schemes can be. It makes sense, therefore, to pull together the derelict land grant, the city grant and the work of English Estates in assisted areas. That will provide the necessary cohesion for work that is often already under way. It will also provide some much-needed flexibility in the process of development.

This move will enable land adjoining urban development corporations to be developed under the auspices of the agency. Where work has been completed, UDC powers can be returned to local authorities—that seems eminently sensible. Indeed, it has worked very well in the case of the Cwmbran development corporation—a successful project of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Its usual planning functions have now been handed back to the local authority.

As the urban regeneration agency sets about its work, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will allow it to consider market towns such as Frome, which has a population of about 18,000. It has lost much of its traditional employment base in this recession. Long-standing industries have closed, and the town centre is in urgent need of a serious plan for redevelopment. The agricultural market has moved out of town. There are vacant factory sites, following the closure of long-established enterprises. With planning and imagination, Frome can again become a thriving centre.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will ensure that the agency will look not only to large conurbations but also to smaller towns. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales already has considerable experience of this, as does my noble Friend Lord Walker. They have done a great deal of this sort of work among the smaller communities of the south Wales valleys. There is a case for similar work to be done in rural areas which have been hard hit in the current recession.

8.7 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): It is one of the remarkable achievements of this Government that after eight senior Ministers, several junior Ministers and eight housing Acts, the Government have left housing in a dramatically worse situation than the one that they inherited in 1979. In this debate, and in all others on housing legislation, that fact should never be forgotten. For the first time in 70 years, homeless teenaged children are begging in our streets. Homelessness is rising faster than at any time that I can remember. Our housing stock is in an advanced state of decay, in both the owner-occupied and the rented sector. That is a damning indictment of any Government and it puts this Bill in perspective.

Throughout the past 13 years the Government have focused on just one issue—owner occupation—in a way which has created a nightmare for many owner-occupiers and done immense damage to the British economic structure. The lack of a healthy rented sector in Britain makes mobility of labour in this country hard to come by.

The Government must not continue to devastate the rented sector. I ask Conservative Members, and especially Ministers, to remember that 2 million homes in the rented sector have been lost in the past 13 years. I take that figure from the Duke of Edinburgh's report, or the Rowntree report. The loss of those homes has had a profound knock-on effect on the economy generally. The Government created an enormous splurge of equity release in the middle to late 1980s, which fed the artificial boom of that period and created the trouble that the

Government now face. Money was diverted from industry into home ownership through the use of mortgage income tax relief. In Britain, we invested our savings in our homes in the expectation that their value would increase—an expectation which has now been destroyed—and took investment away from industry. We did immense damage to our industrial base and at the same time we did nothing for housing. The tragedy is that the Government have come forward with a Bill—their ninth housing Bill—that when enacted and implemented will achieve little.

I shall refer briefly to the public sector borrowing requirement and council receipts. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I are saying—it is almost common ground—that the PSBR is affected by council receipts. We know that, and we know also that that has a macro-economic effect. The issue which divides the Government and the Opposition is that the use of the receipts in a phased way is beneficial to the economy when in a slump. The fundamental reason why Britain is in a deeper slump than that faced by other countries stems partly from that. The French, who do not approach their PSBR in the same way, can have a high-speed rail link because they can borrow on their nationalised railway without affecting the PSBR. They do not have the problems that we face. We are unable to have a high-speed rail link, and at the same time we have greater economic problems. The same comparison applies throughout Europe.

I intervened earlier because the Secretary of State had his facts wrong when dealing with the PSBR argument. The Europeans will insist on our having legislation which fits with the definition being drawn up by ECOFIN. That definition will fit in with European lines and not with ours. There will be advantages in terms of capital receipts, but disadvantages in other areas. I should like the Secretary of State to remain in the Chamber to deal with this matter, but I suspect that he will not. Regardless of whether the Maastricht treaty is ratified—tomorrow's vote will be on confidence in the Prime Minister, not about Maastricht—we want to know whether the Government are moving towards convergence on the PSBR. If so, we must change the definition that we apply. That is what the argument is about. It is complex, but vital.

I am delighted that the Government are moving on the leasehold and commonhold argument. The Minister of State knows that there is an area of agreement in this context. I would wish to be the first to put on record my respect for the late Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, who did so much in advancing the commonhold argument in an area where that could not have won him many friends among rich Tory backers. He did it, however, and his successor, the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), has done it.

I remind the House that, as long as a year ago, the Opposition were saying that we would co-operate with the Government if they brought forward commonhold legislation. I agree that it will be complex, but both parties have said that they want it. There would have been no serious opposition. We could have produced commonhold legislation before the election, and certainly it could have been presented by now. Such legislation would go a long way to meeting the anxiety of many about the outdated leasehold system.

The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) intervened to say that he was worried about property rights. One of the main differences between the Conservative party and the Labour party is that we in the Labour party put individual rights as high as—and very often higher than—property rights, not least because we remember that slavery, for example, was justified on the basis of property. We say that in many circumstances individual rights are more important than property rights. I thought that the Conservative party had moved some way towards our way of thinking. Having listened to some Conservative Members, that seems to be the position. I think that the Conservative party is right.

There are major failings in the Bill's structure. There are problems with the 10 per cent. rule, but I will not go over ground that has already been covered. There are problems about valuation generally, but setting the right market price is not a great difficulty. The Minister knows that there is a method of adjudication. I should have been much more impressed if the Government had taken on board the much deeper problem which exists when properties are being compulsorily purchased under existing legislation. The same problem would arise with compulsory purchase under the urban regeneration agency. Properties are being repurchased compulsorily at market value when more money is owed on the mortgages than properties are worth. I would be much happier if Conservative Members said that something must be done about that instead of worrying about a system which at least makes available independent valuation. I congratulate the Government on continuing with that even if they do not have all the details right.

I hope that the right to extend a lease will be examined carefully in Committee. It will not be possible for many people to take advantage of a different system such as commonhold or the buying out of a lease. In those circumstances there is a strong case for the right to extend a lease. I recognise that that right is set out in the Bill, but it is important that it should apply widely. If residents in a block of flats choose, for whatever reason, not to buy, many people will be trapped as assured tenants. They will pay uncontrolled rents and many other charges will be imposed on them. That will be the position even if their leases are shortly to expire.

The management of housing represents a disastrous shortcoming in the Government's philosophy. They are still stuck with the idea that in some way council housing is bad. Every measure that they have introduced since 1979, and everything that they have done since then, has been designed to get rid of council housing. Housing action trusts were introduced. Initially, everything was supposed to be privatised. In the end, the Government had to back down and give tenants the right to go back to the council. Under the incredible 1988 legislation, every tenant was supposed to be transferred on the basis of votes in favour, with those who did not vote being presumed to wish to be transferred. If that system had been used for the general election, the Government would have lost hands down. Everybody who did not vote would have been presumed to want to get rid of the Government. It was a ludicrous proposition. It is interesting that only one transfer has reached near-completion under the 1988 legislation and, sadly, Westminster council and the Government have tried to block it: it is, of course, in the control of the tenants.

The Government's failings stem from their belief that councils are always bad and everyone else is good. There is a classic example of missed opportunities in the wrong priorities that are set out in the Bill. On many occasions, I have complained about Mr. Hoogstraten, who is a

[Mr. Clive Soley]

private landlord. He has been involved in bad landlordism in this country for many years. *The Daily Telegraph*, to its credit, produced a report on a fire in Hove in which several people died. It was alleged that Mr. Hoogstraten was involved in the management of the property, or in the ownership of it. The person who started the fire later committed suicide.

I wrote to the Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary, the previous Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment about that case and about previous cases in which Mr. Hoogstraten had been involved. Despite the existence of the 1988 legislation, I was told that nothing could be done. The Bill refers only to management by councils. What is wrong with recognising—we in the Opposition changed our position on this issue some years ago, and others outside the House changed their position as well—that ownership in the rented sector is important but is not a critical issue? More important are quality of management, affordable rents and tenantss' rights. If we get those three things right, ownership does not matter too much.

I do not care whether the owner of a house or flat that is rented is a Labour or Tory council, a housing association or a private sector landlord. I say that if there are bad landlords we should be able to put them right and make them good landlords. If that approach fails, tenants want to get out of those landlords' clutches regardless of who they are. If the Conservative party would accept that the management issue involves quality of management generally, it could move mountains.

A Government report—it is sold by HMSO—refers to housing management. I shall quote part of the report for the benefit of Conservative Members, who sometimes make absurd statements about the matter. First of all, it says:

> "The key failing of many councils is that they spend, in comparison to housing associations, too little on management, rather than that they are less 'economic' or 'efficient.'"

Indeed, all the evidence is that 67 per cent. of council tenants are satisfied with their management, compared with 80 per cent. of housing associations. Conservative Members believe that councils are bad when it comes to rent arrears. However, the report says that the result for rent arears was somewhat different. Measured as a percentage of net debit, councils and associations in the samples were equally effective in collecting rents. Housing associations had a higher proportion of their tenants in serious arrears. If hon. Members were to read that report, they could then speak with some confidence about housing management.

The Secretary of State could have made provision in the Bill for a body such as the Housing Corporation to do something about empty properties. Again, I point out to Conservative Members that it is not empty council properties that are the problem. The key to the problem is empty Government properties. The fact is that 2·5 per cent. of council properties are empty, that 3·1 per cent. of housing association houses are empty, that 5·9 per cent. of private properties are empty and that 16·1 per cent. of Government-owned properties are empty. They include not just defence properties. Those properties are being sold off by the Government on the private market in a way which depresses house prices and damages the economy.

There can be no clearer example of this Government's policy failures than their housing policy failure. Without tediously repeating it, I echo everything that was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) —that tenants' rights will be tragically and crucially undermined by the attempt to contract out management in a way which prevents tenants from having a say. Tenants should always have a say. That is crucial. For some years Labour party policy has been that tenants' rights should be given much higher priority and that ownership of their properties should not be transferred without their consent.

Conservative Members talk glibly about compulsory competitive tendering. For commercial reasons, that has to be a secret operation. The result is that tenants' rights are swept aside. I do not intend to dwell too long on the rent-to-mortgage scheme. However, that scheme is wrong, even now. It is not just that we need a mortgage rescue scheme. We all remember what the Prime Minister said on "Desert Island Discs"—"We've dealt with the repossessions problem, haven't we?".

On 15 December last year the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that his mortgage rescue scheme, which he cobbled together in response to my party's proposals, would save 40,000 people this year. To the best of my knowledge, about 40 have been saved. It was a disastrous, silly scheme. It has not saved public money. We are still paying out money to put people into bed-and-breakfast accommodation, having taken them out of their homes which then stand empty for months, thus depressing the housing market.

Apart from the problems referred to by my hon. Friends, there is an additional problem if one goes for the rent-to-mortgage scheme. If somebody comes to me and says, "I want to go for the rent-to-mortgage scheme", my first advice—this is why it has had such a low take-up in Scotland, Basildon and Wales—is that that person would be better advised to go for the right-to-buy scheme. He would then avoid the other problems that would be faced if he went for the rent-to-mortgage scheme, including financial problems.

I do not object to the rent-to-mortgage scheme generally, but it ought to be made as easy as possible for people to move from one sector to another, whether it be from renting to owning, or from owning to renting. The problem with the British housing market and the British economy is that it is too difficult to change one's tenure. If we are to make it easier, we should provide a level playing field. The Labour party has cried out for that for years so that people can choose the type of tenancy that they want to meet their life circumstances, which change from time to time.

I do not know how long it will take the Government to learn their lesson regarding the urban regeneration agency. Great quangos form clones with other quangos. The Government have created more quangos than any other Government. They began by knocking them out; then they started to recreate them. If the Government go down that road, they will create unrepresentative organisations which try to do a local authority job. The ideology is wrong.

If one takes the view that local authorities are bad, of course one will create an urban regeneration agency and plonk it on top of local authorities. That happened with docklands. We gave £1 billion of tax advantages in one form or another to one docklands company, Olympia and

York, but it still went bust. At the same time, the Government refused to give any money to subsidise the coal industry.

A number of German groups visited docklands. They told me that they were amazed that we should impose such a structure on top of local authorities. They pointed out that the British, who drew up their constitution, would not have allowed that structure to develop in Germany. They were right. We gave them regional government which enabled them to bring about the economic regeneration of the regions. Every European country is doing that, except one. That country is Britain. That is why we are doing so badly.

If we impose a quango which does not work well with local authorities, it will fail. The only thing that will begin to regenerate run-down areas is local authorities working in partnership with the private sector and the Government. That partnership should be flexible enough to focus on the economic needs as well as on the social infrastructure, including housing. The Bill is all right in parts, but it is a terrible, terrible missed opportunity. The Government's housing record is literally appalling.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I respectfully point out that hon. Members should deal with their mail outside the Chamber.

8.27 pm

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): Reference has been made to the complexity of the Bill. I am forced to say that the speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has not made it any simpler for me, at least. I am sure that it will be a popular Bill, since its guiding spirit is the desire, long associated with Conservative Members —but, frankly, for less time with Opposition Members —that people should be enabled to exercise more control over important aspects of their lives and, by doing so, to enrich their lives through greater independence and self-determination. That is not, with all due respect to the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones), outdated 'eighties dogma. That is what people want.

The rent-to-mortgage scheme, which builds on the right to buy, is a major step forward in the process of reversing that vortex of dependency which has for so long been the most serious blight affecting many of our inner city areas and for which the Labour party—I see that the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) is laughing—has been responsible through its local government policies. That insidious and dispiriting effect on normal human aspirations may in part go some way towards explaining the conundrum faced by the hon. Member for Greenwich regarding the ability of Labour councils to be returned to office with tiresome regularity in some inner city areas but by no means all.

The rent-to-mortgage scheme incorporated in the Bill represents a simple, cost-effective and relatively low-risk mechanism for council tenants to acquire part or all of their homes. Those who exercise the power to do so will benefit from the relatively painless method of payment and also from the existing right-to-buy legislation. That is very welcome. I hope that it will be widely taken up by people who wish to take greater control over their lives—that is, away from local authorities—and vest it where it belongs: in themselves.

Conservative Members know that there is no reason why the state should be assumed to be a more desirable landlord than anybody else. Indeed, in many cases it is a deeply undesirable landlord, because of inefficiency, delays in repair and a slovenly attitude to serving those who, for too long, have been assumed to have no choice. We are bringing choice to this sector of the housing market, and the Bill includes a number of important further provisions to improve the management of council estates.

The revised and strengthened right to repair is particularly welcome. It did not meet with the approval of the Labour party, but councils that run their affairs efficiently will have nothing to fear from it. It comes as no surprise that Opposition Members find it objectionable or foolish. The advent of compulsory competitive tendering in public sector housing management will, at least, provide opportunities to examine procedures and sharpen service delivery. At best, it could lead to widespread improvement in the management of council-owned estates. It is wholly in keeping with the spirit of the enabling role that local authorities are rightly increasingly coming to play. I welcome the introduction of the statutory framework for involving tenants fully, and for the first time, in the process of deciding who manages their estates, who looks after them and how.

I welcome the proposal to establish the urban regeneration agency, which will streamline the important work that is already under way of bringing back into use derelict, vacant and underused land. To the extent that it proves successful—I have every confidence that it will—it will not only play an important role in regenerating urban areas but, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said, will relieve the pressure for development in neighbouring rural areas, which is of much concern to my constituents in Surrey, East.

The leasehold reform proposals in part I of the Bill will receive a warm welcome from progressive local authorities such as Wandsworth, on which I was privileged to serve for a number of years. I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) in his place; no doubt he will agree with me.

I must confess to a number of reservations about the effect of the proposals on the private sector. Let me make it absolutely clear that I have no pecuniary interest in this matter to declare, nor do I have any consultancy. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) would no doubt disagree, but it seems an inescapable fact that one of the key motivations for the reform is a just desire to tackle the problem of bad landlords. My hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) spoke eloquently on the subject. No Conservative Member would seek to oppose the aim of dealing with bad landlords. Much of the rest of the Bill aims to deal specifically with the problem, which is as widespread in the public sector as it is in the private sector.

The leasehold enfranchisement proposals offer a radical solution to the problem. They involve Government intervention in freely entered into contracts. Such intervention is not unusual; it applies widely in road building and is used on the grounds of health and safety and concerns about the environment. By popular consent, such intervention is undertaken in the public interest. No doubt Ministers have satisfied themselves that the public interest would be served by the enfranchisement proposals.

[Mr. Peter Ainsworth]

On that basis, I add my voice to those who suggest that some aspects of part I of the Bill might benefit from constructive examination.

The Government made it clear that it is not an objective of the Bill to enable leaseholders to buy freeholds at a discount, but, as other hon. Members have said, under the proposed marriage-value arrangements the extra value created by merging the freehold and leasehold interests will be shared by the two parties, which automatically creates a discount for the leaseholder. The freehold will immediately be worth more than the price paid for it, and in some cases that could lead to a reasonably substantial capital gain. There would be nothing to prevent the new owner from realising the gain straight away, which leaves the procedure open to potential abuse. If my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is unwilling to yield on the marriage-value structure, perhaps he will at least think of applying a minimum qualification period such as that adopted for the right-to-buy legislation, which would go a long way towards overcoming the difficulty.

The large commercial estates do not readily lend themselves to public sympathy; they are not exactly the stuff of fashionable legend. Many hon. Members will feel that the largest estates can fend for themselves because they have the resources to do so, but they also have sufficient resources to look after their buildings. Generally, those resources have been put to good use in central London over the years. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will understand that the principal concern is the fate not of the managing estates but of the historic properties under their care, which gives rise to the concern voiced by a number of conservation groups. I hope, therefore, that further consideration will be given to the benefits that might derive from permitting continuity of freehold tenure in areas of heritage value.

I offer those thoughts constructively. I know that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington pointed out, the principal thrust of the reforms will be extremely welcome to the many people who stand to benefit. I am aware, too, that in its approach to the reforms, the Bill questions the continuing viability and validity of the leasehold system, which to many seems unduly complex and perhaps anachronistic.

Finally, I should like to comment on a related matter, because it seems a pity that in a Bill that is so wide ranging there was no room to address one pressing problem with commercial property. Many smaller businesses and shops are locked into upward-only rent reviews. In many cases, that can spell and is spelling disaster. My right hon. and learned Friend has shown his willingness to intervene through the Bill in the private contracts agreed in the housing market, but perhaps he will consider recommending similar intervention in the high street. If it would help to prevent the gradual emptying of high street premises, which is so sadly evident, it would most clearly and unequivocally be in the public interest.

8.39 pm

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): We must say from the outset that the Bill does not really address the housing needs or the employment needs of the country as a whole. We need to go only half a mile from here to be confronted by homeless young people, as my hon. Friends have said. I deduce from that that Ministers must travel through the city with the blinds of their cars drawn. They do not seem to see the tragic consequences of 13 years of disastrous housing policies pursued by the Government. The more I listen to the Government, the more I become convinced that they are continually looking for alibis and that they are not facing reality when it stares them in the face.

I was interested to hear that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) seemed to have the solutions to all the problems from his experience in Wales. As I listened to him speak, I wondered why he was not the Minister for Housing and Planning as he seemed to have so many solutions up his sleeve for every housing ailment in the country. The reality is different.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor quoted the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission's first reports were very crude. The commission, as I am sure many of my hon. Friends with local government experience would agree, spent a lot of time going round local authorities and then producing reports that suggested that the quality of service delivery to tenants was far too high. I could quote one or two examples. I am rather suspicious of any reports coming from the Audit Commission because it is a Government organ and says what Government want it to say, especially when there are criticisms of local government.

The other aspect of the Bill that disappointed me stems from the fact that thousands of people were encouraged to buy their homes, yet some of them find that those homes will be mortgage repossessions. There is not one iota of help for those people, despite the fact that before the general election there were hints and nods here, there and everywhere that the Government would do something to address the problem. Those people will feel badly let down when they look at the Bill.

The Conservative party has always claimed to have lauded and championed tenants' rights. In reality, there has been a cosmetic exercise. Tenants will not be able to have a say about who manages their estates. If anyone tries to tell me that the Bill is an extension of tenants' rights, he will not fool me and I am sure that he will not fool the tenants.

The Bill does not address other areas. In Coventry, for example, we have about 16,000 houses in the private and in the public sector which are in bad need of repair. What has happened over the past 13 years? Grants for repairs have been steadily reduced by the Government. That and not the mythology coming from Ministers and from Conservative Members is the reality of the housing position.

Some of the provisions will again involve a cost that the Government will put on local authorities and for which they will blame local authorities. There is, for example, the question of adopting roads. There are thousands if not millions of miles of road in this country. Adopting roads will be a costly exercise for local authorities. Their only options will be to put the cost on the poll tax payers or to try to find the resources from somewhere else, which will imply cuts. Nothing in the Bill addresses that problem. The Government will have a major problem, although I admit that there is a body of opinion that thinks that roads should be adopted. However, the Government should not ask local authorities to do things if they will not give them the resources with which to do [illegible]

There is a question we must ask about the urban development proposals. After they have taken away land paid for by the public and controlled by the local authorities, how will the Government encourage private investment? As my hon. Friends could tell the Government, there are schemes throughout the country in which land has been made available by the local authorities, but in which the private sector will not invest. How will the Government handle that problem?

The Bill is a cosmetic exercise, once again, to cover up 13 years of Tory mismanagement. I give the Government a word or warning. Last year, local authorities in some of the major cities were confronted by social unrest by young people. There is a variety of opinions about what caused that. Such social unrest occurred in Coventry. Young people are left to live on the streets, they are not given adequate benefit and they are not given homes. Young people are not given jobs. Next summer we shall be confronted by a similar problem. What will the Government do about that?

8.45 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I declare my interests as a parliamentary consultant to Port Enterprises Ltd., to the Waterfront Partnership and to Howard de Walden Estates. I also own a lease on a flat in London.

I entirely applaud the sentiments that lie behind the Bill. I was especially pleased to see what it contained about leasehold enfranchisement. The reasons why the Government introduced part I are clear, and they were clear from the Conservative manifesto. The provisions were introduced to encourage home ownership. Part I is all about enabling people to own their homes. That is a thoroughly laudable prospect which has quite rightly been greeted with approval by hon. Members of all parties.

In an ideal world, it would be possible to have principles that did not conflict with other principles, but, as everyone knows, it is not an ideal world. In this case, as I shall explain, there is, it seems to me as a Conservative, a conflict of principles. Matters need not have come about in that way.

If the Government were concerned solely with dealing with cases of bad landlords, they could have used the procedures that already exist in part I of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. It would be possible to extend the provisions there, as I used to urge on David Trippier when he was in the Department of the Environment, to deal effectively, decisively and quickly with the question of bad management. The Government decided not to go in that direction and doubtless they made that decision because they had rather more in mind than merely dealing with the question of bad management.

Ministers have already fairly made the point that many of the landlords with whom we are dealing are excellent. It is not just a question of dealing with bad management. Listening to my hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson), I heard of the appalling conditions which some of their constituents are enduring. If we were thinking solely in terms of dealing with bad landlords, we would realise that there are other mechanisms that could be used.

The Government decided to follow the route of the Bill. As a result, there are two principles that conflict. On one hand, there is the desire to extend home ownership. On the other hand, the Government will achieve that by depriving people of their property against their will.

It is all very well for Opposition Members to speak in terms of it being only dukes who will lose. Extraordinarily enough, we heard a trace of that sentiment from my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne. He implied that only the great estates were involved and that it did not really matter, because the owners had a bob or two. I believe that it does matter. When one of Her Majesty's subjects has his property taken from him against his will, it is a grave matter which must be considered by Parliament. It is a grave matter whether that deprivation affects the wealthiest duke in the country or the lowliest of Her Majesty's subjects. When the House has to consider taking property away from an owner against his will, it is a matter which is worthy of the most serious deliberation.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning for his consideration and courtesy to me in recent months when he explained to me the reasoning behind the Government's thinking on various points. I feel rather sorry for my hon. Friend, because he must have felt at times that he was being ganged up on from all corners. At times, our debate has seemed to have the battling baronet in one corner and a cohort of dukes in the other. It is a David and Goliath contest with handles. I can understand that at times my hon. Friend must have seen it that way.

We are dealing with a serious matter because we are taking people's property away against their will. How can we reconcile such action with our Conservative principles? The conflict that I have identified can be dealt with only after two conditions have been satisfied: first, we must be certain that the Bill goes as far as, and no further than, is necessary to meet its objectives; secondly, we must ensure that proper compensation is paid to those who lose their property against their will. As I read the Bill at the moment, the drafting is defective in those two particulars.

Let me deal first with the need to ensure that the Bill does not go further than the policy. The policy is to help people own their homes. The trouble is that the Bill does not specify that the home in question has to be one's main or even subsidiary home. One does not have to live in the place at all. As I told my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, under clause 5, a head lessee who is a qualifying tenant because he is on a low rent and a long lease can take over a block when he is not, in fact, a tenant or home owner of any of the flats.

Long ago, my hon. Friend the Minister was, like me, a solicitor. As solicitors, we both know where that might lead. A block of flats on regulated tenancies may not, at first sight, be much of an investment prospect precisely because the tenancies are regulated and the rents are quite low. Under clause 5, it would be quite possible for a head lessee to buy his interest, enfranchise and then start winkling out each one of the regulated tenants, sure and safe in the knowledge that when he ultimately gained vacant possession of the whole block he would make a massive capital gain.

I accept, at once and fully, that it cannot possibly have been the Government's intention that that should happen, but any humble country lawyer—I am not talking about parliamentary counsel, who drafted the Bill—looking at clause 5 with a view to what he could make of it would see that that is where it could lead. I do not think for one moment that that was ever the Government's intention. In

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

case my hon. Friend the Minister should be having a cursory look at clause 5 and should notice there the reference to the fact that the right cannot be exercised in respect of a business tenant, I remind him that a business tenant, for the purposes of part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, does not cover an investment purchaser who becomes a head lessee so that he can get in there and enfranchise. What the Bill does—necessarily, I accept—is to enable home owners to buy their homes from people who do not want to sell; but surely we are not in the business of enabling a type of commercial investor forcibly to acquire property from another type of commercial investor while masquerading as a home owner.

There are apparently two objections to solving that problem. It could be dealt with simply enough by making it a condition of enfranchisement that it should apply to one's main residence. My hon. Friend the Minister explained to me what the objection to that would have been. My answer to his objection is that, although a provision specifying primary occupancy or main residence might cause litigation, all legislation causes litigation; we cannot avoid that. The valuation proceedings under the Bill will cause litigation; we cannot avoid that either. The fact is, however, that "main residence" is a concept well known to the English law and to every hon. Member who has had to apply for MIRAS. Main residence is understood in that context, and it is understood for capital gains tax purposes. Incredibly, bearing in mind the fact that we have heard much from Ministers about the Landlord and Tenant Act 1967, it is in that Act. There is nothing novel, strange or unusual about the concept of main residence. It is there in the 1967 Act and it could be used.

The other, better, objection to my suggestion is that, if such a restriction were imposed, some blocks of flats will not be able to enfranchise because there will be insufficient residents who can enfranchise. I admit that that is a problem, but one cannot throw the baby out with the bathwater just because there is a problem, so allowing the Bill to benefit a class of person whom we never intended it to benefit. An answer to that—although frankly it is not the job of a Back-Bench Member but the Government's job to find a solution to the problem—is this: one could deal with the problem by saying that a block that cannot enfranchise because it has insufficient qualifying members should at least have the automatic right to a new lease. If that were done, most of the objectives of home ownership and its extension would be met without allowing the nightmare scenario whereby those who are, by no stretch of the imagination, home owners winkle their way in. I accept absolutely that that could never have been Ministers' intention.

I now come to the question of compensation. It is easy to deride and say, "They are only dukes. They do not matter. They are lucky to be there." But when one takes people's property away from them they should receive the right amount of compensation. The Government have always admitted that. Replying to last year's debate, the then Under-Secretary made it abundantly clear:

> "We do not intend that through this legislation leaseholders should be able to acquire assets at a discount."—[*Official Report*, 6 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 583.]

That is a laudable intention, and what I should have expected from my hon. Friend. The fact remains, however, that if one values a property and adds together the value of the landlord's and the tenant's existing interest and works out what the value would have been had the property been in the possession of one person, there will be a difference, and that difference is the marriage value. At the very instant at which the tenant forcibly acquires the property from the landlord, he can go out and sell it for more.

I remind the House of the old phrase, "If it looks like a duck, if it sounds like a duck, if it walks like a duck, it's a duck," and this duck is acquiring property at a discount. There is no other way of expressing it. Lest that seems a little too troublesome a concept to get to grips with, let me suggest a better way of expressing it. A landlord may think to himself on day one, "I can do one of two things with this property. I can sell it today or I can create a leasehold interest." If he lets it on a long lease, he will probably be able to sell it for £80,000. His interest on reversion would be £10,000. The value adds up to £90,000. The landlord may think, however, "I'll flog it outright." If he does that, he may get £100,000. That is on day one. On day two, the tenant can enfranchise and tell the landlord that he wants to split the difference with him. That means that the landlord can be forced against his will to sell tomorrow the very asset that he did not want to sell today. That illustrates the fallacy in the argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne in saying that leaseholders are being made to pay twice for something they already have. They are not. What their predecessor in title obtained was the right to build a property on a piece of land. There was never any sale of the land.

My hon. Friend the Minister has told me that he is under pressure from both sides. The leaseholders say that he is being too generous to the nobs. Of course they would say that. There is always a ready market in getting someone else's property at a discount. Every fence I have ever acted for knows that. If we allow the tenant in such a situation to acquire at a price which is less than it would sell for instantly, that is acquiring property at a discount. There is no other way to express it. As a Conservative, I hope that when those leaseholders approach the Minister and say, "Right, come on. We want to acquire for less", they will be told in no uncertain terms that they should pay the correct price and not make a profit.

I have a flat in London and I have a wretched landlord. Mercifully I will be able to get rid of him in due course. I am delighted that I will be able to enfranchise against the landlord. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning will bear out the fact that in all the representations that I have made to him and his predecessors over the years about enfranchisement, I have never said that I wanted to acquire leasehold at an unfair price. Our policy is to advance home ownership and for that one pays the price.

The Bill is excellent in so many ways. However, I have never seen a Bill—with the exception of the Bill to abolish the dock labour scheme—which could not be amended, improved and perfected in Committee. I would be immensely sad if I thought that my colleagues believed that there were no issues to consider in the Bill. There are points to be considered and I trust that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will make that point when he replies to the debate.

9.2 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Many right hon. and hon. Members have served as chair of housing committees in local authorities. As I relinquished my position as chair of the housing committee in Southampton on 16 May, I suspect that I am one of the most recent incumbents of that position and responsibility.

I did not recognise the bizarre description of Labour local housing authorities presented to the House tonight. The idea that Labour local councils are patronising, arrogant and incompetent does not match the facts and that is why my local authority was identified by the Government as being well ahead of the field in housing management last year.

The problem for the Government is not that it is bad political rhetoric; the problem is that if the Government believe it, that leads to bad political policy. Like so much other housing legislation, the Bill betrays a Government who have believed their own rhetoric and are acting to defeat an imaginary dragon instead of tackling real problems.

I have believed passionately for many years, and have a great deal of practical involvement, in advancing tenant participation. If we believe in tenant participation, we must listen to what tenants want and say. If we were to ask tenants in almost any council for their priorities, the response would be that those who live in overcrowded conditions or who want to move their families out of tower blocks should have the chance to move into a more suitable home—a house with a garden. However, that point is not dealt with in the Bill. The Bill contains nothing about new resources for new building.

The section about urban regeneration does not refer to the problem that we face in Southampton, which is one not of derelict land but of public land which might be marketed for purposes other than for social housing. If we are to meet the need for social housing in Southampton, the health authority, county council and other public bodies must be co-ordinated in the release of that land for social housing. Sadly, that opportunity has been missed in the Bill.

As far back as 1989, my local authority expressed the desire for estate management boards, tenant management co-operatives and a wide range of other forms of practical tenant control over housing. That was supported with staffing and training. However, the process of developing tenant participation is not, as anyone who has been involved will know, a matter simply of willing it from the top and then it happens. The process is complex. On the local authority side, long-standing practices and obstructive cultures must be changed. The attitudes of local government officers need to be developed positively and they must be supported and trained in their new roles and responsibilities.

There is a place for confidence building and training among tenants. The real problems must be tackled particularly if, as is the case in Southampton, some estate and tenant organisations comprise almost entirely young single mothers. We must ensure that they have the time and resources away from their other responsibilities to take part in the management of their estates. There must be a willingness among local authority members to let go of the patronage which has always been part of local authority practice and so allow decisions to be taken by the tenants.

The tragedy is that for the local authorities—at least, for the vast majority of Labour-led local authorities—which have been backing tenant participation positively, the impact of CCT is destroying the progress that has been made towards tenant participation.

The enforced imposition of compulsory competitive tendering cuts across the genuine evolution and development of tenant participation in, and control of, local authority housing and makes matters more difficult. It creates a more complex system that tenants have to operate. It means that they have to go not only to the council as clients but to whichever contractor is providing services. That makes it infinitely more difficult for a tenants' organisation to know with whom it should deal in respect of a problem.

That is not a prediction of what will happen when CCT is introduced in respect of housing management; it is the reality today. In most local authorities, CCT has had the effect of splintering those who are responsible for cleaning the streets, for open-space maintentance and for refuse collection into a myriad contracts with different contractors with whom it is much more difficult for tenants' organisations to work.

I have concluded that the Government's rhetoric on tenant participation has proved to be purely that. The Government's support in speeches and in the small level of funding for tenant participation came about only because it was hoped that tenant participation would lead to tenants turning against Labour council landlords. That has not happened, and that is why in the Bill the fundamental principle of tenant participation, that tenants should have the deciding say over who manages the homes in which they live and for which they pay rent, has been swept aside. Under the legislation tenants will have their management imposed upon them.

Those are not my views alone. When tenants in Southampton met to discuss the CCT proposals and the issues flagged in the Bill—a meeting organised not by the city council but by the priority estates project and funded by the Government, not by the city council—their conclusions were that the proposals brought no power to tenants, that they would be pushed through too quickly and that they were an attack on local democracy. The tenants say, "We are having something that we do not want and we have to pay for it."

Many tenants' associations have responded in a similar vein. A letter from the Thornhill Tower Blocks Residents Association states that it fears that

> "This Government is again rushing through a scheme knowing full well the consequences of such haste, I refer to the poll tax and the hash made of that legislation and the cost."

The Kingsland Residents Community Association states:

> "Tenant Participation has been widely encouraged by the Government and Local Authorities, but the proposed legislation makes a mockery of this policy, because there are no proposals within the legislation for any consultation with Tenant groups."

That association's view was that there should be a selection panel for deciding which tender is successful. They suggested that it should be 50 per cent. council tenants and 50 per cent. local authority, with the deciding vote being cast by a council tenant. The Northam Tenants and Residents Association comments:

> "we are concerned that the . . . Housing Act should not be amended to remove the safeguard that Transfer of houses should not occur unless a majority of tenants agree."

In those consultation responses and others that I do not have time to read, three issues are apparent. Encouraging

[Mr. John Denham]

tenant participation is not just a matter of legislation; it is a matter of changing the culture of housing management. That culture and that positive co-operation will be shattered by the legislation.

The Bill knocks out the steady movement towards the estate management boards, tenants' management organisations and co-ops that have been developing in recent years. Even when tenants wish to take on the direct responsibility of management under CCT, in practice very few will be in a position to bid, and they will have to wait at least five years before they can have a say in the management of their estates.

We should remember that neither local authorities nor the Government pay the bills for tenants. Tenants pay the bills. Any Government who refuse to let tenants take the final decisions about their homes are ignoring the wishes of those tenants.

9.9 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): In welcoming the Bill, I must say that I am extremely disappointed in the approach of part I. The Government might have approached this aspect of the law by a general review of tenures and the incidents of them, or by following the last Conservative manifesto which said that it would tackle this by the introduction of commonhold. The Government might have approached this by tightening the screw in some penal way against bad landlords, which, no doubt, would have attracted universal consent.

The Government might have approached this area of the law by introducing a comprehensive Bill which covered all the relevant material. What they have done is to leave the 1967 Act in place and add something to it, loosely modelled on the 1967 approach. The 1967 Act was a socialist measure, rough in its justice but necessary in south Wales, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will no doubt agree. If he looks at the 1967 Act, however, I am sure that he will also agree, as any lawyer would, that it was highly technical, highly obscure and grossly arbitrary in its operation as to who came within its benefits and who did not.

When Ministers contemplate interference in long-established rights of property, entered into under freedom of contract, it is peculiarly incumbent on them, I respectfully suggest, to see that this is done for very careful, well justified public purposes. What is of such concern in part I of the Bill is that it appears, in a fashion which is not related to merit or to reason, to take property assets from one party and to give them to another.

It is quite clear that there is a windfall element of profit in this process of transformation. All that is being offered to the freeholder is 50 per cent. of the marriage value, whereas in reality in the commercial market it would be 80 per cent. There would be a claim for injurious affection for the rest of his estate and there would be consequential losses which the landlord would expect to recover. Therefore, this is a system which in its ordinary commercial operation is expected to favour the acquiring leaseholder, not the original freeholder.

If, however, we start from that premise, we must go on to examine who is to benefit and who is to lose from these arrangements. I urge upon my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, first of all that it surely cannot be appropriate for a Conservative Administration to attack the property rights of long-established, ancient charities which have exercised and enjoyed their property rights over centuries. The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) spoke on behalf of the Church Commissioners, who have been in existence from about 1710: why should they be singled out and treated as if they were an ordinary commercial landlord unless there is a case against them particularly for what they have done? Why should the dean and chapter of every cathedral close in England who have managed and enjoyed their close as an entirety suddenly discover that leasehold enfranchisement attacks particular parts of that entirety? What public purpose or benefit is to be gained by this kind of arbitrary intervention in property rights?

We could understand it and we would sympathise if this were a measure designed to attack grasping commercial landlords who deserved their just deserts, but the ambit of this is far too wide.

But if it is far too wide for those who lose, the ambit for those who gain is even more extraordinary. The social justice, well apparent in south Wales, in the 1967 Act was that individuals at a certain point in the social scale and of not particularly ample means, whose main residence was at stake and whose family home it was, achieved enfranchisement. Why, however, should, under this new proposal, every commercial company which, as the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) pointed out, may have only temporarily acquired a qualifying leasehold interest benefit without any particular reason whatsoever? And the rules as to who benefits go further than that. The 10 per cent. rule cannot be founded upon anything other than the arbitrary exercise of a discretion, and the low-rent rule qualifying provision is again purely a legislative choice, utterly arbitrary.

What has already begun to happen and will go on happening is that commercial landlords of the least attractive variety will take the short-term course, grant leases for 21 years, which are outside the ambit of this legislation, or make sure that there is more than 10 per cent. which is non-residential in the block or that the ground rents are more than two thirds of the normal commercial rateable value. Such simple, easy steps will be taken in every instance to frustrate the Bill's purpose.

The debate has not dealt with a point that is fundamental to the purpose of the proposed reform. Why has leasehold endured in England—astonishingly—although for many years it has been attacked as an unsatisfactory system of tenure? The explanation is very simple, very ancient and very clear: it is impossible to buy, charge or sell a freehold flat in England without experiencing considerable difficulty because of two well-established principles of English law.

Covenants involving freehold land between freeholders can only be enforced between the original parties; if the original parties are not involved, only covenants that are negative in character and that benefit retained land can be enforced. The courts will not specifically perform such obligations. In a freehold development, there is no proper scheme of obligations to retain the public benefit of maintaining the value of the estate as a whole. The reason goes back to the year 1265, and the statute of Quia Emptores. That misguided 13th-century attempt at consumer protection made it impossible to impose feudal obligations on freeholding tenants. That is still the law in

Scotland, where the feudal system has yet to be abolished. Because of that legal anomaly, leasehold remains popular among charities and ordinary commercial landlords and, indeed, among ordinary developers.

The Government ought to ask themselves why the building lease has been the classic means whereby Bath, Eastbourne, Cheltenham and the larger parts of inner London were developed. It was chosen because it enabled legal enforcement obligations to operate in a way that freehold development generally did not. In the Old Kent road, which was developed on a freehold basis, Georgian terraces were ruined at a relatively early date as their front gardens were turned into shops. The system is fundamentally defective, and the legislation should have dealt with the problem.

The social consequences are particularly serious, especially those relating to conservation. The unity of ownership and occupation does not necessarily guarantee a continued high standard of maintenance. Suggesting that local authorities are capable of maintaining high standards by exercising their planning powers is rather like being confident that the fabric of Ancient Rome would be looked after by Attila the Hun. It really will not do.

9.17 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Let me declare a potential interest immediately: I am trying to buy a flat in London. My real interest, however, relates to constituents who are inadequately housed, and whose lives have been blighted by that. From the point of view of my constituents, we are discussing the right subject; it is a pity that the Bill does not allow us to address the real housing problems of many thousands of people.

In the short time available, I shall confine my remarks to the local authority aspects of the Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) ably demonstrated, the rent-to-mortgage scheme shows the Government's obsession with housing tenure above all else. Instead, we should be discussing the right of everyone in the country to a decent home, and the way in which, collectively, we can improve the quality and quantity of our housing.

Unfortunately, in the Government's terms, the quality of housing seems to be related to persuading people to become owner-occupiers—as though that would somehow magically improve the properties in which they live. Their idea of quantity is related solely to the percentage of the population who become owner-occupiers. The real issues —homelessness, and the time for which people must wait for a home of any kind—are not addressed by the Bill.

On behalf of my constituents, I am upset by the complacency of Conservative Members—Ministers as well as Back Benchers. Surely some of them must have in their surgeries the sort of severe housing problems that Labour Members have every week. And we have to offer people no hope because the resources to deal with them are simply not there.

One can take the homeless crisis in this country on a national scale; the figures are there, or one can take a particular case. In 1976, when I joined the Sheffield city council, we rehoused 100 homeless families a year. This year, 2,000 homeless families will be housed. That is the scale of the problem as it has grown under this Government. One can take the homeless crisis on the particular scale not only of individuals sleeping in cardboard boxes, because the homeless legislation does not touch them in any way, but of families that probably do qualify waiting in every housing department in the country to prove themselves homeless. What greater degradation and humiliation could be inflicted on people than to put them through that sort of process, and not to care about it?

Many older people in Sheffield tell me that when they were younger, just after the war, seeking to get a home of their own for the first time they used to have to live with their in-laws or their parents, often parted from their prospective partners, waiting for a home. When I joined the council, people used to thank goodness that those days were gone and that after two or three years on the waiting list one could get a nice little home in which to start a family. I thought that this Government believed in family values, but the house that they could get in 1976 after three years on the waiting list they now have to wait at least 10 years for.

We could blame the Germans in the 1950s for the housing crisis. I do not think that even this Government can manage to blame the Germans in the 1990s for the housing crisis in all our major cities.

The answer is in the Government's hands. We have a building industry which is largely out of work and many unemployed building workers with the necessary skills. Local authorities have capital receipts and it is time the Government addressed the situation. It is nonsense to have a situation in which by selling an asset and replacing it with another asset the borrowing requirement is increased. Only the British Treasury, with its peculiar detached view of economic reality, could manage to come up with such a solution.

When the right to buy was brought in the Government promised Conservative local authorities that the capital receipts could be spent on building homes. But it is not just a matter of building homes. Conservative Members criticise Labour local authorities for not repairing houses, ignoring the fact that many of those capital receipts were used by Labour local authorities, through a loophole in the legislation in the 1980s, to reroof and rewire homes and generally improve them. The Government closed that loophole in their later legislation and stopped those repair schemes going ahead. It is not Labour local authorities that are to blame.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith rightly said, it is not just a matter of capital receipts. We also have to address the borrowing allocations, which are down to one third of what they were in 1980, because some of the receipts are not in the hands of authorities that would naturally spend them on housing needs. Some of the authorities with the worst housing needs do not have the greatest amount of capital receipts.

We need to redefine the public sector borrowing requirement and take local authority borrowing out of the PSBR. We need to sort out the difference between current expenditure for revenue purposes and capital expenditure on long-term investment. We need to have regard to the differences in the PSBR in other European countries. That will certainly have an impact under the Maastricht treaty and we must recognise and take account of it.

I have no time to answer all the attacks that were made on Labour local authorities—some of my colleagues have already done that—but authorities such as Sheffield were introducing right-to-repair schemes and compensation-for-improvement schemes because of their commitment to

[Mr. Clive Betts]

tenants' rights and their belief in those rights before this Government ever thought of them and brought them into legislation out of political expediency. Their commitment to tenants' rights was shown to be skin deep by the fact that in one piece of legislation they brought in the right for tenants to choose their landlord and in the next piece of legislation they suddenly found that the right of their friends in the private sector to tender for the work was more important than the rights of the tenants. That shows how deep their commitment to tenants' rights is.

If the Government really want tenants to get the benefit of the right to repair and right to improvement compensation, they must talk to the local authority associations and to their own colleagues who run councils and get a scheme that will work and deliver practical benefit, not simply produce a piece of paper that they can wave around as showing that they have fulfilled their manifesto commitment.

Finally, it is a question of assisting economic recovery, rather than merely getting housing circumstances right. Let us put the building industry back to work. Let us assist economic recovery by allowing local authorities to build the homes that people need. I appreciate that that would require the Government to eat a few words, do a few U-turns and even some somersaults, but we all know that these days they are getting good at all those tricks.

9.24 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a brief last-minute contribution to the debate.

I must first declare an interest as, like many hon. Members, I am the leaseholder of a small flat near this place. I hasten to add that I have no plans to exercise any future possible right to buy into the freehold because I am happy with the existing managing agents and landlord. Unfortunately, that is not the case for many leaseholders, and where the relationship has broken down I have no doubt that many of them will want to exercise the right to buy into the freehold so that they can manage the properties themselves.

My constituency contains an especially large number of leaseholders—approaching 8,000 or 9,000—and in some areas there is nothing but leasehold tenure. In the past six months, I have received a remarkable number of complaints on different issues relating to the way in which properties are maaged or to leaseholders' relationships with freeholders and managing agents. Even if that is not the main reason, it justifies the need to alter existing arrangements and to introduce this reform.

Many leaseholders—perhaps a majority—do not feel entirely secure when they are told that they are home owners; they know that a reversionary right exists and that they cannot control the way in which managing agents operate. The desire to be a full owner and to participate fully, as people in other forms of tenure are able to do, is also powerful.

In May 1991, the Department of the Environment produced a report entitled, "The Landlord and Tenant Act 1987: awareness, experience and impact." It gave many examples of where the relationship between freeholder and leaseholder had broken down and it was powerful evidence of the need for reform. I warmly welcome the Bill and the clauses which deal with leasehold enfranchisement, as I am sure will thousands of people throughout the country.

I must briefly quote one example from my constituency—one of many similar cases that I know of—where there is a clear need for the law to intervene to assuage a difficult situation. One small property—a house which has been divided into leasehold flats—at No. 1 Durham road, is owned by Wellington Property. The managing agent is Appledore Finance, which operates from a post box and hides behind a cloak of anonymity. No one knows who runs it and all the letters sent to leaseholders are simply signed "Appledore". That is a bad start—it hardly encourages confidence or a good relationship. The leaseholders have complained that efficiency is shown only in issuing accounts and bills: the threat to sue and to take legal action is readily used; and there are large, unexplained and regular increases in the service charge, which the leaseholders cannot explain or understand. Recently, a sinking fund was suddenly activated to pay for future work, supposedly on behalf of the leaseholders, who were immediately charged interest if they did not pay a large sum into the fund. Most recently there was an attempt to charge every leaseholder about £10,000 to pay for urgently needed works that the freeholder had suddenly discovered; work that should have been done earlier was not done because the freeholder or his predecessors did not apply the letter of the lease.

Unfortunately, there are all too many examples such as the one I quoted. I could cite many more if I had the time. At the end of the day, they are examples of greedy, oppressive and sometimes exploitative landlords. I appreciate that many examples could be given of landlords who provide an excellent service and have a good relationship with their leaseholders, but where landlords are clearly evading the spirit—and sometimes the letter—of the law, there is powerful reason for the leasehold enfranchisement included in the Bill being introduced. That, together with the need to strengthen proper full home ownership, is a strong argument for speeding this reform into law as quickly as possible.

9.30 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): It was encouraging to see the Secretary of State face a veritable assault from his hon. Friends during his opening speech. I hope that that assault will be repeated tomorrow, possibly with more effect, when those doing the assaulting will accompany us into the Lobby.

Some hon. Members who spoke this afternoon have not stayed the course. Presumably they have gone to celebrate the victory of an American democratic president. We shall be joining them shortly. Some spoke in support of big landlords such as the Duke of Westminster or for tenants such as Lord Tebbit and complained that the legislation was like being mugged by a friend. But some Conservative Members have been as concerned as Opposition Members about various aspects of housing problems.

We in Wales have had some experience of the urban regeneration agency. It appears yet again that the Government have not paid attention to the comments, suggestions and criticisms of their own consultation exercise. Why have the Government not amended their proposals in the light of the criticisms?

From where will come the money for the new quango? Will it come from other urban programmes, or will it, as the Bill suggests, be expected to achieve more regeneration from the resources available to it? Is this yet another new quango which will not be backed by new resources?

There has been talk of the agency having a budget of £260 million. What sort of dent will that make on the 160,000 derelict acres in the inner cities? Remember, the Welsh Development Agency has an annual budget of £150 million. This was an opportunity to rationalise the disparate funds for urban development. When will the Government learn? Instead of another fiasco like London docklands, with empty houses and office blocks which in no way meet the needs of the homeless in Tower Hamlets and Newham, the Government should have introduced a regeneration scheme with a fair share of social housing and community facilities, with jobs, training and transport for all the people of London.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) rightly said that the authentic voice of the inner cities was calling for jobs. The Government, he said, were misdirecting the use of scarce resources. He should know. The power to vest local authority land and to take planning powers from local authorities in designated areas implies that the urban regeneration agency will be holding a big stick behind its back in its dealings with local government.

Even if the Government claim that they are the powers of last resort, the very existence of the powers will damage the relationship with local government and deprive local authorities of their proper democratic planning role.

Heading the URA will be none other than Lord Walker —*[Interruption.]*—the former Secretary of State for Wales, the man brought in by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to oversee pit closure sweeteners, the man who will mastermind the minimal help that is to be given to mining areas once the pits are gone. The best thing that can be said of Lord Walker is that he knows all about pay-offs and how to get the most out of them. Last April, he got £100,000 after a few months' work when he quit as chairman of Maxwell Communication Corporation. The former Welsh Secretary was allowed to buy— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I wish to hear the hon. Lady. When there is noise from both sides of the House, that becomes impossible and it is quite unacceptable.

Mrs. Clwyd: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The former Welsh Secretary was allowed to buy his £50,000 Mercedes office car for the grand sum of £1. He is on the board of British Gas; his business interests range from Thornton chocolates to Tate and Lyle sugar; until three months ago, he was chairman of Cornhill Insurance; and he is a director of Rothchilds on whose reports the Government base their plans to decimate the coal industry in Britain. What did he do for Wales? Not a lot.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Many of the Labour leaders of local authorities in Wales would disagree with what the hon. Lady is saying and would pay tribute to the work which my right hon. and noble Friend the former Secretary of State did for Wales.

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Gentleman would say that, wouldn't he? After all, he was a junior Minister in the Welsh Office, so it is not surprising that he backs his old master.

In a blaze of publicity, Lord Walker set up the valleys initiative to improve significantly the prosperity of the valleys of south Wales. It was meant to be a regeneration programme for mining communities where the pits had already disappeared. Its main economic aim was to reduce unemployment by between 25,000 and 30,000. It failed. Male unemployment in the valleys now is higher than it was in 1988 when the valleys initiative started. In Mid Glamorgan, 24 per cent. of school leavers leave school without any qualifications.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Stick to the Bill.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am sticking to the Bill. The hon. Lady clearly has not understood that Lord Walker is to be chairman of the urban regeneration agency. It is interesting to look at his record in Wales. Tory Members may not like it but that is his record in Wales. As for his record on land reclamation, while 1,090 acres were reclaimed in the valleys in 1979-80, by the time Lord Walker was enthroned in the Welsh Office in 1988-89, the figure had fallen by two thirds to 350 acres.

The valleys initiative raised great hopes in the valley communities, but, in reality, it was just another Government public relations exercise, in exactly the same way as the urban regeneration agency will be.

Mr. Mark Robinson: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not normal practice in the House to talk about the Bill under discussion and not about extraneous issues?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before the hon. Lady continues, I would point out that, although it is perfectly permissible to make passing reference to matters that seem to be germane to the Bill, the main thrust of the hon. Lady's argument must relate to Second Reading.

Mrs. Clwyd: May I point out, Madam Deputy Speaker, that when you were not in the Chair the Secretary of State for the Environment talked in some detail about Lord Walker.

Spending on regional policy in Wales, again while Lord Walker was in office, fell by a staggering 58·3 per cent. in 10 years and in Britain by 62·7 per cent. Again, that shows the hollowness of Lord Walker's words to the Tory Reform Group in April 1989. Tory Members do not like such references because they are profoundly embarrassing to those people.

Lord Walker talked about a dynamic regional policy.

Mr. Mark Robinson: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I should like to ask what connection the Tory Reform Group has with this Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I heard no reference to that, mainly because of the noise emanating from both sides of the House. That illustrates the point that I made earlier.

Mrs. Clwyd: I can quite understand why Conservative Members want to drown my words.

The fanciful claims made on behalf of the valleys initiative have now been attacked by the Public Accounts Committee in a report published last week. It said:

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"We consider it unsatisfactory that, despite the Welsh Office's undertaking in 1988, to improve the accuracy of the figures provided by the database for regional selective assistance, inaccuracies subsequently remained uncorrected".

Now, the man who failed to regenerate the valleys of south Wales is planning to regenerate the inner cities of England, with no new ideas, no new money but plenty of hype. Like the grand old Duke of York, he has 10,000 men: "He'll march them up to the top of the hill and march them down again. And when they are up they are up, and when they are down they are down, and when they are only halfway up they are neither up nor down." That is precisely how the people of Wales view the efforts of the former Secretary of State for Wales.

The United Kingdom faces a huge housing crisis. The Department of the Environment has just released figures showing that more than 100,000 people, including thousands of children, are living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. In other parts of the country the situation is just as bad. Figures do not tell the whole story. They do not include single people, childless couples or those turned away for other reasons. People are sleeping rough on the streets of London and in many other towns and cities. They are a too familiar sight on the streets of Britain.

London is the worst area in the country for repossessions. The 1992 total will be little changed. Mortgage rescue schemes have flopped while the Government are preoccupied with trying to save their political skin. Thousands of families are trapped because their homes are worth less than their mortgages. More than 24,000 families are on council waiting lists; more than 110,000 tenants want a transfer. Housing conditions, especially in the private sector, are worsening.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) for his work on housing over many years and I regret that he has chosen to return to the Back Benches. He pointed out that the Bill fails to deal with all these issues, because the Government do not care about meeting housing needs or ensuring that people live in decent homes. Although the Secretary of State would have us believe otherwise, the Government do not believe in choice, standards or opportunities.

We support the extension of leaseholders' rights and the independent assessment of the value of leases, but we believe that the proposals do not go far enough. Will landlords make windfall gains, or will market valuations deter leaseholders? Will disputes be settled quickly through the leasehold valuation tribunal?

What about the future of private rented flats in the same building? We welcome the Secretary of State's renewed promise to introduce commonhold—that enjoys enthusiastic support on both sides of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) asked why it was necessary, to qualify to buy the freehold, that two thirds of properties should be long leaseholds and that two thirds of occupants should have to apply. Perhaps the Secretary of State will tell us. We are not opposed to ideas enabling people to become home owners, but we think it bizarre that the Government should encourage a scheme to promote home ownership for low-income households at a time of record numbers of repossessions and when 300,000 families are having problems paying their mortgages.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) described the serious danger of tempting people into rent-to-mortgage arrangements. They are likely to be the most vulnerable people on the lowest incomes. What is needed is more investment in affordable, rentable accommodation. We all know that pilot rent-to-mortgage projects have all but failed, and I am sure that the Secretary of State for Wales can confirm that under the scheme run by the Development Board of Rural Wales only 52 sales had been achieved by 3 February this year.

Given the state of the housing market, why are the Government pressing ahead with further measures to tempt tenants into home ownership? Given the evidence that the cost of administration will be disproportionately high in relation to the numbers of successful applicants, why are the Government hell-bent on the scheme? Why do they not listen to my hon. Friends the Members for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and for Stockport (Ms. Coffey), for example, and introduce instead an effective mortgage-to-rent scheme? It would be much more appropriate.

The decision to amend tenants' rights to consultation in the context of compulsory tendering has proved highly unpopular with housing organisations and tenants' bodies. Why do the Government not recognise that they have no mandate for CCT from those who are living in the homes that will be affected by their proposals?

On right to repair—[HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down."] Conservative Members must take full responsibility for interrupting my speech and causing me to be longer than I intended. We support efforts to improve local authorities' repair services. The Association of District Councils and others are doubtful, however, whether the new right-to-repair scheme will produce an improvement. The idea that a modified right to repair could be introduced by local authorities at no extra cost is not realistic. Does the Secretary of State agree that there is a series of cost implications for local authorities and that some of the extra costs will fall upon tenants through higher rents?

Nowhere is the housing crisis greater than in Wales. Shelter estimates that as many as 60,000 people are homeless in Wales alone. Government policies have led to the sale of 60,000 homes. In 1975, 8,000 council houses were built. Only 900 were built in 1987. In 1990, not one house was started by local authorities in the valleys area. Yet in the decade to 1991 the valleys councils received £384 million in capital receipts from the sale of council houses. Why are they still not allowed to build? Why will the Secretary of State not pledge to release capital receipts so that councils can build houses to rent?

Yet again the Government have invested much political capital in Housing for Wales. It is another quango that does not have one local authority representative on its board. That shows yet again the contempt in which the Government hold local authorities. They devalue and denigrate the important role that the authorities have played and could play in housing policy. The Bill is marginal and not relevant to Britain's housing problems. It is yet another tragically missed opportunity.

9.47 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): We have listened to 30 speeches during the debate, which has been comprehensive and wide ranging. Many issues have been covered. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will excuse me if I am not able in the time allotted to me to deal with all the points that have been raised. I shall ensure, however, that everyone who has raised a matter that requires an answer will receive one from either my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment or myself.

There is another name on the Bill, as it were, and it has been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn). I was so pleased when the name was also mentioned by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). I refer, of course, to the late Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, and not because of the leasehold enfranchisement proposals alone. As those of us in Wales know, Brandon Park is the site of the new Bosch factory, and it was very much the dream of Sir Brandon. He set such a good example on both leasehold franchisement and urban regeneration.

The housing provisions in the Bill are all about new rights for existing leaseholders and existing tenants, but the House has been right to see the Bill in the context of the Government's housing policies as a whole. I criticise no hon. Member for the points that have been raised in the debate. Our housing policies as a whole are designed to ensure that decent housing is within the reach of all families. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) pointed out, the Bill is an important further step towards a property-owning democracy.

Several hon. Members referred to homelessness. I would point out to the hon. Member for Hammersmith that the Government have adopted important measures to help homeless families. I shall give two examples. The first is the output of social housing through housing associations, financed by the Housing Corporation and Housing for Wales. In addition, we are making increasing use of private finance. That has doubled over the past four years. Secondly, I would point out to the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) that the deregulation of the private rented sector for 1989, which the Opposition opposed all the way along, is gradually bringing about the renaissance of the private rented sector.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) and other hon. Members raised the question of mortgage arrears. For people in difficulty with their mortgages, the single most important measure that the Government have taken is to bring down interest rates from 15 to 8 per cent. That helps individual borrowers and the housing market. Rescue schemes announced by the mortgage lenders last December will save about 55,000 repossessions this year. The Lord Chancellor's latest figures for repossession orders confirm an encouraging fall.

Leasehold reform is an important reform. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington on a remarkably good speech. He spoke without any notes. My parliamentary private secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), passed a letter to me during the debate from one of his constituents—*[Interruption.]*—who said that the Bill is fair and popular legislation—*[Interruption.]*—that must go through. I say also to the—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) would have been better left unsaid. I note that earlier on he had 10 minutes of the time of the House.

Mr. Hunt: As for what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), my right hon. and hon. Friends have fought hard for these reforms. Several hon. Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne and for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), highlighted a number of other concerns. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clywd) was right when she said —as was also pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans)—that the bringing forward of commonhold proposals is needed. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) said that they will come forward. Of course that will happen. I recognise that my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne and Fulham and the hon. Member for Cheltenham are impatient, as are the hon. Members for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson), but reform will come. However, it would have been inappropriate to include it in the Bill.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Why?

Mr. Hunt: Because it is long and complicated and requires a Bill of its own.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth, my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) raised important points of detail. They argued for more restrictive rules, whereas my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) said that the rules were already too restrictive, which leads me to believe that my right hon. and hon. Friends have probably got it about right. However, all these matters will be considered in Committee. I can give my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) the assurance that he sought.

As for the other housing provisions, the rent-to-mortgage scheme offers an important route into home ownership for no greater outlay than the rent that is already being paid. Tenants who pay full rent henceforth can invest that money in their own homes. It will give people a much wider range of choice.

I was not sure at the end of his speech whether the hon. Member for Blackburn was in favour of the scheme, but we shall no doubt find out in Committee. I remember that he was against the right-to-buy scheme. The hon. Gentleman said that in the first six months there had been only 17,000 sales. In the first quarter there were 20,000 sales. Completed sales are moving at the rate of about 50,000 a year. The hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) spoke out strongly against the scheme, as did other Opposition Members, but I believe that the scheme ought to be supported in all parts of the House.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate said there are no rights in the Bill for council tenants. I wave at her this book, "A Charter for Council House Tenants". Our charter in Wales has been sent to all tenants to help them obtain the standards of service that they are entitled to expect. The charter committed the Government not only to the rent-to-mortgage scheme but to the right to manage, which is being given to council tenants for the first time.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Where does the charter make it clear that tenants' rights will be removed by the Bill? Is not that true of the proposals for compulsory competitive tendering?

Mr. Hunt: No, it is not in there because it is untrue. [HON. MEMBERS: "Have you read it?] Yes, I have.

The charter commits the Government to the right of tenants to have urgent repairs done quickly and to receive compensation for home improvements.

Mr. Straw: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Hunt: I am still answering questions on this point. I hope that the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) will welcome the Bill's provisions that give council tenants more rights. As my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson) said, rights can transform the untransformable, and have done so in Wales.

Mr. Straw: What exactly was the Secretary of State saying is untrue? Is not it a matter of fact and record that, by deleting section 27A of the Housing Act 1985, the Bill will remove tenants' clear right to veto by ballot changes in housing management? The Bill removes tenants' right to choose who should manage their estates.

Mr. Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to clause 115, under which, for the first time, local authority tenants get the right collectively to manage their dwellings. I ask hon. Members to look at that.

The disgraceful attack that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley made on Peter Walker will not go unanswered. I remind the Labour party that it was the only political party to get money from Maxwell. How dare it attack my noble Friend. The hon. Lady should get her facts right. She got it wrong again: she said that the Welsh Development Agency has a budget of £150 million. I have news for her: this year, its budget has increased to its highest level in cash and real terms to £167 million.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), who knows more about urban regeneration than all the Labour Members put together, that the Bill will give a new, exciting opportunity. I say to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley——

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd) *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I am still answering the points made by the hon. Lady. In the valleys, we have seen a remarkable transformation, and that has had much to do with the positive contribution of my noble Friend Lord Walker, and we should remember that.

The Labour party has shown how much it hates home ownership. It may try to pretend that it is in favour of extending home ownership, but self-interest teaches it to be wary of the independence and pride that come with a property-owning democracy. It opposes enfranchisement and ownership; the Conservative party openly embraces those concepts. Ownership is at the heart of the Government's housing ideal because it leads to independence and active citizenship. Labour still wants people to be the vassals of some municipal socialist hierarchy. It wants people to be owned lock, stock and homestead by the Labour party. Conservatives believe that local councils should be the servants of the people; Labour sees them as landlords, political masters and latter-day feudal barons.

Labour Members have spoken a lot of rubbish in the debate. I am delighted that in urban regeneration and in rent to mortgage, Wales has again led the way. Many Opposition Members have witnessed at first hand in Wales the enormous benefits of measures such as those in the Bill. The Opposition must be the most negative in the history of this place. We are bringing power closer to the people. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 327, Noes 259.

Division No. 80] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David

Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
(Epsom-Ewell)
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith

Hanham, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*

Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

10.15 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It will not have escaped your notice that the Housing and Urban Development Bill has a number of clauses relating to Scotland. So that Scots Members may have a proper opportunity to debate those clauses, would it be in order for me to seek to refer the Bill to a Committee of the whole House? If so, I beg to move,

That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.

Question put, That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House:—

The House divided: Ayes 15, Noes 303.

Division No. 81] **[10.15**

AYES

Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Cryer, Bob
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C&S)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Simon Hughes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward

Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Housing and Urban Development Bill [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Housing and Urban Development Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums required to enable the Secretary of State to make payments to the Urban Regeneration Agency ("the Agency");

(b) any expenses of the Secretary of State incurred in consequence of the Act;

(c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment:

(2) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums necessary to enable the Secretary of State to make loans to the Agency;

(3) the payment out of the Consolidated Fund of any sums required to fulfil guarantees given by the Treasury in respect of sums borrowed by the Agency.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.30 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I shall detain the House briefly—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] Conservative Members will have to be tolerant tonight—a lot may depend on it—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. May we have a little more quiet so that we can hear the hon. Member?

Mr. Hughes: My influence may be greater tonight than for a long time to come.

I must comment on the funding arrangements proposed in the resolution, as they affect urban development and housing aspects of the Bill, from my constituency experience.

First, when we grant aid money from central Government to carry out the purpose of a Bill, as the money resolution enables us to do, the procedure is fairly hit and miss. When a Bill states in its explanatory memorandum, as this one does, that

> "The Bill has financial effects for both central and local government"

and continues to set them out, it would be better if we quantified them more accurately. One of the consistent complaints about the way in which central Government and Parliament fund the activities of local government and quangos—such as the proposed urban regeneration agency—is that we impose duties on them without necessarily giving adequate funding to carry them out.

I fear that that may be the case with the Bill. I have alerted Ministers that I should be grateful of a specific —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt, but there is a buzz of conversation in the Chamber, which is discourteous to the hon. Gentleman. If people want to talk, perhaps they will move out of the Chamber.

Mr. Hughes: It would be helpful if Ministers could make clear to us—perhaps by correspondence, which could be circulated also to all the other parties—as soon as possible, their assessment of the real costs of the two types of activity provided for in the Bill—housing and the urban regeneration agency.

In the notes to the Bill, on page iv it is stated:

> "Sales under rent to mortgage . . . will lead to some increase in administrative expenditure for local authorities, but will also yield capital receipts and reduce their expenditure on repairs and maintenance."

It would be helpful if at some stage the Minister would give his best estimate of what that increase in expenditure will be and what the net cost will be, remembering that it assumes that there will be capital receipts and reduced repairs and maintenance expenditure. From the figures given by the Secretary of State relating to the precedent in Scotland, there have been few—only about 500—rents—to mortgage transactions, so that will not yield substantial capital receipts, even by a generous definition.

There is a provision to the effect that the right to a mortgage is repealed, and it is said, in relation to the financial consequence of that, that the

> "repeal is likely to have limited financial effects"

because receipts will increase as people will not be able to claim the mortgage and will not be asking for that money from local authorities. It would be helpful to know, first, how many people have so far exercised their right to a mortgage and, secondly, what the saving will be from the proposed reduction.

The final part of that provision proposes the abolition of the shared ownership lease as an option. That would appear to have minimal, if any, financial consequences, although it appears in the financial part of the measure. May we be told the estimate of that?

More important in terms of the implications of what is proposed are the points in the following paragraph of the explanatory and financial memorandum about the financial implications for the taxpayer. There is to be a new right—to—repair scheme and a right to compensate secure tenants for home improvements. The memorandum says that the responsibility for the payment of those matters will rest with the local authority.

Any local authority, of whatever political colour and those with independent councillors in control, will want to know that it will not be out of pocket and will not be asked for money from its secure tenants which will not be refunded by Government. It will represent an additional liability on them without that assurance. May we be assured that the moneys will be provided not just this year but continuingly? It is no good the Government saying that the matter can be left to the public expenditure round because, as we know, at that stage cuts are made even though the duties remain.

In the same paragraph of the memorandum is a provision relating to the delegation of housing management. That provision is welcome, particularly for a constituency such as mine, in which getting on for 80 per cent. of the electorate live in council properties. It will not be welcome in its entirety if the costs will fall on local authorities to the detriment of their other responsibilities, such as repairs and maintenance. Those seeking estate management boards, tenant management co-operatives and other bodies will want to know that the money will be available to make them work, and not on the cheap.

The memorandum then says:

> "There will be nil effect on public expenditure of restoring statutory authority for the payment of annual loan charge contributions towards the expenditure which local housing authorities have incurred on defective housing."

That sounds wonderful in theory, but it would help if the Government would set out how they come to that conclusion.

The urban regeneration agency, it is said, "will be funded by central government grant in aid";

and several parts of the money resolution relate to that funding. We are told that the URA

"will take over responsibility for three existing central government programmes";

and we are told—it is a dangerous word, and we should take warning signals—that it will adopt

"a more focused approach".

Focused approaches, like targeted spending, normally mean less money.

Constituencies such as mine, other areas of the docklands, and areas where there have been urban development corporations are specifically concerned that, if urban development is to happen through the offices of an urban development agency, moneys expended need to be guaranteed beyond the existence of that agency, particularly if it is contemplated that the responsibilities will be handed over to local councils.

The Bill contains a power to allow the Government, by order of Parliament, to return parts of urban development corporation areas to local authorities. I am concerned that the funding commitment undertaken by urban development corporations will not be continued in the funding of any new local authority arrangement, which would have practical implications for housing repairs, the voluntary sector, transport improvements and so on.

May I flag up now that, unless the money is sufficient —not just while the urban regeneration agency and urban development corporations exist, but beyond—there will be substantial risk to the positive net benefit to urban communities such as mine. Rather, they will be looking for money that they are not given, and the effect on urban communities will be not regeneration but degeneration.

I am grateful for the time of the House. Those are important matters to hard-pressed authorities such as mine, but particularly to the people who rely on the Government to be fair in the money which they give for the tasks that the Bill proposes.

10.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I shall do my best to be helpful to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). As he said, the financial implications of the measures are clearly set out in the financial and explanatory memorandum.

Part I of the Bill relates to leasehold reforms, which essentially involve the transfer of assets between private individuals. As such, they will not have a significant effect on central Government or local authority spending. The parties involved will have the right to refer disputes over eligibility to the county court and over terms to the local leasehold valuation tribunal. That is likely to lead to a slight increase in the workload of those two bodies.

On part II of the Bill, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey is right to say that the administrative cost of sales under rent to mortgage, and the payment of compensation to tenants for home improvements, will fall on local authorities, but we estimate that the net effect on local authority spending will be minimal. Likewise, we believe that the other provisions in part II will have no, or negligible, public spending implications. As the hon. Gentleman raised a number of specific points, the fair way for me to deal with the matter is for me to respond to him in writing about how we have estimated those costs.

Part III of the Bill will establish the urban regeneration agency as a non-departmental public body funded by central Government grant-in-aid. The agency's budget will subsume three existing programmes: English Estates, derelict land grant and city grant. The English Estates element will include the programme in coalfield areas announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. The agency will also be expected to attract substantial amounts of private sector investment into areas in need of regeneration.

A key feature of the URA will be that it will break down the divisions between the component programmes, thus eliminating duplication and ensuring the best possible use of resources. Again, as the hon. Gentleman raised several specific points about year-on-year funding of the urban regeneration agency, I shall respond to him in writing.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Housing and Urban Development Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

- (a) any sums required to enable the Secretary of State to make payments to the Urban Regeneration Agency ("the Agency");
- (b) any expenses of the Secretary of State incurred in consequence of the Act;
- (c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment;

(2) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums necessary to enable the Secretary of State to make loans to the Agency;

(3) the payment out of the Consolidated Fund of any sums required to fulfil guarantees given by the Treasury in respect of sums borrowed by the Agency.

WAYS AND MEANS

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT BILL

Resolved,

That, for the puposes of any Act resulting from the Housing and Urban Development Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

- (a) the making of provision about the payment bythe Urban Regeneration Agency to the Secretary of State of sums in respect of surpluses of that Agency;
- (b) the payment of any sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

PETITIONS

Pit Closures

10.44 pm

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): I collected 7,500 signatures to this petition in about two days, which shows the depth of feeling about the pit closures in the Coventry area.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland assembled. The humble petition of the residents of Coventry sheweth; that the recent announcement of the pit closures has filled the people of Coventry with deep concern because of the consequential loss of employment for miners. They are also concerned because of the effect of these pit closures will have on employment in related industries. They believe that this short-term policy will be to the long term detriment of Coventry and to the nation. Seven thousand people of Coventry have expressed their concern by signing this petition because they feel that the closures are neither economically or socially justified. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will take measures to see that those closures will not proceed because of the resulting social and economic hardship for the many communities and thousands of families.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I rise to present the first batch of signatures to a petition signed by tens of thousands of people from all over the United Kingdom, representing all political parties—Conservative, Labour and Liberal. It is a petition for a referendum on the Maastricht treaty.

The petitioners make three points:

That the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty, which was negotiated by the Heads of Government of the Member States within the European Community, are designed to bring about a European Union, complete with its own constitution, in which all the countries that are a party to it, will belong;

That this Union, and its laws, will have a profound effect upon the way in which the United Kingdom is governed, and upon the democratic rights of the citizens of this country to elect and remove those who now enact and administer the laws of this Nation;

That the British people have been given no right to determine, for themselves, in a democratic vote, whether or not they wish these constitutional changes to be made.

The petition ends in the traditional way:

Wherefore Your Petitioners pray that your honourable House:

Will ensure that before the Maastricht Treaty, or any modification or amendment of it, is approved by Parliament, or ratified by Her Majesty's Government, the Citizens of the United Kingdom shall be given the right to vote for or against that Treaty, in a National Referendum, and that the decision reached in that Referendum be accepted as binding upon the Government and Parliament.

And Your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Fabrication Yards (Highlands)

Motion made, and Question proposed, that this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.47 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I would have preferred not to have to raise this matter on the Floor of the House, for obvious reasons, but I welcome the opportunity to discuss with Ministers the future of the fabrication yards in the highlands of Scotland.

This is an issue of great concern to all who represent the area, and I am grateful to the Minister for being here. I understand that he flew back from Berlin to respond to this debate. He has agreed that the hon. Members for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) should share the debate with me. Although we represent different parties, we have a common concern about this matter. We greatly appreciate the Minister's being here.

The purpose of the debate is to argue the case for the retention of the fabrication yards in the highlands. This is a key manufacturing industry which is of great significance to the local economy, and it has a massive impact on other aspects of the economy—not only in the Highland local authority area but in the Grampian region in which my constituency lies and where many of the workers at Ardersier live.

Recently Ardersier announced 1,300 redundancies, to take place by Christmas. Another 1,200 jobs could be in jeopardy by next April. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye will speak about Nigg, which lies within his constituency. I can assure the Minister that both yards are looking positively towards the future and that they will be second to none in their efforts to win orders to retain their facility in the area. I congratulate both the management and the work force at the yards on the substantial efforts that they make year in and year out to bring orders to the area.

It is easy to say that the fabrication yards are part of a cyclical economy and that it is bust or boom. I do not accept that that is necessarily the position. There is a strong argument for having a much more planned approach to winning and allocating orders to ensure that they are distributed evenly among the yards.

It is easy also to say that the oil boom is over and never again will substantial orders come to our yards. There is still huge potential in the North sea, as there is off the west coast of Scotland and in other areas throughout the world. There is an opportunity that must be seized and not lost, as it was in the past.

We are keen to ensure that the highly skilled work force in the area, with its excellent reputation for high standards and quality of work—there is good management and good industrial relations—is retained as a key manufacturing base in the highlands of Scotland. Without the fabrication yards in the north of Scotland, there is a distinct danger of a service-only economy. It is essential that we retain a manufacturing base in the area.

I shall put three key points to the Minister. First, when the Minister visited Aberdeen recently he spoke about the establishment of a working party to examine the potential of the United Kingdom continental shelf. We welcome the opportunity that that will bring. I ask him to spell out more clearly what the working party will do. It is fundamental that it should consult those who are involved in exploration, development, supply and fabrication. Local representatives of the managements and unions should be able to express their points of view, and so should the local authorities. Highland regional council, Grampian regional council and local district councils have made it clear that they have their own ideas, attitudes and propositions. I hope that the Minister will adopt a positive attitude to the representations that have already been made.

Secondly, the House has agreed that there should be an overall review of energy policy as a result of what has happened in the coal industry. Members have rightly emphasised the importance of the industry, and we do not dispute that. However, if there is to be an overall review of energy policy and strategy, surely there must be an opportunity for the committee that is now working on the issue to consider the implications of energy policy for suppliers and producers. Is it possible for the Minister to enable evidence to be taken by the committee that will bear on the fabrication yards? The effect on our communities of the loss of the yards would be as significant as the loss of jobs in the mining communities. That must be taken on board.

Thirdly, when we talk about the need for assistance to be given to industry, people think in terms of subsidies. It is thought that the Government should provide money. There are many areas in which the Government could consider assisting industry without necessarily spending money. I ask the Minister to consider tax inducements for exploration and development and to ensure that there are policies to enable marginal fields to be brought on stream a little earlier than the date anticipated by the Government. They should not all come on stream at the same time because we want a steady flow of orders and stability.

Will the Minister also take on board the need for forward planning on a long-term basis? A clear argument is emerging from our yard—that we should never have been put in this position in the first place. If the Government had listened to the arguments several years ago—indeed, decades ago—about the need to ensure stability in the planning process, we should not have been in this boom or bust situation.

I hope, too, that the Government will look into the question of the need for expertise in sub-sea engineering. That is where the future of many of these yards will lie. If the Government could ensure that expertise is provided to the yards for sub-sea engineering, they would be guaranteed a better future than the bleak one that they now face.

There are many other important aspects of this subject, but as this is a short debate I shall give way to other hon. Members who wish to speak. Nevertheless, I hope that the Minister for Energy and the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who has responsibility for the highlands and who I am glad to see on the Treasury Bench, will afford to the three of us an opportunity to discuss with them in greater detail other ideas that we have about helping the local economy.

10.55 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): First, I thank the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) for allowing me the opportunity to take part in the debate. My particular interest is the McDermott yard which is in my constituency, though many of the workers in that yard live in the hon. Lady's constituency. Although we are members of different parties, in my opinion the hon. Lady has always adopted a concerned, constructive and sensible approach to these problems. I cannot think of any time when we have been in dispute about them. I also thank the Minister, as the hon. Lady did. It is one of the coincidences of life that while I was sitting beside the German ambassador tonight he observed that he had travelled in the same aeroplane as the Minister on the way back from Berlin.

I intend to make six points. First, the Minister is looking at the cost-cutting exercise which he told us about at our meeting with him. He has the co-operation of the trade unions and of management. It is worth repeating what the hon. Lady said—that industrial relations at the McDermott yard are a model for everyone to follow. A genuine cost-cutting exercise implies, however, a more ordered and planned approach, as things run down, than obtained in the heady days. It takes about £500,000 to make a bid. If this were dealt with in a planned way, as the regions have tried to do, the costs could be reduced.

Secondly, we want to know how the inquiry that the Minister is engaged in will fit into the general energy inquiry which arose out of the proposed closure of coal mines.

Thirdly, the direct question has to be asked: whether and by how much the Government want to sustain the oil supply industry in Scotland and what they intend to do about it. We know that there is over-capacity—that only 25 to 30 per cent. of capacity is being used. How do we deal with that? During the coal industry debate, reference was made to what is happening in Germany. Reductions are also being made in Germany, but they are being made over a 15-year period. The hon. Lady referred to possible developments on the west coast. By the time they come on stream, we may have no means left of servicing them.

Fourthly, there is the immediate question whether work can be brought forward. We are told that there are between 150,000 and 200,000 tonnes of work until 1995. What are the opportunities?

Fifthly, the oil rig fabrication workers operate in conditions of intense difficulty and danger. They are easily comparable with those to be found in coal mines. In many respects, they are more dangerous. Coal miners benefit from European Community regulations. I do not complain about that. However, there are no central redundancy arrangements for oil rig fabrication workers. I should be glad if that could be looked into.

Sixthly—I address this particularly to the Scottish Office Minister—whatever happens, there will be cuts. The Government must acknowledge that cuts will place huge pressure on local government services and training agencies such as Highland Enterprise, which will require more finance. We have already had 1,200 redundancies announced but we face the possibility of twice as many. That is an enormous number. In the highland economy, it is huge and it will require a swift, considerable and committed response. I hope that that is what we shall hear from the Minister tonight.

11 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), I am exceedingly grateful to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) for the opportunity to contribute to the debate, though only briefly so as to allow the ministerial response to be as full as possible.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and the hon. Member for Moray, I welcome the fact that we have present not only the oil Minister, if I may so describe him, but the Minister with responsibilities for the highlands. The seriousness of the situation—not only the immediate redundancies announced at Ardersier, but the long-term implications for the industry and their impact on the highland economy —is such that, to quote the phrase that the Minister with responsibilities for the highlands used in a meeting with us this summer, although we are not seeking excessively paternalistic reflexes, we need help.

I endorse the points that have been made, but I stress to the Minister that in the past 25 years the highlands have seen the siting of the Corpach pulp mill, the Invergordon aluminium smelter and the Dounreay nuclear reactor, all of which, in their various ways, were at the forefront of technology. Two are now gone and one is in severe decline. In many senses, the oil yards represent the last anchor of the economy in terms of major infrastructural investment employing thousands of people. I plead with the Minister to make every constructive effort in his own Department and particularly with the Treasury to ensure that this significant industry and vital part of our economy, social fabric and well-being is secured for the future.

11.2 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I appreciate the chance to have this debate in the House. Some of the debates in which I have been involved in the past six months as Minister for Energy have been conducted in a rational way, with sensible analysis of the various issues that we face; other debates have not gone exactly that way.

The issue has rightly received a lot of attention, and I have been impressed by the way in which everyone involved—unions, management, oil companies, the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and other Opposition Members—has been prepared to consider the options and to explore the various possibilities in a joint and co-operative way.

We know that we face a considerable problem in the fabrication industry throughout the United Kingdom. One of the dreadful ironies is that although the important Dunbar order, which was awarded to the Fife yard recently, brought much pleasure to people there, it obviously has serious implications in Ardersier.

It is worth reminding ourselves that over the past couple of years the United Kingdom construction yards have enjoyed very full order books. Some people would say, with the benefit of hindsight, that the order books were almost over-full because they were leading to genuine capacity problems, to training problems and to cost control problems. Looking forward, we are moving from a high peak historically to a prospect of a relatively low volume of orders. Unlike on previous occasions, when we have been able to see a pick-up a number of years ahead, present predictions are of fairly flat demand for three or four years.

Everyone in the industry recognises that likelihood. The task that everyone is trying to address is how we overcome a structural change in the marketplace. The structural change is perhaps all the more serious for the heavy fabrication yards because the nature of the orders in the United Kingdom continental shelf in the years ahead is changing. As the North sea is becoming a more mature oil province, and as a result of technological changes brought on largely by cost pressures, there is a consensus in the industry that we are moving away from the large-scale developments, with the large jackets to which the highland yards especially were designed to respond, to smaller platforms and jackets, and an increasing preoccupation with sub-sea completions—the more high-tech end of the fabrication industry. With that development comes a different mix of skills. The size of the yards can be considerably smaller. That, again, has implications for the cost base of the highland yards.

As hon. Members know, I have been up to the Highland Fabricators yard and I have had many meetings, both formal and informal, with unions and with management. There is a feeling out there that somehow the major threat comes from overseas contractors. In fact—one must congratulate the United Kingdom fabrication industry as a whole—although the threat has always been there, in practice the United Kingdom yards have been more than able to hold their own. It is significant that virtually all the orders for the Dunbar project have so far gone to United Kingdom yards, with the deck contracts to UIE at Clydebank and the jacket contract to RGC.

There is a feeling, to which the hon. Member for Moray referred, that somehow we should design a policy that is all about evening out the flow of work. It is extremely complex even to conceptualise such an evening out. What one would try to do would be to dictate to individual companies which have to make investment decisions the precise timing of when those investment decisions should be taken. Unless one dictates the timing, one cannot, by definition, even out the flow.

One of the interesting factors that we face now—a great opportunity for British yards—is that the Norwegians, who are sometimes held up to us, despite the fact that they have a far smaller sector, as people who have evened up the flow of orders, face a severe capacity problem in their yards because their order book is building up very fast. Many people believe that it is building up so fast that it is ahead of the Norwegian yards' capacity to produce the necessary jackets and concrete platforms. That, in turn, provides an opportunity for our United Kingdom yards to go in there competitively. I agree with the hon. Member for Moray that our yards are now properly competitive. They were not always, but they are now. Work force and management alike are determined to get out there and get the orders that are available, and the AMEC yard has recently won an important order from Norway. Before that order, many had believed that there were no Norwegian orders to be had, but that has proved wrong. Unfortunately, that order has not helped the yards in the highlands, but it shows that there is more work out there to be got, and that it is not necessary to consider only UKCS opportunities.

The hon. Members for Moray and for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnson) were kind enough to draw attention to the widespread support for my announcement in Aberdeen, which I discussed when the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber came to see me. I am keen that that important initiative should result in practical suggestions from the working group as to ways in which we can reduce operating, construction and capital costs in the UKCS.

For reasons that I fully understand, the hon. Member for Moray wanted to make the group rather larger than we currently intend. We have suggested that it should be chaired by John d'Ancona of the Offshore Supplies Office and should consist of a small group of representatives of the oil companies or customers—about three—and a similar number from the oil supply industry, as well as a representative of the Scottish TUC. I have deliberately kept the group small because I want it to be a working group. We have given it a very tight timetable. We have asked it to report back and have emphasised the need to produce practical recommendations by the end of February. Although I would certainly encourage the various different local organisations and others to make suggestions, I am reluctant to extend the membership of the group, because to do so would slow down its work, which will in any case be undertaken within a tight timetable.

The hon. Member for Moray will be aware that I made some other announcements in Aberdeen, which were intended to try to make it easier for oil companies to come forward with developments. In the past, the arrangements were rather bureaucratic, and companies were required to jump unnecessary hurdles, some of which we are now trying to remove. In particular, I emphasised the need to get some of the very small fields up and running rather more quickly than had previously been the case. The easing of bureaucracy combined with a determination to try to identify cost reduction methods should have the effect of bringing forward a number of marginal fields.

I do not want to put an unfair positive gloss on the situation by pretending to the House that numerous large jacket orders will suddenly be produced. That is not the nature of the new North sea. What it will do, however, is to produce a large number of additional man-hours of work. Given the inevitable changes in orders, one of the challenges for the traditionally large highlands yards is to find ways to reduce their overheads and thus become more responsive to the more technologically complex orders which are available but which may not keep them so busy for so long a period. Both unions and management are aware of that challenge.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland has been listening carefully to the points that have been made. Concern has been expressed in the highlands about such matters as assisted area status. Hon. Members will be aware that we are currently conducting a review of the map and have that in mind. Although it was not mentioned today, I know that the question whether there is a chance of the highlands being upgraded—if that is the right word—to EC Objective 1 status is of concern to many people. My information is that at the moment the criteria are not met. However, that does not necessarily mean that the new draft regulations published by the Commission might not change the situation.

Mrs. Ewing: I did not raise assisted area status because I recognise that that is not within the Minister's remit. However, as he has mentioned it, are the Government going to support Objective 1 status for the highlands?

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Lady rightly realises, that is not my direct responsibility. However, I understand that under the current criteria the region is not eligible, although those criteria may be revised as part of the EC future financing and structural funds review. I assure the hon. Lady that United Kingdom Ministers will take the case of the highlands and islands fully into account once negotiations on the future of the fund begin in earnest. I hope that that is helpful. However, if the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber wants to pursue that issue, he is best advised to pursue it with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), because I must admit that I am not fully familiar with all the detailed arguments.

The hon. Member for Moray referred to the taxation regime and ways in which it might help to bring forward developments which would not otherwise occur. That technique was used in 1986-87, but the situation is now rather different. The total Government take from the North sea is very limited—about £1 billion. Most of that money comes from well-established producing fields. The amount of flexibility that the Government have to reduce taxes and thus bring forward marginal fields is almost insignificant because of the relatively low level of tax currently paid by North sea fields.

However, I am obviously interested in particular proposals and cases put to me by oil companies. In particular, I would always be concerned about a project which would make sense pre-tax and which would therefore go ahead pre-tax, but which does not make sense post-tax. For example, we were able to find a way to ensure that the Columba development proceeded.

I am acutely conscious that I have not covered all the points that have been raised. The hon. Member for Moray raised three points and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber raised six. I will read the *Official Report* and try to respond to those points in writing. If the hon. Member for Moray would like meetings, I can tell her that I always have an open door. I want to explore ways to help as much as she does.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 4 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

MIDLAND METRO (No. 3) BILL

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufactured Goods

1. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the balance of trade in manufactured goods for *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): The United Kingdom had a trade surplus in manufactured goods of £5·05 billion in 1978, with imports at £22·67 billion and exports at £27·72 billion. In the past 12 months, to September 1992, it had a deficit of £6·18 billion, with imports at £92·16 billion and exports at £85·98 billion. Export volume remains strong.

Mr. Howarth: Is not the picture even worse than that, because, every year since 1983, we have had a deficit in the balance of trade in manufactured goods, peaking in 1989 at just under £17 billion? When will the Government stop being so complacent about that appalling situation and do something about it? When will they put in place a strategy for manufacturing, instead of the inactivity and hopelessness that we have faced in the past few months?

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the trade deficit in manufactured goods has been a long time in coming. Between 1974 and 1979, imports increased by some 37 per cent. and export volumes by 11 per cent. whereas, between 1979 and 1991, imports increased by 100 per cent. and export volumes by 59 per cent. The figures under the previous Labour Government were three times worse than under this Administration.

Mr. Fry: In view of the disappointing figures that my hon. Friend has just given, will he explain why he has not agreed with our Community partners to impose limits on the importation of Chinese footwear and has acted against the advice of the British Footwear Manufacturers Federation and the vast majority of footwear manufacturers? The failure to take that step will result in fewer jobs in this country and increased imports.

Mr. Needham: The volume increases in exports over the past 13 years has averaged 4 per cent. compared with 2 per cent. under the previous Administration. In fact, in the past four years our share of world markets has stabilised and, if anything, increased. I know that my hon. Friend feels very strongly about the footwear industry, but Chinese imports represent a small proportion of total footwear sales in Britain. We will continue to consider carefully whether the EC rules have been breached in relation to the import of footwear, but, at the moment, we believe that it is not possible to take the action that my hon. Friend requests within the free trade environment of the Community.

Mr. Barry Jones: Is the Minister aware of the huge job losses in the aerospace, steel and textile industries? Why are the Government so complacent? Why do they not bring before the House a policy to promote and defend manufacturing industry in Britain?

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman knows from his own constituency experience what has happened to the steel industry, which has changed dramatically in the past few years. He knows that British steel exports are 10 times higher than they were several years ago. He will be aware also from his constituency experience of the number of lost jobs that have been replaced by those created by companies such as Toyota. Of course, the Government accept that British industry and manufacturing are crucial and that is why support for our export volumes and export promotion is a vital ingredient of our policy.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Is not devaluation potentially a most encouraging prospect for British manufacturing industry?

Mr. Needham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We now have a tremendous opportunity—I speak as Minister for Trade—to get out and sell British products abroad. We also now have an opportunity to ensure that we can replace imports with locally produced goods.

Job Creation

2. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the number of jobs created in the past 12 months as a result of his Department's programmes and policies.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The aim of the Department of Trade and Industry's programmes and policies is to help United Kingdom business compete successfully at home, in the rest of Europe and throughout the world.

Mr. Mitchell: In the past three years, the Government have managed to destroy 600,000 jobs in manufacturing industry, thanks to their policy of high exchange rates and high interest rates. Now that they have been forced out of that deflationary bunker and have a chance to do something different, what proposals does the Minister have to encourage import substitution, so that British industry can win back more of its own market?

Mr. Sainsbury: I can think of no policy more destructive of jobs in manufacturing than the policy that the hon. Gentleman supports, of anti-European Community membership. However, I acknowledge that he is at least consistent, unlike the Labour Front Bench.

Mr. Butcher: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best job creation programme that his Department could pursue is to ensure that we get a successful outcome in the GATT—general agreement on tariffs and trade—negotiations? Does he agree that the situation is now very serious and poses an immense threat to the traded goods sector of manufacturing in this country? How is it that 2·5 per cent. of Europe's population—the French farmers—have apparently hijacked the pan-European negotiating position? What is going on?

Mr. Sainsbury: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of a successful outcome in the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations. Clearly, it would provide a non-inflationary stimulus to the world economy at a time when it is much needed. He will be aware of the great difficulties in arriving at a successful outcome and of the efforts that have been made. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade have been at the forefront of those efforts, but great difficulties remain.

Mr. Stevenson: Is the Minister aware that even the pathetic efforts of his Department to aid British industry are being effectively undermined by policies that have been established by the Treasury, which seeks to impose a further VAT burden on industry by requiring it to pay VAT on account rather than in arrears? In my constituency, that is causing an additional serious burden, which is costing jobs. What does the Minister intend to do about that?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that one of the most important ways to create an environment that encourages business is to improve the tax environment. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the rates of corporation tax and personal tax now, as opposed to those that we inherited from the Labour Government in 1979, he will see that we have made immense progress.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that new jobs will be generated by the creation of new, and the development of existing, small businesses? Is he aware that many small businesses complain bitterly about the red tape and regulation that 2 million of them have to face? What progress has his Deepartment made in tackling that serious problem?

Mr. Sainsbury: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the important role of small businesses in job creation, not only directly through the jobs that they provide but indirectly through the service that they provide as suppliers to larger companies. I agree also with my hon. Friend about the importance of deregulation. We have had a drive to remove the burdens of bureaucracy from small businesses. We have not yet achieved enough, but I am happy to say that my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy is renewing that drive and is determined that we shall make real progress. I fear that the Opposition remain committed to imposing just the sort of regulatory burdens on business that destroy jobs.

Mr. Fatchett: With 600,000 manufacturing jobs lost in the past two years, with job losses in manufacturing industry now running at 50,000 a month and with the Engineering Employers Federation predicting 100,000 job losses in the next 12 months, is it not clear that the Government have totally failed manufacturing industry? Now that one President in the United States has lost his job, would not the best policy for this country be for the President of the Board of Trade to lose his job as well?

Mr. Sainsbury: I constantly hope that one day I will hear someone from the Opposition Front Bench say something complimentary about the achievements of British industry. I remind the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* My comment is not confined to the Opposition Front Bench. It would be nice to hear something in favour of British industry said from anywhere on the Opposition Benches. I remind Opposition Members that one of the most remarkable achievements has been the increase of more than 50 per cent. in the productivity of manufacturing industry under the Government.

EH101 Helicopter

3. **Sir Jim Spicer:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for methods by which Her Majesty's Government can enhance the sale prospects of the EH101.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department has provided £60 million of launch aid for the civil version of the EH101. We shall help to promote export sales of the civil version through our overseas trade services and we are ready to respond to any requests for assistance in pursuing civil export sales prospects.

Sir Jim Spicer: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the development of the EH101 has been a remarkable success for European co-operation? Beyond that, does he understand that the export market for the EH101 will bring jobs to Westland—a highly successful company—and to 600 small businesses throughout the country? Will he do all that he can to ensure that his Department helps in every way possible to secure the success of an overseas export drive?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend's assessment of progress on the EH101 and of the potential market for that excellent helicopter in Europe and elsewhere. I assure my hon. Friend that we in the Department of Trade and Industry will do all that we can to help sales of the civil version both overseas and at home.

Manufacturing Industry

4. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy with respect to enlarging the manufacturing base.

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): We shall give whatever help is appropriate and affordable in support of the manufacturing sector.

Mr. Lloyd: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that that is a pathetic answer? He is the man who told the Tory party conference that he would intervene all day, every day, if necessary. Manufacturing industry is still continuing to shed jobs at an horrendous rate. Manufacturers—not those on the Labour party's side of the political debate—are now afraid that their base has shrunk and that it is not sustainable. What will the right hon. Gentleman do about that? What will he do about putting public money into schemes that will create manufacturing excellence for the future? For example, when will we see the Jubilee line project and investment in British Rail come on stream?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman realises that many of his supplementary questions can be answered only in the context of the "Autumn Statement" by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, let me help the hon. Gentleman specifically. I have no doubt that he is delighted that we have seen industry save £9 billion in interest charges as a result of the recent reduction in interest rates. He will be delighted to know also that the United Kingdom attracted one third of all inward investment into the European Community in 1990-91. He will understand that there is no base except one of low inflation from which we can see an expanding economy.

Mr. Couchman: My right hon. Friend will know that my constituency has attracted three Japanese companies to its industrial park, which will bring 300 or 400 jobs to the area. How much damage does he think that an adverse vote tonight at the end of the debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill might cause to inward investment in my constituency?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has asked a central question. I shall give the House the figures as an indication of the scale of the success of the United Kingdom in attracting inward investment. In 1991-92, the Invest in Britain Bureau recorded 332 direct investment projects by foreign companies in the United Kingdom, which will create or safeguard 50,000 jobs. The United Kingdom has 36·1 per cent. of American and 40·9 per cent. of Japanese direct investment in the EC. It is critical that we do nothing to prejudice the certainty of these companies that the United Kingdom is a part of the single market and that it intends to remain so.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that British industry has shown considerable resolution in weathering a vicious recession, the longest in the post-war period? Is he further aware that industry had hoped that when he came to office there would be, at long last, personal leadership and a strategy for the manufacturing sector? Unless a clear lead and strategy are forthcoming shortly, the right hon. Gentleman will be seen to be like other Ministers—a do-nothing President.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman has considerable experience of Britain's manufacturing economy. He knows that a policy of direct subsidy by the public sector has been a disaster in terms of advancing the manufacturing base. No man has greater personal experience of how that happens.

Mr. Moate: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some of the largest manufacturing industries—I refer especially to the intensive energy users—are being crippled by increasing electricity prices? One company in my constituency has had a 50 per cent. price increase in four years and is paying almost £2 million in nuclear levy. Despite many representations, we are making no progress in this matter. Will my right hon. Friend take a personal interest and try to lift the burden off intensive energy users?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has spoken to my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy about that matter, so I am fully aware of his concern and that of a number of colleagues. I assure him that we will take a considerable personal interest in this matter in the review that is under way.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the President recall that, during his years in the wilderness, he identified steel, cars and aerospace as the three key industries in our manufacturing base? Is he aware that, during the past month, British Steel has cut output by one fifth, Ford has suspended production and British Aerospace has been exporting jobs to Taiwan?

The right hon. Gentleman promised that he would intervene before breakfast, before lunch and before dinner. If I bought him lunch, would he intervene to save at least one of those industries? If not, can he name just one specific job that he has saved during the seven months since he took office?

Mr. Heseltine: If I were invited to sup with the hon. Gentleman, I would take the longest spoon that I could find. He knows that British Steel is now exporting successfully. He knows that Japanese inward investment in our car industry is likely to turn a deficit into a surplus. He knows that aerospace is one of our major exporting industries.

Sir Peter Tapsell: On the subject of Japanese inward investment, is my right hon. Friend aware that what attracts Japan is our access to the European single market? Is he further aware that, for reasons that I shall explain if I am successful in catching your eye, Madam Speaker, the Japanese would prefer that we did not ratify the Maastricht treaty? They are certainly strongly opposed to monetary union for Britain and for Europe.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has as much knowledge as any in the House about the inward investment arguments. However, his view is not that put to me by the significant number of Japanese who visit my Department.

Defence Diversification

5. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what new initiatives he now proposes to introduce to increase diversification in those industries losing work as a result of the reduction in demand for armaments.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government believe that decisions about diversification are essentially matters for companies themselves. Nevertheless, they encourage such diversification—for example, through their regional seminars, which have drawn attention to Government assistance and to opportunities in other markets.

Mr. Pike: Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that both the management and the work force in industries that are heavily dependent on defence-oriented products —which is very much the case in the north-west and Lancashire—will be concerned about his answer? Is he aware that they believe that he and the Government have a duty to help diversification and to ensure that the industries and the skills of the work force are preserved within civil manufacture? Should not those jobs be secured to preserve the nation's manufacturing industry?

Mr. Heseltine: The House has rarely heard such hypocrisy from a member of the Opposition, who in the

1980s threatened to close one third of our defence industries to pander to nuclear disarmers and mobs on the street.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that less diversification would be needed if we in this country did not open our contracts to tender to those European countries that do not reciprocate with our arms industries? May I ask my right hon. Friend when he believes that the single market will be implemented and policed in every member state? Is not that the way forward to a better Europe for trading?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for her continuing interest in these matters. I hope that she will feel able to support my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the Lobby tonight in his determination to achieve more effective policing of the European Community.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the President of the Board of Trade accept that his first answer was unsatisfactory? Does he accept that more than half of Britain's research and development industry is in the aerospace and defence sectors, which are being savagely cut? Organising regional seminars will not ensure that Britain leads the way in technology in either the single European market or world markets. Does he not need to do more to ensure that we diversify our high-tech industries?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman displays a remarkable naivety. No companies are coming to my Department to ask my civil servants for advice on how to run their businesses. Diversification will take place in British industry as a result of the entrepreneurial skills of industry managers, and no one else.

Mr. Sykes: Does my right hon. Friend agree with voters in Scarborough and Whitby who say that the social chapter would suffocate jobs and enterprise?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has hit a bull's eye. It is precisely because the Labour party wishes to enshrine the social chapter in the Maastricht treaty that it would impose intolerable costs, willy-nilly, on British industry.

Mr. Byers: Is the President of the Board of Trade aware that Swan Hunter Shipbuilders on Tyneside wishes to diversify into the merchant shipbuilding sector but, in so doing, will be in direct competition with German shipyards that presently receive a 36 per cent. subsidy from the European Commission? In the light of that, will the President agree to make intervention funding available? Will he also consider using the provisions of article 4.5 of the seventh shipbuilding directive to protect Swan Hunter from unfair competition? Does he accept that Government action is essential if we are to win those orders and keep jobs on Tyneside?

Mr. Heseltine: I have great sympathy with the difficult position of the Swan Hunter company, which we have considered carefully. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, that grant mechanism was denied to the warship builders as a consequence of arrangements provided for merchant shipbuilders, not warship builders. It is not intended that we should widen the arrangement. There are understandings that preclude the east Germans from competing unfairly with British shipyard products.

Mr. Tracey: Will my right hon. Friend lend his support to the case of training and enterprise councils, particularly the TEC for my district of Kingston and south-west London, which is battling to provide jobs for British Aerospace workers who have been made redundant or are in danger of losing their jobs because of the loss of the Harrier?

Mr. Heseltine: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. The role of the TECs is widely admired. I share responsibility for the TECs with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. I hope to make further announcements in the near future about the positive opportunities for TECs.

Mr. Cousins: Does the President accept that his seminars were held many months ago and 250,000 workers in aerospace, shipbuilding, electronics and engineering are still waiting for a response? If not, can he simply confirm that he has drawn no conclusions, formed no policy, taken no action and his cupboard is bare?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is ill-informed. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry attended such a seminar in the north-east only 10 days ago. The companies know full well that civil servants in the Department of Trade and Industry do not and should not have the skills to explain to British management how to diversify product range. That is a management responsibility, which we should not blur.

Mr. Gallie: Will my right hon. Friend take note of the 500 extra jobs that have been created by British Aerospace at Prestwick? Will he also take note of a letter that has been circulated today by the chief executive of British Aerospace urging that the Maastricht treaty must be progressed? Will he join me in urging Opposition Members from Ayrshire to vote with us in the Lobby tonight in support of the chief executive of British Aerospace?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes an impassioned plea, but I have never seen the Labour party vote in the interests of British industry one way or another.

Pit Closures

6. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect of pit closures on public services in the areas affected.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): We have announced a package of measures aimed at economic regeneration of the communities which may be affected. We will be working in partnership with local authorities and development organisations. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has asked Lord Walker to co-ordinate these measures.

Mr. Hughes: The President's announcement on pit closures, together with the multiplier effect, will mean the loss of some 100,000 jobs. Has the Minister read the recent report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, which shows that in the former heartland of the Welsh coalfield—the four counties of West Glamorgan, Mid-Glamorgan, Dyfed and Gwent—20 per cent. of all males are inactive and that there is all manner of social and health deprivation. Is not it a pretty shameful indictment of a son of Swansea that he should now be contemplating bringing the same havoc and distress to so many other communities in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire?

Mr. Eggar: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman so writes down the considerable achievements of the noble Lord Walker in regenerating economic activity in south Wales. It is widely accepted that considerable efforts were made by the noble Lord, his predecessor and my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Wales. Indeed, many parts of the United Kingdom look with admiration at what has been achieved in south Wales in the past decade.

Mr. Cormack: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of us believe that if the review is comprehensive and fair, most of the pits will not close?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend has made his position very clear. The review will be conducted openly and will encompass a wide number of issues. I am sure that my hon. Friend will make his views clear to the review, as he has to me privately.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Government be prepared not only to refrain from granting further licences for gas-fired stations while the review continues but to make it clear that licences will be revoked where the review shows that the licence should not have been granted in the first place?

Mr. Eggar: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and the House would not want me to prejudice the results of the review. Existing contracts for independent power projects are subject to the regulator, who has announced that he will consider the economics of the projects with a view to pronouncing some time in mid-December. Future approvals are covered by the review, and doubtless it and the White Paper will comment on the issue.

Sir Michael Grylls: Does my hon. Friend agree that Britain has had a proud record in the past 20 years of creating new jobs and new job opportunities in steel-closure areas and, more recently, in coal-closure areas? In the last year up until the end of September, British Coal Enterprise Ltd. created 9,482 jobs in the coal-closure areas. Jobs can be created, and if British Coal Enterprise's efforts can be increased, it can deal with the current problem.

Mr. Eggar: I agree with my hon. Friend that British Coal Enterprise has a first-class record. It is not perhaps widely enough known that some 86 per cent. of all former miners who have registered with British Coal Enterprise since 1987 have found jobs within 18 months.

Mr. Steinberg: In view of the proposed destruction of the north-east coalfield, will the Minister tell the House what he proposes for Tursdale workshops in my constituency which employs 300 men? If the coalfield is to be decimated, are these jobs safe or will this workshop close, with the destruction of the industry for the people in my constituency and their families?

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern and of the concern of other hon. Gentlemen in the north-east on that particular issue. While not directly the subject of the review, it is a matter which will have to be taken into account during the review period, and I will make sure that British Coal is aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern and that of his constituents.

Overseas Relocation

7. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what new proposals he has to discourage British firms from relocating overseas.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is for British firms to make their own decisions about where to locate.

Mr. Flynn: Is it not true that the Government do not even count the number of jobs lost to this country abroad? Is it not rather like trying to fill a bath by watching the water coming in and failing to notice that the plug has been pulled out and that jobs are syphoning off to other countries? From Cwmbran and Pontypool and from Inmos in my constituency thousands of jobs have gone to other continental countries because of lack of investment in British industry. Is it not true that the Minister's Department has done nothing every day for the past six months to help British industry before breakfast, before dinner and before supper and that he has got up the next morning and done nothing again? When will the Government show the same faith in British industry as the Italian, the Belgian and the German Governments?

Mr. Sainsbury: I can appreciate why the hon. Member is concerned about potential job losses from a factory in his own constituency, but he has made some extraordinarily wild and inaccurate allegations about the alleged support available elsewhere, and he seems totally to overlook the massive number of jobs created in this country by inward investors, not just from the United States, Japan or the far east but from other parts of Europe, coming here because we create the right environment to encourage enterprise.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I hope that my right hon. Friend will accept that the 500 jobs created in Prestwick in Scotland represent a direct transfer of jobs from Woodford which is located on the periphery of my constituency. That may be considered as transferring jobs overseas, I am not sure, but will my hon. Friend accept that many major manufacturing industries in the United Kingdom are transferring thousands of jobs to other parts of the world, particularly to the Indian subcontinent and the Pacific basin and, in doing so, are transferring and shipping to those countries not only the jobs but the highly sophisticated, modern machinery which will then be used in employing people in those countries to compete against manufacturers in this country?

When will the Government realise that manufacturing industry is the only source of non-inflationary economic growth and that we need an industrial strategy now, not tomorrow?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sure that the whole House is well aware of the great interest that my hon. Friend takes in manufacturing industry. Because of that interest he will be aware that not just in this year or this decade or even this century it has been the pattern of manufacturing industry to diversify and invest in other countries. There has always been change. Without it, we cannot have an effective and competitive manufacturing industry.

Mr. Bell: But even the Minister of State will accept that investment abroad is not covering the balance of payments deficit on our manufactured exports. The Government's policy over the past 13 years has failed. It is no longer good enough for the Minister to come to the Dispatch Box and say that it is up to British industry to locate where it will. When the Single European Act comes into force on 1 January we will be looking for investment in this country by British firms in British industry, in British goods and in British jobs. Where will the Department of Trade and Industry be? Will it be on the coat tails of the Treasury?

Mr. Sainsbury: I do not know what British industry would think of the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that it is not good enough for the Department of Trade and Industry to say that industry can make its own decisions about where to invest. Does the hon. Gentleman want to bring back industrial development certificates?

Mr. John Marshall: Is not industry more likely to locate in Britain because of low corporate taxes, low interest rates and the fact that the social chapter does not apply here?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend is right, and our success in attracting inward investment, to which my right hon. and hon. Friends have already referred, is evidence of that. If one thing could deter any inward investor in Britain it would be imposing the social chapter upon British industry.

Pit Closures

8. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will presume against the granting of further opencast coal licences during the period of the moratorium on deep mine closures.

Mr. Eggar: It is for the planning authorities, taking account of all material matters, to determine whether individual applications for opencast mining should be approved.

Mr. Lewis: Given the problems of the Government's own making in the coal industry, should not the Department of Trade and Industry take a more hands-on approach? The people whom I represent who are threatened by the huge Lomax coal application in Greater Manchester consider it stupid and crass to be ruining communities in deep mine areas while expanding opencast mining and ruining the lives of people who are threatened by that intrusive method of winning coal. We need a sensible overall policy which satisfies the needs of opencast and deep mine coal communities.

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the concern about opencast mining in many parts of the country, but I am also aware that in some parts of the country, such as Scotland and the north-east, opencast mining is critical to the survivability of deep mines, so it is a complex matter. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the particular matter to which he referred is currently before the planning authorities. As I understand it, the precise proposal is to opencast some 470 hectares, of which 77 hectares have been described as the biggest coal spoil heap in Europe, and there are some who see considerable environmental benefits from that operation. However, it is a matter for the planning authorities.

Mr. Alexander: Does my hon. Friend agree that, contrary to the view of the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis), opencast mining must be part of the general coal scene, and it is no part of the survival of the general coal industry to start being restrictive about a profitable part of it? Therefore will he resist the temptation offered by the hon. Gentleman's question?

Mr. Eggar: This must be a matter for the planning authorities. It is now widely recognised throughout the House and among people who take an interest in mining matters that there is a role for opencast mining both in reducing the average cost of British coal by reducing its sulphur content and in blending. Overall, it improves the long-term competitiveness of a number of deep-mined pits rather than harming it.

Mr. Tipping: The Government and British Coal are closing down five of the 12 collieries in Nottinghamshire and there is a world energy surplus, yet British Coal is tearing up green fields, hedgerows and trees on the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire border. Does not that reflect a dereliction of duty by the Government and the lack of an adequate energy framework?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman will recognise that a blend of methods is required. The precise question that I was asked related to the planning application system and the exact procedure for that is well known. The hon. Gentleman knows that a high proportion of planning applications for opencast mines are turned down.

Mrs. Peacock: Any opencast coal licences which are granted by the Government will not be well received in Yorkshire, particularly in my constituency. Will my hon. Friend discuss the matter with his colleagues in the Department of the Environment?

Mr. Eggar: That is clearly a matter for the planning authorities. A number of applications are in the pipeline, but it goes without saying that part of the review on which we have embarked will inevitably consider the role and level of opencast mining, just as it will consider other sources of energy and the specific 21 collieries that are part of that review.

Mr. Barron: Last week, the Secretary of State for the Environment told the Energy Select Committee that he was currently revising the mineral planning guidance relating to opencast coal, and that he would report to the House within four weeks. Given that he also said that he had had discussions with other Departments, is it likely that we shall have more opencast coal in Britain next year, or less?

Mr. Eggar: That point, along with others, will be considered in the review. I can tell the hon. Gentleman, however, that most predictions suggest that an increase in production from opencast sources is not likely; the general consensus is that, if anything, the trend will be downwards. There is also a general consensus, however—with which I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree—that we still need a significant level of opencast production to enhance the general competitiveness of deep-mined pits.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend accept that this is not a local planning matter? Green-field sites are seldom dealt with locally; the material relating to them arrives at the Department. I think that the Opposition's request for a stop on any licences for opencast mining while a review is taking place is very reasonable. My hon. Friend may like to consider gas licences at the same time.

Mr. Eggar: The Government have announced that the issue of gas consents under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 will be a matter for the review to consider, and that no licences will be granted until the review itself has been considered. The specific question raised by my hon. Friend is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is currently examining possible revisions for mineral planning guidance note No. 3. I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to make a judgment from the Dispatch Box on planning applications that are currently in the pipeline.

9. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will meet representatives of the 10 pits threatened with closure before the end of the consultation period.

Mr. Heseltine: Representations are best made to British Coal, as it is currently engaged in the statutory consultation process relating to the 10 pits.

Mr. Hughes: I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's reply, but I hope that he will reconsider. Not only would meeting those representatives be the decent thing to do, but they would be able to impress on the right hon. Gentleman the devastating effect that the closures will have on the communities involved. More importantly, the 7,500 miners affected have thought through very clearly their arguments for the viability not just of their own pits, but of the British coal industry as part of the energy strategy. Will the right hon. Gentleman seriously consider meeting the representatives? I think that it would be a very good thing if he did, from all points of view.

Mr. Heseltine: I am afraid that I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks. A statutory process is now under way; as the hon. Gentleman knows, the matter is sub judice, and I therefore cannot discuss a number of issues connected with it. However, it would not be helpful for me to agree to the hon. Gentleman's request.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that the last time that a Government imposed an energy strategy on the economy, they saddled the economy with the most expensive nuclear power in the free world, with coal at well over world prices, while our competitors shopped around for cheap gas and coal and their economies benefited as a result?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has made an important point. In the end, we have a responsibility to ensure that British industry is supplied with competitively priced fuel. As the House knows, however, all such matters are now subject to the comprehensive review that is under way.

Mr. Benn: Did the President of the Board of Trade authorise British Coal to issue redundancy notices to all the miners working in the 31 pits? If so, in what sense can the review be held to be open?

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman has raised that question with me before, and I have asserted that the assurances that I gave the House about no compulsory redundancy are valid. British Coal is complying with its statutory obligations so that it can offer voluntary redundancy where miners seek to achieve it.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend accept that his recent announcement about the closure of the 31 collieries has struck at the heart of this nation, and that people in my constituency, who live many miles from the coal mines, have been greatly concerned about the effects of the closure programme on local economies? When he meets the representatives of the 10 collieries already threatened with closure, will he discuss with them how we can revitalise those economies? Does he further agree that ratifying the Maastricht treaty will help to encourage more inward investment into this country, including the areas where mines are to close?

Mr. Heseltine: As my hon. Friend will have heard me say to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I cannot undertake to meet representatives of the 10 pits that were in the closure programme and are now subject to statutory consultation—but my hon. Friend can certainly be sure that I shall meet representatives of the miners in the context of the general review which is proceeding. I entirely support my hon. Friend's view that in order to proceed with the diversification of economic activity in the affected areas it is important to attract inward investment into this country.

Mr. Robin Cook: As the President of the Board of Trade will not meet representatives from the 10 pits, may I tell him that, when people see their own pits being closed, there is deep cynicism among the work forces as to whether consultation is genuine? If it is genuine, why are props being removed from the coal face at Grimethorpe? Why has millions of pounds worth of equipment at Silverhill already been buried? Why has equipment at Cotgrave been allowed to buckle under pressure? Would not the best way to maintain the pits be to keep them producing coal? Why not let the miners, who are being paid to turn up every day at the surface, go underground to cut coal?

Mr. Heseltine: As I have explained to the House before, there is no market for the coal that the hon. Gentleman is asking me to produce. The miners know that the coal produced in the past has been added to the stocks at the pitheads and the generating stations, but—*[Interruption.]* This is an important aspect of what I have tried to do since I announced the review. Several right hon. and hon. Members have suggested to my Department that British Coal is in some way not honouring its commitment to put the 10 pits on a care and maintenance basis, so that if the statutory proceedings determine that the pits should continue in existence, they will be able to do so. I have personally investigated every suggestion put to me, by taking the matter up with British Coal, and I am satisfied with the assurance given to me by British Coal that none of the 10 pits has been prejudiced, should the outcome of the consultations suggest their continued life.

Northern Region

10. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next plans to meet representatives of industry and employees in the northern region to discuss the industrial situation in the region.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to visit the northern region, but I intend to visit the region again before Christmas. This should provide a good opportunity to discuss the local industrial situation.

Ms. Quin: Has the Minister seen the report, "Business Survey North" by the Northern Development Company and the Tyneside and Teesside chambers of commerce? It points out that the northern region's economy is falling back to the level to which it plunged so disastrously 18 months ago—and that prospects are even bleaker now. Can he persuade his right hon. Friend the President to have an urgent business breakfast with the authors of the report—or better still, to intervene to help our region before breakfast?

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the concern in the north-east, a region which until recently has managed to cope with the general economic situation well compared with many other regions of the United Kingdom. I have had discussions with several leading business men from the region, and I believe that one of its strengths, which it did not previously have, is a much more diversified economic base over a number of different industrial sectors. That is of considerable assistance.

When I was in the north-east I was pleased by the determination, especially in the small business sector, to go ahead with new technology, and I was heartened by the response of many smaller firms and their interest in taking advantage of the considerable potential orders available in the United Kingdom continental shelf and the Norwegian North sea.

Mr. Devlin: As the report points out that 73 per cent. of goods manufactured in our region are exported to the European Community, and as our region has been one of the leading beneficiaries of inward investment from outside the Community, does my hon. Friend agree that when he next talks to business men in the northern region he should point out to them the importance of ratifying the Maastricht treaty at the earliest opportunity? Does he agree that all Members of Parliament in the region who support the Community should vote with the Government tonight?

Mr. Eggar: There will be no need for me to make that point to business men in the north-east. They have been in the forefront of pointing out to me the need for ratification of the treaty.

Mr. Clelland: Is the Minister aware that north-east business man of the year, Karl Watkin, told members of the Tyne and Wear chamber of commerce on Monday that if any of them did their jobs as badly as Ministers did theirs, they would all be sacked? As we have developed our own political and development agency structure in the northern region, does the Minister agree that it would be appropriate for him to hand over responsibility for his Department's budget for the region to people who represent the region, live in the region and better understand the needs and aspirations of the people of the region?

Mr. Eggar: I pay tribute to those regional organisations and, indeed, to a significant number of local authorities in the north-east who have developed a partnership concept and are working with central Government on regeneration projects. For example, I was struck by the positive action of the east Durham initiative, which deals with Easington and Vane Tempest collieries and other areas. I hope that we can get a proper partnership working there for the good of the region and especially of the coalfield areas.

Mr. Batiste: Is my hon. Friend aware of the advice given today by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, which represents much of industry in the north of England and many other regions? It said that the industry placed the utmost importance on the House giving a clear affirmation today of Britain's commitment to being at the heart of the European Community.

Mr. Eggar: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Almost all companies that come to see Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry which are considering inward investment or expansion see the market for their products as the whole of the European Community—not simply the United Kingdom. I hope that the whole House will bear that in mind and also bear in mind the views of leading industrialists in Britain.

Pit Closures

11. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the effect of the pit closure programme on the balance of payments deficit.

Mr. Eggar: Pit closures, caused by falling domestic coal demand, have little effect on trade or international payments.

Mr. Chisholm: Is the Minister aware that we already import 20 million tonnes of foreign coal, some mined by child labour in Colombia, and that the position will get worse if we go ahead with pit closures? Is he further aware that all independent experts—and the Minister's Department in Energy Paper 59—suggest that there will be massive imports of gas if the dash for gas continues? Is he aware that that will have a devastating effect on an already appalling balance of payments deficit which is a brake on growth and the development of full employment?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on almost all counts. No coal mined by child labour is imported to the United Kingdom. We have had a categorical assurance from the Colombian authorities to that effect. It shows a complete misunderstanding about coal production methods in Colombia even to assert that coal is mined by child labour. The hon. Gentleman went on to predict increased imports of gas into the United Kingdom. He seems to be unaware that the share of imports has fallen in the past five years and is predicted to fall further in the next five years. The issues of coal production and generation of electricity by gas are, of course, matters for the comprehensive review which is currently being undertaken.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Can my hon. Friend explain why, in a free-trade Europe, it is not possible for us to export coal produced at £40 a tonne to countries such as Germany, which produce lots of coal at £86 a tonne, and could even send us some specialist coal? Has the European Community allowed the Germans a system of huge subsidies for their coal while making it clear that if Britain applied for subsidies for our coal, the answer would be no?

Mr. Eggar: The whole future of the EC coal subsidy regime is still to be discussed in the forthcoming years. We cannot export coal because the production costs of British coal are a long way above world coal prices. It is about twice as expensive to produce British deep-mined coal and to get it to the top as to import coal to power stations. One of the challenges that faces British Coal—it will be the subject of the comprehensive review—is to find ways of reducing the costs associated with the production of British deep-mined coal.

Mr. O'Neill: Does not the Minister appreciate that there is great anger and frustration among British electricity consumers because of the purchasing of nuclear power from France, power which attracts subsidy under the nuclear levy? Will he terminate the contract in 1993 when it comes up for renewal and thus enable 5 million tonnes of British coal to be used to generate the electricity that would otherwise come from France in the form of nuclear power?

Mr. Eggar: That will be taken into account during the review too. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman talks to his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who was responsible for originating the agreement with the French—an agreement which is in a treaty protocol.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Time is up.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Ray Powell
Mr. Bob Cryer
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett

Privatisation of Gipsy Sites

3.31 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I beg to move,

> That leave be given to bring in a Bill to repeal the Caravan Sites Act 1968; to make further provision regarding illegal parking of caravans; and for connected purposes.

This is clearly a matter that will be dealt with under the motion that follows this Bill, in that it will be the subject of the subsidiarity which is enshrined in the Maastricht Bill.

This Bill is about protecting the human rights and civil liberties of the law-abiding, property-owning resident population from the people known as travellers who seek to trespass, molest, vandalise and to intimidate others in self-righteous pursuit of their chosen way of life—at the expense of all other people.

At the same time, the Bill seeks to protect and enhance legitimate gipsies who lead a traditionally nomadic life by selling them local government-owned sites for them to control and manage in their own way. The Bill seeks to put the citizens of this country on an equal footing before the law—*[Interruption.]*—while respecting the liberties of all to lead the lives of their choosing.

My Bill was stimulated by the anger and fear instigated by the arrival of huge numbers of shiny and expensive caravans, hauled by Range Rovers, Jaguars and other expensive motor vehicles, on green belt land near the town of Hertford and near other villages and towns in my constituency. These people then encamped illegally, without sanitation, and in full view of a council house estate, many of whose residents had waited months and years to gain a council tenancy. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. It is most unfair that the hon. Gentleman should be having such difficulty in making himself heard. That remark applies to hon. Members on both sides of the House. Will those hon. Members who wish to have conversations please leave the Chamber and have them elsewhere?

Mr. Wells: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your protection.

Many people on the housing estates, who were so affronted by these trespassers on green belt land, had waited months and years for the opportunity to gain a house with a lovely view. They could not even allow their children to play on the playing fields for fear that they would be injured and bullied by the children of the travelling families encamped in those fields. They cancelled their holidays because they could not leave their property, knowing that it would be burgled and otherwise interfered with if they did.

When we eventually managed to get rid of these people by legal means, a month later, they left behind them huge mounds of filth, dirt, broken cars and refuse of all kinds, which we in the local community had to pay to clean up. That has happened not once but three or four times on the same land, and these people subsequently moved on to other land in my constituency and constituencies nearby.

Clause 1 would repeal the section in the Caravan Sites Act 1968 that requires local authorities to provide caravan sites for gipsies. Clause 2 would require local authorities to sell by auction, within 12 months of the passage of the Act, all the sites they own. They must first, however, be offered to recognised gipsy organisations such as the National Gypsy Council at valuation, less discounts equivalent to the maximum discounts allowed to council house tenants buying their homes.

On passage of the Act, the whole of England and Wales should then be designated under the 1968 Act, which would enable local authorities to require the police to remove those trespassing on private and public land and would make such trespass a criminal offence. Powers should be given to the police to impound caravans and other vehicles and property of the trespassers, subject to the payment of fines determined by the clause.

The National Gypsy Council very much wants to own and manage its own sites, and would make certain that they did not attract travellers other than genuine gipsies. That would force any others wishing to lead a nomadic life to use regular private sector sites in the same way as any other citizen who owns a caravan. The Bill would put gipsies, caravan owners and residents on the same basis.

I hope that the Bill will strike a reasonable balance between the legitimate rights of residents and the legitimate rights of those who traditionally lead a nomadic life, such as gipsies who lead a gipsy life in the traditional manner. It will provide for the more effective enforcement of the law for the benefit of all the citizens of England and Wales.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Bowen Wells, Mr. Cranley Onslow, Sir Anthony Grant, Mr. Michael Spicer, Mr. Colin Shepherd, Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Mrs. Teresa Gorman, Dr. Liam Fox, Mr. Mark Robinson and Sir Michael Grylls.

PRIVATISATION OF GIPSY SITES

Mr. Bowen Wells accordingly presented a Bill to repeal the Caravan Sites Act 1968; to make further provision regarding illegal parking of caravans; and for connected purpose: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 77.]

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Madam Speaker: Before we come to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, I must inform the House of two things. First, more than 90 hon. Members have intimated to me that they wish to speak in the debate; I therefore ask all right hon. and hon. Members who are called to exercise a great deal of restraint. I am sure that it will be obvious that I have had to impose the 10-minute limit on speeches between the hours of 6 o'clock and 8 o'clock. Secondly, I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, so let us get on with it.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Surely it is wrong that the procedures of the House do not take into account what is clearly a multi-party system. The amendment tabled by Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party—a motion of no confidence in the Government's blundering handling of the Maastricht treaty—has widespread support in the House and in the country. What steps can be taken to protect the rights of minority parties—especially when our amendment of no confidence has the support of the majority in the country—and to ensure that their rights are upheld? Our amendment deals with the issue that is at the heart of today's debate.

Madam Speaker: All the authority I have—through our Standing Orders and procedures which have been handed down for centuries—is used to protect the rights of minority parties. The hon. Gentleman is right. He has been to see me about the matter and I am sympathetic to what he said, but I have to make a decision to protect the rights of majorities as well as those of minorities.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. There is a solution to that problem, and it is very easy. If that minority party there—the Scottish nationalists—will tell this minority party here—the Liberals—to vote with us tonight on our amendment, they can have a vote of no confidence tomorrow.

Madam Speaker: Would that all my problems were solved as easily.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is the hon. Lady seeking to raise another point of order?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) knows that he was out of order, because he had no seat in the House when he raised his point of order.

Madam Speaker: There are so many Members crowding into the Chamber that I could not see whether he was in his place at the time. We must now make progress.

3.42 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): I beg to move,

That this House notes that the European Communities (Amendment) Bill received a majority of 244 at its second reading and was committed to a Committee of the whole House; acknowledges that the House was promised a debate prior to the committee stage; notes that the Danish Government's intentions have now been clarified; recalls the Lisbon Council's commitment to subsidiarity, the Birmingham Council's agreement on a framework for decisions to implement that principle and the practical steps already taken to achieve it; recognises that the United Kingdom should play a leading role in the development of the European Community to achieve a free market Europe open to accession by other European democracies, thereby promoting employment, prosperity and investment into the United Kingdom; and invites Her Majesty's Government to proceed with the Bill in order that the House should consider its provisions in further detail.

I should like to turn in a moment in some detail to the provisions of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and the agreement at Maastricht, but I should like, for a moment, just to put this afternoon's debate in context, for I think that that is relevant.

The past two years have seen massive changes, both within Europe and beyond it in almost every part of the world. The Soviet empire has collapsed. Russia has 1,500 per cent. inflation, and the Ukraine higher still. Across the whole of eastern Europe, new democracies are looking to the west and trying to rebuild their countries in a democratic image.

In Europe, in the former Yugoslavia there is a brutal war. The United States—the mightiest economy in the world—has been struggling for the past two years. Japan has falling growth and severe problems in the financial sector. Within the European Community, Italy, France, Germany, Greece and Spain all face increasing economic difficulties as well as those that we face in the United Kingdom.

The world has not seen such a whirlwind of events coming together for many decades, and that is an important background to the debate today. The motion before us is about the treaty agreed at Maastricht, but the substance is about Britain's priorities in Europe, and the essential question there is quite simple: in this country, are we or are we not to play a central role in Europe's future development? I believe that the answer that this House gives to that question is fundamental to our future well-being—both economic and political. I have no doubt about the anwer to that question. The answer, in our own national self-interest, must be yes—we will play a central part in the future of the European Community.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Prime Minister: If Opposition Members will have some patience, I will give way when I have made a little progress, but I should like to set the scene and make some progress first.

I do not believe that it is credible for this country to sit by on the sidelines of Europe and let other people determine policies. That is frankly no way for the United Kingdom to behave. It is not in our interests—not now, not in the future, not at any time. I believe that I carry the majority of people in the House in the belief that very few people would advocate leaving the European Community; so let me take our future membership as a point that is accepted across the House.

The question is, what sort of Europe is it that we wish to help build? The Community today is at a crossroads. No one should duck, dodge or weave around that question. There are important decisions to be made, now and in the immediate future, about the way in which the Community develops. We can develop as a centralist institution, as some might want, or we can develop as a free-market, free-trade, wider European Community more

[The Prime Minister]

responsive to its citizens. I am unreservedly in favour of the latter form of the Community, and I believe that that is the overwhelming view of this country.

But there is only one way in which we can bring that Community about, and I believe that it is this—by Britain playing a full part in the Community, by arguing its case, by forming alliances, by exercising its influence and authority, by persuading, by pushing, by fighting for its interests and, sometimes, by digging our toes in and saying no as we did over the social chapter and the single currency.

There is a second question of equal importance. How can a centralist federal Europe develop if some people wish to develop it? The answer to that is equally clear. A centralist Europe is most likely to develop if Britain has no influence in the Community, if it is sidelined, and if we do stand aside and let others run Europe while Britain scowls in frustration on the fringes. That is not the sort of Community that this country wants, and it would not be in the interests of this country or any political party in this country if Britain were to stand on the sidelines and let others run the Community.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As one who voted in favour of the Maastricht treaty on Second Reading, may I ask the Prime Minister whether he accepts the advice of the House authorities that, even if he were to lose the vote tonight, he could put the Bill into Committee on Monday or any time that the Government please? Is that not fact?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman will know that the answer is not as straightforward as he may suppose. Technically he may be correct, but perhaps only technically. Our position on the timing of the Committee stage is clear. We will seek to make some progress before the Edinburgh summit—we need to do so if our views on subsidiarity, enlargement and other vital issues are to carry the day when we get to that summit in Edinburgh.

The hon. Gentleman's views on Europe are well known—he has held them for many years—and he may be trying to comfort himself with the thought that a vote against Maastricht today will not compromise his principles, because the Government can still move ahead with the Committee stage. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that, in the unlikely event that the Labour party amendment were carried, we would obviously listen to the views that had been expressed in this House. The hon. Gentleman cannot shrug aside the amendment that his own right hon. Friends have put down.

To return to the question that I was developing, I cannot believe that the House wants a European Community with minimum influence for this country.

Let me now deal directly with the motion and the Bill before the House.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: Not upon this point, because I should like to make some progress, if the hon. Gentleman will permit me. I am sure that hon. Members will wish to develop many questions of substance later, and I will wish to give way when we reach some of those points.

On 3 June, I indicated to the House that there would be a debate before resuming the Committee stage. I did so in response to the then Leader of the Opposition. Despite the amendment put down by the Opposition, the roots of this debate were a request by the Opposition in the summer. Since then, we have had the French referendum, the Danish White Paper and specific proposals and, of course, the Birmingham summit. By Christmas, 10 of the 12 member states expect to have ratified the treaty, leaving only Denmark and Britain to do so.

It is against that background that the Opposition amendment proposes that we delay ratification on the grounds that we do not yet have sufficient clarity about the Danish position or certainty about the implementation of subsidiarity.

On subsidiarity, we secured the principle in the Maastricht treaty, and it is justiciable. In Lisbon, we made progress and agreed that subsidiarity should be integrated in the work of the Community as a legally binding rule. In Birmingham, we agreed a framework for specific decisions in Edinburgh.

That framework provides for a clearer understanding of what member states should do and what needs to be done by the Community. It provides for action by the Community only where member states have given it the power to do so in the treaties, and only where proper and necessary. It also provides for the lightest possible form of legislation, with maximum freedom for member states on how best to achieve the Community's objectives.

We made more progress in Birmingham than we foresaw when we went there. Implementing decisions will be agreed in Edinburgh, and the House will probably debate subsidiarity in Committee only after Edinburgh, when the outcome of Edinburgh will be known to the House.

As regards the position of Denmark, the Danish Government have now put forward a memorandum with firm policy proposals. We shall discuss that memorandum with the Danish Government and other member states. Some of the work called for by the memorandum is already in train, and was set in train not least in Birmingham. The task that lies ahead is to find ways of accommodating the needs of the Danish Government while respecting the intention of all member states, including Denmark, not to reopen the substantive text of the Maastricht treaty itself. That is a task that will very much involve Britain as President of the Community.

Let me turn for a moment to the Opposition amendment. In June, the then Leader of the Opposition said that, before the House resumed discussion on the Maastricht Bill, we should have a written report on the Danish position and a debate. The House has the report, and this is the debate.

Against that background, it can be seen that the amendment which the Labour party has put down today is a fraud. It is a very odd amendment from an allegedly pro-European party. The amendment in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) might usefully be called a "Napoleonic" amendment. "Not tonight Josephine," is the message from the right hon. and learned Gentleman, "we'll debate it at some other time." That is not the politics of principle. It is the politics of political expediency—*[Interruption.]* We are told that the Leader of the Opposition is a man of great principle. We are told that he has deeply held views about Britain's place in Europe. As long ago as 1971, he said:

> "Ministers are in a better position to secure national interests and bolster up the country's sovereignty when they are inside the conference room, not waiting outside."—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1971; Vol. 822; c. 128.]

I could not agree more with the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Then, last May, he said:

> "I do not think that we"—

the Labour party—

> "should oppose the Maastricht treaty".

Then, in September, he said:

> "I have always believed Britain's future lies in Europe and that we must take a confident and leading role in the European Community".

A leading role, but he is seeking to hide behind Denmark and the splits in his own party.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said just over a month ago:

> "I want to see progress in the European Community as set out in the Maastricht treaty".

He wants to see progress. That is why his amendment proposes delay—so that we can see progress. These are said to be deeply held views—principled views, honourable views. Yet now all is set aside in the interests of an expedient amendment.

The Opposition would do well to recall what the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said recently, which was as follows:

> "Another Labour flip-flop over Europe would not only rob the party of all credibility but would be against the best interests of Britain and the European Community."

He added that it

> "would cost Labour dear."

I agree with him. He then said—the Labour party should bear this in mind—

> "there would be a heavy domestic political price to be paid for yet another volte-face over Europe."

There will be.

Mr. Ashton *rose*——

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North) *rose*——

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Will the Prime Minister give way?

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has made it clear that he is not giving way.

The Prime Minister: What is the effective message from the Leader of the Opposition? It is: "Lord, give me Europe—but not yet."

Mr. Radice: I am grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, by his technical ineptitude, he has provided the circumstances in which the pro-Maastricht majority in the House can be dissipated, and ensured that pro-Maastricht Members can go with anti-Maastricht Members into the Lobby against the Government? Does he not understand that it is not the job of a Labour Member to prop up a discredited Government by supporting a motion that is procedurally unnecessary and expressly designed as a vote of confidence in himself and his Administration?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has said that he is proposing to vote for something that he does not believe in, and against something that he does believe in. If this were truly a vote of confidence, why did the Leader of the Opposition not table a vote of confidence? So much for principle. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has his principles cast adrift on a sea of expediency. When that happens when he is in opposition, he deserves to stay there. It is the sort of contemptible wriggling that will earn him no plaudits either here or in the Community.

I turn directly to some of the genuine concerns about the treaty that have been expressed in each and every part of the House. Sometimes people have said of the Government that we have talked too much of what is not in the treaty and too little of what is in it. I make no apology for talking about what we managed to keep out of the treaty, for I believe that it would have been damaging to the interests of this country. I took the view at Maastricht, as I do today, that a single currency cannot necessarily be in our interests, and certainly is not in our interests at this time.

The timetable that was set at Maastricht was too ambitious. I think that that is becoming increasingly apparent to nations across Europe as week succeeds week. We were therefore right to have our special protocol. It is doubtful that the necessary degree of economic convergence will be there in the time scale set out in the treaty, and I have made that point to the House on many occasions.

The danger that now exists on that issue is not that we shall get economic convergence across Europe. In present circumstances, there is a genuine danger of economic divergence.

We have made the point often enough that the social chapter would damage jobs, and I am happy to reiterate that. There is, however, much in the treaty that we want. There are both large and small things that are very much in the interests of this country.

As for some of the more modest things in the treaty, we have long sought fines on member states that do not comply with Community rules. This country complies with Community rules, and the Attorney-General would say something smartly to us if it did not. However, that has not been universally the case throughout Europe. Now, under the terms of the treaty, others must comply or they will pay a financial penalty for not doing so.

One of the matters that concerned us most in the run-up to the negotiations was that, hitherto, each and every development in the Community could go only through the central institutions—the treaty of Rome and the Commission, and justiciably through the European Court of Justice. At Maastricht, we developed a new way, and one much more amenable to the instincts of this country—co-operation by agreement between Governments, but not under the treaty of Rome. It covers interior and justice matters, foreign affairs and security, and the option is available for it to cover wider matters in future.

Some member states—I make no secret of it—had ambitions for that co-operation to be through the traditional route. We resisted that, and in doing so set a pattern for further co-operation.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Can my right hon. Friend say whether there has been a leak of the Maastricht treaty minutes? They have appeared in a Dutch newspaper, which basically says, "Major wants opt-out from EMU and he gets it," and "Major does not want an immigration policy from Brussels and he gets it." The paper asks, "Why is it that Major always gets his own way?" Can my right hon. Friend enlighten us on what appears to be an admirable performance by him?

The Prime Minister: I do not know about the article, but I like the principle.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way? *[Interruption.]* I have horns and a tail, but I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. He mentioned the pillars. Why is it that, under them, the Commission has rights of policy initiation? Does not the Commission have enough powers already without giving it more?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, under the pillars any decision must be unanimous; therefore, we have an absolute block on any decisions taken. That is the critical point in preserving our national interests.

Mr. Ashton: As an ex-Whip, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, even if he wins the vote tonight, he will still need a guillotine to get the Bill through the House? Is he prepared to make deals to obtain that guillotine? Will he accept amendments relating to the social chapter or to other parts of the treaty, or does he intend to go ahead with the Bill as it stands?

The Prime Minister: I cannot anticipate what will happen when we reach the Committee stage, and the hon. Gentleman would not expect me to do so. I certainly do not anticipate accepting amendments that would bring the social chapter within the ambit of our proposals.

I was dealing with the question why we should co-operate with our European partners, either through the twin pillars or by other routes. I tell the House that it is very much in our interests to have that co-operation. There are issues throughout Europe that cross frontiers and can be dealt with only internationally, such as drugs, crime and illegal immigration. There is the exchange of intelligence on terrorist threats, the Dublin asylum convention—something of great importance to us—and the co-operation in the fight against drugs, with 60 per cent. of heroin being seized at United Kingdom frontiers after it has passed through other countries in the Community. Those are practical reasons for the co-operation that we agreed to enter into under the Maastricht treaty.

I know that many hon. Members throughout the House are concerned about ensuring that we keep immigration issues under the control of this House and out of the competence of others, including the European Community. That is the effect of the references to immigration and asylum issues in the Maastricht treaty. Those matters will be kept out of Community competence and dealt with under separate intergovernmental pillars —that is, by unanimous agreement between Governments. Only two limited aspects of visa policy are transferred to Community competence, and I shall explain to the House the rational reason for that. The two aspects are: a visa list and agreement on the format of visas.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I shall not give way, as I am in the midst of advancing an argument that is relevant to many hon. Members, and I should like to conclude it.

The purpose of that co-operation is clear. We may need at any time in the next few years to deal with the possible difficulties of large-scale migration, either from across eastern Europe to western Europe or from north Africa, up through the southern states of Europe into northern Europe. The Maastricht treaty equips the Community as a whole to deal swiftly and effectively with such problems, should they arise.

I know that the following matter concerns some hon. Members—not least some of my hon. Friends. The test alludes to the possibility of further Community competence, but that is subject to a double lock: first, the agreement of all member states—that would require the United Kingdom's agreement—and, secondly, the specific approval of national parliaments, including this Parliament. Therefore, there is a double lock to protect our authority over immigration matters.

I shall mention another matter of concern to the House: the number of issues of competence that fall under the control of the European Community. One of the greatest concerns has been what many hon. Members in the past few years have referred to as the "creeping competence" that comes about either by the abuse of articles in the treaty or by judgments of the European Court of Justice. I shall illustrate the issue by using the health and safety article to pursue wider social legislation. That is by no means the only illustration, but it is an important one.

Due to provisions contained in the Maastricht treaty, the article codifies, clarifies and limits competence in the sectors of health, education, culture, vocational training and others. It closes down the difficulties that we have faced with creeping competence in a way that has not previously been done.

I shall give but one illustration to the House, as I know that it is one of concern. A number of hon. Members have expressed the fear that the treaty gives the Community a greater say in education. The reality is that article 128 of the treaty of Rome was an example of an article subsequently used for creeping competence.

That article is abolished by the Maastricht treaty, and the new article spells out that it is the responsibility of member states to deal with the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems. The action that the Community can take is spelt out clearly, and stipulates that the Community is specifically debarred from any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of member states. There are many such illustrations that the House will wish to discuss in Committee when we embark on it.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Prime Minister help the House with the context of the debate? Who authorised the briefings held the weekend before last, at which the Prime Minister threatened a general election if he lost today's vote?

The Prime Minister: I am talking about the substance of debate today.

The difficulties and concerns that some people have expressed about the relationship——

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Last week, the Foreign Secretary said that tonight's vote would decide whether the Prime Minister leads the British representation at the Edinburgh summit. Does the Prime Minister agree with the Foreign Secretary? If he does, does that not make tonight's vote a confidence vote?

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Not true.

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) will have heard my right hon.

Friend the Foreign Secretary say, from a seated position, that that was untrue. The right hon. Gentleman has been misled—I know that he will accept that.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Does the Prime Minister agree that the declaration adopted at Birmingham stated that there could be no change to the Maastricht treaty? If so, how can the Prime Minister argue that the Danish position has been made clear, when the Danish Government are arguing for a legally binding change? How can there be a legally binding change that will satisfy the needs of the Danish people while, at the same time, there is no change to the Maastricht treaty?

The Prime Minister: Almost every intervention from Labour Members—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer".] I shall answer specifically in a second—has been trying to find another weaselly excuse for not voting for a motion that they are in favour of. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's specific question is that the Danish Government are not seeking to change the substance of what is in the treaty. They are seeking to add to it clarifications and extra matters beyond the treaty, as their Prime Minister has repeatedly made clear.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No, I will make some progress. The House is aware that I have given way a number of times already.

I should like to turn now to the exchange rate mechanism and the fears that have been expressed about the relationship between the mechanism and any possible future commitment to a single currency. It is the Government's intention that the United Kingdom should enter the second stage of monetary union in 1994. It is important to understand precisely what that involves. During the second stage, monetary policy remains a national responsibility and the United Kingdom is not committed to going beyond stage 2. This is not affected by the establishment of the European Monetary Institute, whose functions will be in elaboration of the existing committee of central bank governors. We will continue to take our own decisions on monetary policy matters and will remain entirely free whether or not to participate in the exchange rate mechanism as a quite separate matter from the ratification of this treaty.

The only relevance of the mechanism in this respect is as one of the convergence criteria for the move from stage 2 of economic and monetary union to the final stage of a single currency. I have repeatedly made it clear, and do so again today, that it is far too soon to consider whether the United Kingdom should join a single currency. I have made that clear in the House on many occasions in the past.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): The Prime Minister will be well aware of the strong misgivings in the House and outside about the possibility of moving to a single currency. Will he therefore at least keep the door open about whether there should be a referendum on that matter at some convenient time?

The Prime Minister: I have kept the door entirely open to decisions by the House, at a time when it is economically appropriate to make a decision. As I have said many times in the past—I repeat for my hon. Friend what I said on 20 May—I do not believe that it is right to predetermine a decision that should properly be taken only by Parliament, in the light of the circumstances then prevailing across Europe. This decision, as I said then, is too important to be an act of faith: it must also be an act of judgment, and that judgment cannot sensibly be made until we see the economic circumstances of the day.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Everybody respects the Prime Minister's desire to take Britain to the heart of Europe, but does he honestly believe that the people of this country can be made to accept that on the basis of legislation passed by the Whips, of either party, on votes of confidence? Is it not clear that, as he is prepared to wait for the Danish people to determine in a referendum whether to reverse their previous decision, he should have the same respect for the rights of the British people—of all opinions, for and against Maastricht, and of all parties—to have a part in deciding the biggest constitutional issue that has come before Parliament this century?

The Prime Minister: I have great respect for the right hon. Gentleman as a parliamentarian, and as a parliamentarian he will know that, through the centuries, it has been through this House that we have dealt with such matters. I understand the strong feelings that exist in many parts of the House about referendums, but it has always been my view that these matters are best dealt with by the House, because we are ultimately answerable to the electorate for the decisions we take.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: Will the hon. Gentleman forgive me? I have given way generously to hon. Members on both sides, and I would like to make a little more progress.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has made his views clear.

The Prime Minister: So the provisions that we have in the treaty mean that, in both stages two and three, we will be entirely free to decide the framework and institutional arrangements for the conduct of monetary policy in the United Kingdom. That is the position, and it will remain so. I believe that it will be better understood not just in the House but beyond it when we have had the opportunity of discussing these matters at great length in the Committee to which I trust we will move, both before and after Christmas.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I have given way on many occasions, and I would like to make some progress.

I turn now to the important question of citizenship. Let me again make it clear to the House that our position as British citizens now and in the future will not in any way be affected by the Maastricht treaty. That is the position, and it will remain the position.

In tomorrow's edition of *The European*—I have not often found things that I like in newspapers in recent weeks, but I have now—there is an article by the Chancellor of Germany, who makes the point very clearly that we will remain, he writes, Germans, Britons, Italians

[The Prime Minister]

and Frenchmen, and at the same time Europeans; there is no question of subordination to a European citizenship in any way in the treaty immediately in front of us.

One other important matter of concern to the House in the treaty is that of common defence, so let me turn to defence and the perspective of a common treaty.

Mr. Cryer: The treaty needs 12 states to support it—he is wasting time.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman were to read the treaty, he might better understand it, and if he were to listen, he would understand it better yet.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

The Prime Minister: The treaty reflects a British concept of a possible longer-term perspective of a common defence policy, and it does so because, in my judgment, it is right that Europe should do more in its own defence in future; but it is important to realise the context in which that will happen.

Any defence co-operation will take place within the Western European Union, and the Western European Union is free to take its own decisions on defence. It will not be under instruction in any way from the Community member states, now or at any stage in the future. It is equally clear that any decisions must be without prejudice to our obligations under NATO. NATO has in any case already recognised the Western European Union as the European pillar of the NATO alliance.

All the decisions in this area will be taken by unanimity. There is no question whatsoever of our allowing any of these provisions to come within Community competence now or in the future.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way—my point is an important one. May I remind him of the decision of the National Assembly of France on 30 August 1954 not to ratify the proposed European defence community? From that decision there arose the free association of independent sovereign states—the Western European Union and, as a consequence, NATO was strengthened through the accession both of West Germany and of Italy. That procedural motion of 30 August put France, by the decision of its parliamentarians, at the heart of Europe for the next generation. No one can say that they were unmindful of either France's interests or Europe's and nor shall we be when we vote against the Government motion tonight.

The Prime Minister: I am not entirely sure that I detected my hon. Friend's question.

Let me turn to an important issue that is not itself directly in the treaty but is absolutely dependent on the treaty—the enlargement of the European Community. The United Kingdom's policy is unreservedly in favour of widening the borders of the Community. We should like first to bring in the EFTA states and then in due course the newly democratic states of central and eastern Europe.

We would like the EFTA states to join us for a number of important reasons. First, it would widen the Community to embrace democracies which look to us for political and economic stability; secondly, it would increase the free trade area of the single market; thirdly, it would reinforce the democratic structures of Europe.

But there is a fourth reason why it is very much in Britain's self-interest, and that is that the EFTA states would bring in further net contributors to the European Community budget. In future, when the EFTA states have joined, those factors will ensure a better balance. The EFTA states will also ensure our vigorous enforcement of Community obligations.

One of the difficulties at present in the Community is that, of the 12 member states, only three, Germany—by far the largest—the United Kingdom and France, are significant net contributors to the Community budget. Italy and the Netherlands are broadly in balance, but the others are all net beneficiaries, in some cases by large amounts. The practical effect of that is to tilt decision making in favour of the centre because of the interest which a majority of states have in more Community expenditure and because the Commission has responsibility for the administration of those funds.

We will have a much better balance in the Community when the extra contributing nations join it. That will mean that we have nearly 50 per cent. of contributors, a much more healthy position for the future development of the Community.

There are a large number of practical reasons why we should ratify the treaty. I know that there is a seductive argument used by some that says, "Delay—don't hurry. We didn't want the treaty in the first place, so just concentrate on the economy and push it to one side." But the fact is that our European policy and our economic well-being are inextricably linked, and will remain inextricably linked in future.

The EC receives £60 billion-worth of manufactured goods and 54 per cent. of our total trade is now with the EC. An estimated—*[Interruption.]* I should have thought that the Opposition would be interested in this point. An estimated 3 million jobs depend on trade with the Community. In 1990, the United Kingdom received £17 billion-worth of inward investment, and 50,000 manufacturing jobs flow from Japanese investment in the United Kingdom—new markets, new jobs.

The economic reality is that the Community has been economically good for Britain and good for our position as a power in world trade. Scottish Members will recall a practical illustration of that. It was GATT action by the Community that persuaded Japan to open the market for Scottish whisky. I could stretch that list from here to the doorway and back again.

The Community is good for future trade, and the evidence is clear in the attitudes of countries not yet in the Community. A large array of countries is queuing to join the Community—Sweden, Finland, Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Can they all be wrong about the advantages—social, economic and in security terms—in joining the Community? They all see the Community as a necessary ingredient in their future prosperity, and I believe that they are right in that judgment.

We are seeking to build—this treaty is part of that building—a safer and more secure Europe than any previous generation has known. That is an opportunity for this generation of politicians if they have the courage and the vision to take it and I believe that the House should do so.

Neither is this just a question of international matters of that sort. The fact is that our relationship with the European Community is very hard-headed and very much in our own interests; our jobs, our markets, our future prosperity. That is not just the Government's view. British Aerospace is a large company in which many people will have an interest and they would do well to listen to its chief executive, who says:

> "The risks of non-ratification to all our businesses and employees are too high to be seriously worth consideration."

As 27 senior business men recently wrote:

> "We are also concerned about the signal that failure to ratify the treaty would give about our future position in the Community."

If our interests are so great—and undeniably they are great—this country must play a central role in the Community, and we cannot do that if we shy away from the agreements into which we have entered with our partners in the Community.

I know that it is the wish of some that the Maastricht treaty might not have been proposed by others in the Community. The fact is that it was. It is equally the case that we got the best out of it that we could in our own national interests. Those who argue that, because we did not propose the treaty, we should take advantage of present circumstances to ditch it do so in the belief that we could have everything we want in Europe and sacrifice nothing. I have to tell them that that argument is not real in regard to the way in which the Community conducts its business.

Without the Maastricht treaty, there would be no enlargement of the Community—and every hon. Member knows that it is right to enlarge the Community, and that it is in our interests to do so. Without the Maastricht treaty, we would have no means of developing co-operation between member states outside Community competence—and we want to develop co-operation outside Community competence.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, Derby): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Without Maastricht, we would have no subsidiarity, and we know that we need that. No hon. Member should kid himself that, without Maastricht, we would have a Community without any of the problems posed by the Maastricht debate. Instead, we would have a Community fighting—day after day, time and time again—all the battles that were fought and largely won by us in the treaty that the House will shortly reconsider. Anyone who believes that that situation would be good for political stability——

Mr. Wareing *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has made it abundantly clear that he is not giving way. The hon. Gentleman should not proceed in such circumstances.

The Prime Minister: With respect to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Derby (Mr. Wareing), I have given way frequently enough, and many hon. Members are waiting to speak.

Anyone who believed that that situation of uncertainty would be good for political stability, for business, for growth and for jobs would simply be deluding himself. It would be a fatal cocktail for the future interests of this country if we were to shrink from meeting the agreement into which we freely entered.

There is a very practical point of real and immediate importance that the House should consider. At the Edinburgh summit in a few weeks' time, we will have important matters to agree with our European partners—matters of crucial interest to us: the Community's future financial arrangements, the final stages of the single market, and enlargement. If the House votes against the Government today, it will diminish our capacity to negotiate successfully on matters in our own national self-interest. That is the point that every hon. Member should carry into the Lobby. If hon. Members want to diminish our capacity to negotiate what is right for this country, they should vote for the Opposition amendment and against the Government today.

I must tell the House, however, that, if it were to do that, our European partners would not take our negotiating position seriously, now or in the future, and we would not be able to make agreements that are in our own national self-interest. I understand very clearly the frustration that some people feel in having to make compromises to advance the British interest; the temptation to break out—to go our own way—is sometimes strong. I must tell the House, however, that it would be wrong to do so. National self-interest is not about striking attitudes, but about striking deals that are in our own interest—and that is what we must do in the Community. That is why every British Government from Harold Macmillan's onwards has sought first to enter the Community and then to make a success of our membership.

I have to tell the House, and I have to tell the country, that we cannot continue to make a success of our membership of the Community unless we ratify the treaty to which we agreed. That is my clear judgment, and I would be doing the country and the House a disservice if I did not back that judgment with all the force at my command.

That means that, after this debate has been concluded and won by the Government, we shall bring back the Bill and seek the support of all the Members of this House to secure its adoption—that is what is in our own national self-interest. In order that we may do so, I ask hon. Members to support the motion.

4.30 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move, to leave out from first "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

> "recalls the conditions relating to the Danish position and to subsidiarity laid down by the Prime Minister in the debate in this House on 24th September; and believes that these conditions cannot be satisfied until the Edinburgh European Council at the earliest and that therefore further consideration of the Bill should await the outcome of that meeting."

Before I enter on the merits of the debate I think that it would be appropriate to congratulate Governor Clinton on his tremendous victory in the American presidential election—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] He fought a positive campaign, which set out a new agenda for America's future, and he eloquently and effectively made the case for change. He deserves his victory, and we in the

[Mr. John Smith]

Labour party wish him well. I add that we are delighted that a major battle has been won against negative campaigning—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith *rose*——*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House should settle down now.

Mr. Smith: I take it, Madam Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. A bit of fun is all right, but we want to make some progress now—*[Interruption.]* Order. I can hear as well as anybody else in the House.

Mr. Smith: I take it from Conservative Members' reaction to what I said that the two Tory strategists who were sent to help President Bush will not be welcome when they come back to this country. What the Conservatives have done seems an odd way to start off a relationship with the new President.

The House will remember that the roots of the motion and the debate go back to 24 September—*[Interruption.]* If the Prime Minister will hear me out, and listen to the argument, he will be able to pass comments on it. The right hon. Gentleman will recollect that on 24 September, in the recall debate following black Wednesday, he chose to set out to the House in clear terms the way in which the Government proposed to deal with the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. He made two points, which he referred to only obliquely today—the Danish question and subsidiarity. This is what he said:

> "we need a definition—a settled order—of what is for national action and what is for Community action. We need clear criteria by which Community proposals will be judged. When we are satisfied that such a system has been put in place, and when we are clear that the Danes have a basis on which they can put the treaty back to their electorate, we shall bring the Maastricht Bill back to the House of Commons."

It is clear that the Prime Minister prescribed that there should be a settled order of subsidiarity, and that the Danes should have a basis for a new referendum—both to be in place before the House proceeded further with the Bill.

Today the House must judge whether the substantive conditions have been met.

The Prime Minister: The roots of the debate go back to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) when he was Leader of the Opposition, when I agreed that we would consider arranging a debate in the House in October, as soon as we came back from the recess. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House subsequently specifically confirmed that to the House.

Secondly, I fear that the right hon. and learned Gentleman should have looked at the paragraph governing the words that he has quoted. That said:

> "It would not make sense to bring the . . . Bill back to the House . . . before we know clearly what Danish intentions are, and when and how the Danes propose to consult their people again. When those things are known . . . we must examine the Bill further."

As I clearly set out in my speech, both those things are now known.

Mr. Smith: —*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members will surely let me reply. Clearly, the Prime Minister was planning for two eventualities because he put two versions to the House. The version that I have quoted embarrasses him because it says clearly:

> "When we are satisfied that such a system has been put in place."—[*Official Report, 24 September 1992; Vol. 212, c. 8.*]

The words carry no ambiguity.

The Prime Minister said that the roots of today's debate went back to the debate with my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). My right hon. Friend asked the Prime Minister for a written paper and a debate. I do not know where the report is. We do not have a written report before the House. In any event, I will not quibble with the Prime Minister about that because there is a more important matter.

The Prime Minister: Just to ensure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has no need to quibble, the paper is in the Library.

Mr. Smith: The proper—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister was heard in reasonable order by the House. The same must apply to every right hon. and hon. Member.

Mr. Smith: The proper place for the Prime Minister to put any report is before the House, not in the Library.

The Birmingham summit—a non-event to which I shall return later—has occurred and the Danes have set out their negotiating position in a series of proposals to other member states, the most important of which they wish to be juridically binding. Do those developments satisfy the conditions set out by the Prime Minister? Is there now "a settled order" for dealing with the allocation of responsibility between nation states and the Community? The Birmingham declaration said:

> "we reaffirm that decisions must be taken as closely as possible to the citizen."

Note the word "reaffirm". It is not a word which signals some change.

The communique went on to say:

> "the Maastricht Treaty provides the right framework and objective for subsidiarity."

It was interesting that, when the Prime Minister came back to the House after the Birmingham summit, he told us that for the first time there was a proper framework for the practical definition and implementation of subsidiarity. When we check that against the summit communique, we discover that he was referring not to something new but to the treaty itself, which existed long before the Birmingham summit.

All that happened at the Birmingham summit was that member states invited reports—presumably from the Commission—on the ways in which Maastricht might be taken forward. The Prime Minister came back and told the House that decisions would be taken at Edinburgh to make subsidiarity an integral part of future Community decision-taking. He did not succeed in discharging his obligation to the House.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman must allow me to finish this point because it is at the heart of the amendment.

The Danes have set out their stall. We have yet to know the reaction of the other 11 member states to that. Their reactions might be positive or negative, but the Prime Minister must confirm——

Mr. Philip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I have already said that I want to finish this point. If I am allowed to finish this passage, I shall give way. I am adopting the same practice as the Prime Minister in the early part of his speech.

The Prime Minister told us that it was the aim of the Danes to ratify the treaty. He said in his report to the House:

> "we plan to set in place at Edinburgh the framework that will allow them to do so."—[*Official Report*, 20 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 320.]

Note that in both cases the Prime Minister said "at Edinburgh". He did not say "now". That is the undertaking which he gave to the House and which has not been discharged. It was not the Opposition but the Government who gave that undertaking to the House.

If the Danish position cannot be resolved, how can there be a basis for a new referendum? If there were any doubts about the Danish position, they were revealed in a memorandum from Mr. Michael Jay, an assistant under-secretary of state at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. He said:

> "The Danish plan is unlikely to be acceptable as it stands to member states and some of them may make this clear. We may therefore have a difficult negotiation ahead of us, which could play awkwardly with the paving debate and the Maastricht Bill".

That is an interesting passage——

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I have not yet finished this bit, but I suspect that the hon. Gentleman will be persistent.

Mr. Thurnham: While the right hon. and learned Gentleman is in the Library checking on his other facts, will he look at *The House Magazine* for 28 September and refresh his memory? He said then that he did not begin to understand why the people of Bolton did not vote Labour. Does he agree that the people of this country will never trust such an unprincipled wriggler as he is proving himself to be today?

Mr. Smith: Since the hon. Gentleman has challenged me directly he will allow me to say that it is a curious idea that to vote against the motion that the Government have tabled is a move to betray the European ideal.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester) *rose*——

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest) *rose*——

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: The motion is drafted in such deliberately anodyne terms that it does not even mention the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I hope that the House will listen carefully, since many Members seem interested in my reply. The motion is also framed only to endorse the Conservative view of Europe. If the Opposition were foolish enough to vote for it we would endorse the opt-out from the social chapter, and that we are not prepared to do. It might suit Liberal Members, but for us it would be a betrayal of an important principle.

Mr. Oppenheim: I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his courtesy in giving way. May I suggest in a helpful spirit that he should celebrate his accession to the Labour leadership by changing the rather faded red rose symbol for a fig leaf behind which to hide what little is left of his party's integrity?

Mr. Smith: Not for the first time I have made an error of judgment in giving way to the hon. Gentleman. I thought that he was going to raise a point of substance.

Mr. John Marshall: In 1971 the right hon. and learned Gentleman was seen as a man of principle because he put principle before party. This evening he is seeking to put party before country. Does he not realise that the fact that we are not in the social chapter makes Britain a haven for inward investment, as Monsieur Delors has admitted?

Mr. Smith: On the first point, I have already demonstrated that the motion before the House is not some rallying call for the European ideal, the Maastricht treaty or the European Community. It is a narrowly, carefully drafted motion which has more to do with the internal problems of the Conservative party than with the European Community.

Mr. Brandreth: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I must move on; I have given way with considerable generosity. On second thoughts, I will give way.

Mr. Brandreth: I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his courtesy. To come to the heart of the matter, if the engineers, the employers, the motor car industry, the CBI and the chambers of commerce all say that they want Maastricht but not the social chapter, is the right hon. and learned Gentleman a Leader of the Opposition who listens, or is he simply the leader of the opportunists who does not give a damn what message his party sends to the world? At least the Liberal Democrats stand by their principles.

Mr. Smith: Once again I have given way expecting a question only to be given a speech. If the CBI's view is to be accepted, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will read some of its comments about the state of demand in the economy and the effects of Government economic policy.

Mr. Mallon: I take this opportunity to put to the right hon. and learned Gentleman exactly the same question as I would have put to the Prime Minister had I been given the opportunity. The right hon. and learned Gentleman and I know that in this House there is a majority in favour of Europe and of Maastricht. Can he explain how that majority has been whittled down to a potential minority? Secondly, can he explain why someone like me, in a minority party, cannot vote and deliberate on this issue on its merits but must debate it on the divisions in the Tory party and the contradictions in the Prime Minister's own position? Does not that border on an abuse of the House?

Mr. Smith: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but if he gets the chance on another occasion he should direct it to the Prime Minister. It is he who is responsible for the Government's handling of this and other legislation and it is he who drafted the motion before the House. I agree that it does not even mention the treaty.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman telling us that the vote tonight on the motion and on his even more carefully drafted amendment goes to the heart of Britain's policy towards Europe and that, if lost, it would lead to the resignation of the Government? Or is he telling us that this is a narrow and unnecessary motion whose defeat is neither here nor there?

Mr. Smith: I must ask the right hon. Gentleman and other Liberals to read the motion that they are attempting to vote for. All it does is note that there was a majority on Second Reading. It goes on with a few oblique references to subsidiarity and the Danes; it reaffirms the Conservative view of Europe; and it says that we should proceed with the Bill at some stage. I do not regard that as a touchstone of European policy, but what I will tell the Liberals is that they have been conned by the Conservatives and that they suffer from two great defects: naivety and self-importance.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point) *rose*——

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman giving way?

Mr. Smith: No.

Madam Speaker: In that case, hon. Members must resume their seats.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A reference was made a short time ago to a document that is apparently in the Library. When I went to ask Library staff they did indeed produce a document, but it seems fundamentally diferent from that to which the Prime Minister referred. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] The document that the Library gave me is a letter from Poul Schlüter to the Prime Minister covering Denmark and Europe. Whatever else it is, it is not recognisable as a report to the House of Commons. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: The Prime Minister is waving a document. I think that I have the same document before me. It is a letter from the Prime Minister of Denmark enclosing a document entitled "Denmark in Europe". It is merely the Danish proposals, yet the Prime Minister pretended to the House that it was a report given to us. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I am not giving way.

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman giving way?

Mr. Smith: No.

Madam Speaker: Is the Minister raising a point of order?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes. Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), Madam Speaker. The documents available in the Library are a letter from Prime Minister Schlüter, a copy of the document issued by the Danish Parliament and a memorandum from the Foreign Office commenting on the Danish document. *[Interruption.]*

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Unless the House comes to order, I shall not be able to hear those hon. Members who are screaming to have points of order heard.

Mr. Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I hope that it is a point of order for me.

Mr. Davies: It is a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it not the practice of the House that if a document is tabled to condition a debate—particularly if it is a report to the House on which a debate is purporting to take place—that document is listed on the Order Paper?

Madam Speaker: I understand that it is not the document that has been tabled. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Oh. It has not been tabled."] If the hon. Gentleman would listen, I am sure that he could hear me. The document has been placed in the Library. I call Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: We are all clear about that, then: it is not a report from Her Majesty's Government to the House but a letter from the Danes with a few comments from the Foreign Office. That should put us all on our guard; we should be very careful about accepting assurances from the Prime Minister.

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I must move on. I am trying to debate the issue but am being frustrated by hon. Members continuing to raise points of order.

Mr. Couchman: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way yet again. May I ask him——

Mr. Smith: I am not giving way, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) wish to raise a point of order?

Mr. Couchman: No.

Madam Speaker: In that case, will the hon. Gentleman resume his seat?

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman told me that he did not have a point of order for me. Has he now changed his mind?

Mr. Couchman: I asked the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) whether he would give way. He resumed his seat and I therefore assumed that he was giving way. That is quite natural, but

I am quite prepared to raise the point that I wanted to raise with the right hon. and learned Gentleman on a point of order. Would that be in order?

Madam Speaker: No. Points of order are for me, and not for the right hon. and learned Gentleman at the Dispatch Box. Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith *rose*——

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Like many hon. Members, I am having difficulty knowing what today's debate is about. May I ask you, because in the Opposition amendment, there is no mention of Maastricht whatever.

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now make progress. Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: Let me get back to the subject of the debate, which is a motion tabled by the Government, which we are debating together with an amendment tabled by the official Opposition. I am surprised that I should have to tell the Government that, although such is their state of incompetence on other matters that perhaps I should not be surprised.

People will be wondering why we are holding the debate now, given that we know perfectly well that the earliest date at which the Danish referendum can be held is May 1993. The Prime Minister knows that as well as I do. When we look at the political situation, and the Prime Minister's predicament within his own party, we realise that this debate has far more to do with the right hon. Gentleman's problems than with the future of Europe. That is why we have had all the feverish activity of the past few weeks, culminating in the arm twisting of the past few days. Many devices have been used, including, most startlingly, the on-off threat of a general election.

If the debate is only about the timing of the Committee stage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, why was it that, when the Prime Minister flew to Egypt on 24 October, the accompanying lobby journalists were briefed that the Prime Minister would hold a general election if his authority was further challenged? There is no question about it: the headlines in the Sunday papers carried the story. In *The Sunday Times*, we read:

> "Major threatens general election if he fails to win Maastricht vote",

and in *The Sunday Telegraph:*

> "Angry Major threatens an election".

On the flight back from Egypt, no attempt was made to dissuade people from believing the stories.

In an attempt to try to find a resume of those events that Conservative Members would find fair and impartial, I turned to *The Sunday Telegraph*, whose leader last Sunday summed up the matter very well. Let me briefly remind the House what it said:

> "This newspaper tries to keep its readers abreast of events. At present, however, we suffer from a difficulty: a week is such an incredibly long time in current Conservative politics. Last Sunday we reported faithfully the assertion by No. 10 Downing Street that if the House of Commons turned out the Maastricht Treaty Mr. Major would call a general election. On Monday, Downing Street distanced itself from its own suggestion. As the week went on, it was reported, variously, that the Government would back down over the motion for the paving debate this week, that it would 'go for broke', that Mr. Major would make Maastricht an issue of confidence in him, that he would insist that it be treated solely, in his words, 'on its merits', that his tactic was to go for a bang and that it was to opt for a whimper. As we went to press last night we understood that the Government had proposed a motion on Maastricht which, by not mentioning the subject, hoped to persuade the Tory rebels to back it. By the time you read this the situation may well be different again."

After that series of events—and we all watched them unfold—is there any hon. Member in the House naive enough to believe that the motion is only about the timing of the start of the Committee stage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill?. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes. The Liberals."] Yes, there are some hon. Members but not very many. How can a motion that attracted the threat of a general election not be about the credibility, competence and authority of the Government? That has been evident in the statements made by Ministers in the past week or so.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) drew to the Prime Minister's attention the reply given by the Foreign Secretary at Foreign Office questions last week. As I understand it, the Prime Minister answered that my right hon. Friend had somehow been misled about the reply, which I shall quote so that the House can decide and so that the Prime Minister can correct me if I have been misleading myself in my reading of *Hansard*:

> "The House will have to decide whether it wants my right hon. Friend to preside over that summit preserving and extending this country's influence over what happens in Europe or whether it does not"—[*Official Report*, 28 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 1004.]

The House has to decide whether the Prime Minister does or does not do that.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. and learned Gentleman gabbled a little bit that he did not want the House to hear. The point that I was making was not that the choice before the House was whether my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister would go to Edinburgh or not, because I took it for granted that he would. No, no. The choice before the House, as is clear from the bit that the right hon. and learned Gentleman gabbled, is whether my right hon. Friend would go equipped with all the possible influence that he could exert, or whether he would go weakened by the kind of twists and turns in which the right hon. and learned Gentleman is indulging.

Mr. Smith: I must say that, having listened to the Foreign Secretary's reply, I find it a bit rich to be accused of twisting and turning.

The Foreign Secretary said that the House will have to decide whether the Prime Minister will or will not. Let me be charitable to the right hon. Gentleman and take his alternative explanation, that it is about the authority of the Prime Minister when he goes to the summit, which is further evidence that it is not about the Bill.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On the question being discussed, given that the House has already approved the Second Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill on the Maastricht treaty, can you tell us whether this debate is a necessary part of the constitutional process of endorsing that treaty? If not—which is what I expect you to say—this debate must be for some other purpose.

Madam Speaker: That is hardly a point of order for the Chair. The hon. Gentleman knows that formal proceedings on the Bill will not be affected by the outcome of the result today—[*Interruption.*] Order. Hear me out. The Committee stage of the Bill will remain among the Remaining Orders.

Mr. Smith: I also referred to statements made by other Ministers about the nature of this debate. In "On the Record" the Secretary of State for Wales——

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The amendment on the Order Paper in the name of the Opposition calls for a four-week delay in consideration of the Bill, until after the Edinburgh summit. First, that is surely at odds with your ruling. Secondly, is it not at odds with the Leader of the Opposition's speech, which seems to be about confidence?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman and the entire House should not anticipate what will happen at the end of the debate and should allow it to proceed normally. Hon. Members are seeking to speak, and I think that the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) is one of them, so let us make some progress.

Mr. Smith: Some Conservative Members seem to be reluctant to engage properly in this debate, but I am doing my best. Even if there are another 10 bogus points of order from the Conservative side, I will refer to the statement made by the Secretary of State for Wales in "On the Record" on Sunday. He warned Tory rebels that they were playing with fire and told Mr. Dimbleby:

> "We have to show our confidence, not only in the Government, but also in John Major."

That was a sort of double whammy confidence motion.

The third—perhaps even more ominous to the Prime Minister—was the President of the Board of Trade, who said on ITN on Monday:

> "The Prime Minister is entitled to our confidence *now*."

The right hon. Member also chooses his words with care, so I do not believe that the qualifying "*now*" was accidental—now, but not necessarily for ever. That was not the only effort by the right hon. Member, the Lord President. I beg his pardon: he has an even grander title than Lord President of the Council; he is President of the Board of Trade. I think that, for short, we shall call him Mr. President during this exchange. He told BBC radio—presumably he was addressing Conservative Back Benchers as he used direct speech:

> "If you vote against the Prime Minister and the Government on Wednesday, on Thursday you have a policy vacuum at the centre of British decision making of incalculable destructiveness."

Gosh, what an awful prospect that would be.

After all the clear and decisive leadership of the past few weeks, after all the consistent and determined implementation of long-established policies, well and clearly understood, how could we cope with the black hole of a policy vacuum? Perhaps Mr. President could reflect that the Government's basic problem is not the threat of a policy vacuum, but the stark reality of such a vacuum, which extends right to the heart of the Government.

Only this week, with singular appropriateness, the Governor of the Bank of England referred to a policy vacuum at the heart of economic policy.

The Prime Minister: Yesterday the right hon. and learned Gentleman quoted the Governor of the Bank of England. I gather that he misquoted him, and that the Governor will be writing to him about that. So he had better not pursue the point.

Mr. Smith: While the Governor is doing that he had better write to the newspapers from which I quoted, which quoted him in direct speech. When I checked with the Bank of England I was told that the quote was from a question and answer session with foreign journalists and that the Bank was unable to provide a text. I shall look with interest at what ends up in the Library.

If we had any doubt over what the debate is all about, we could have resolved it by looking at the terms of the motion. There are no ringing declarations about the future of Europe, which would rally the troops under the Maastricht banner. There is no declaration of principle of any discernible kind. I have already drawn attention to some of the hallmarks of the motion, which has the Prime Minister's style all about it. It is the product of the internal machinations of the Conservative party, and it is designed for internal Conservative party purposes. Only someone of enormous naivety——

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I should have been delighted to give way to more hon. Members if there had not been so many organised points of order. I have to get on with my speech. If the hon. Gentleman has a complaint, he should take it up with his hon. Friends.

Only the most naive of people would believe that the motion is some touchstone of loyalty to the treaty. The truth of the present situation and the background to the debate, as the whole country knows, is that an increasingly angry and bewildered nation is watching with astonishment and dismay as the Government stumble from one disaster to another. They recollect the Prime Minister's grand assurance—that is why they would not want them to be propped up or given a motion of confidence of any kind—that if they were only to vote Conservative on Thursday, recovery would continue on Friday. Not merely has there been no recovery, but the Government's economic policy was blown to smithereens on black Wednesday.

In the motion, the Government have the nerve to refer to the promotion of "employment, prosperity and investment". Do they know what is happening in this country? When the Prime Minister emerges blinking from his bunker, does he not see the destruction that his economic policies have caused? Bankruptcies and home repossessions continue at record levels and unemployment is rising relentlessly and, I fear, menacingly, and will certainly pass 3 million. Hardly a day goes by without new redundancies, as prestige firms in vital manufacturing industries throw more skilled workers into unemployment and undermine the country's wealth-creating capacity.

Ominously, the most recent surveys of business confidence—I refer this to the attention of the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) who mentioned the Confederation of British Industry—from the CBI and British chambers of commerce point to a further downturn in output, investment and job creation. All the signs are that the country is heading from recession into slump.

Just before the election, in the March Budget, the Government sought to paint a different scenario. In the budget we were told that growth would be 1 per cent. this year, and—it seems incredible that they were able to say so, but they did—that it would be 3 per cent. next year. They said that manufacturing output would rise to 4 per cent. by next year and forecast the balance of payments at £6·5 billion.

What are the forecasts now, six months after that election? According to the Treasury survey of independent forecasters, growth will fall again by almost 1 per cent. and will not rise; manufacturing output is expected not to rise but to fall by 1 per cent.; and the balance of payments deficit is predicted to be £12 billion, which is almost double the predicted figure. That is in the middle of the worst recession since the war.

The Government have never realised that our economic success in the European Community—we have heard a lot about that from the Prime Minister and others—can only be achieved if we build a strong economy, based on manufacturing strength, investment, skills development and on Government partnership between industry and commerce. Nor have they realised that the Community can best recover from recession by co-ordinated policies for recovery, growth and jobs.

The United Kingdom presidency of the Community, which has about eight weeks to run, has been a disastrous missed opportunity. Why was the Birmingham summit not used to consider urgent Community-wide action to promote recovery and investment, instead of the Prime Minister's game of words over subsidiarity—a principle which he lauds for Europe but which he denies here?

I have a direct question for the Prime Minister: why did he refuse to put growth and jobs on the agenda for the Birmingham summit although he had been asked to do so by the Commission? [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] The Prime Minister can clear that up. I am told that the Commission asked for those subjects to be put on the agenda for the summit, but, if that were not the case, the Prime Minister can correct me.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman better wait for the reply to his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) before he pursues that line of argument.

Mr. Smith: I thought that the right hon. Gentleman was going to ask me to go to the Library.

The Prime Minister: There is no need to ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman to go to the Library. He gets all his information from *The Sunday Telegraph*.

Mr. Smith: I know that the Prime Minister is very good at telephoning the editors of newspapers, but I think that that is one number that he should not put at the top of his list for a little while.

Instead of positive action being taken in the Community, what have we had? Instead of the Government working together with the other member states at the heart of Europe—where the presidency of the Community takes the United Kingdom—their effort has been concentrated in other directions. They have proposed plans to close 31 pits, which will lock off millions of tonnes of recoverable coal reserves, destroy 100,000 jobs in the mining and related industries and devastate whole communities throughout the coalfields.

Next week, in the autumn statement, we will be told who is next to pay the price of Government incompetence. I suspect that it will be teachers, nurses, the low paid, the sick, the elderly and the poor. Because of Government incompetence, public services will be undermined even further and the recession prolonged even longer. *[Interruption.]* I know that Conservative Members do not want to listen to this, but that is what is happening.

As the public well understand, it is not just policies that are the problem—it is the Prime Minister as well. He has the precise opposite of the Midas touch: from black Wednesday to the pit closure fiasco and onwards to the mysteries of whatever the Government's new economic policy is, his baleful presence courts disaster. I understand that even at Stamford Bridge, Chelsea fans would prefer he stay away because most times when he attends Chelsea loses.

Last month the right hon. Gentleman contributed to a book about football entitled "We'll support you evermore"—obviously not a Conservative party publication. When we think of the Prime Minister's record since the election, a passage about his experience as a football supporter hits the truth with uncanny precision. He wrote:

> "After all, I have nearly 30 years behind me of high hopes at the start of a season fading into disappointment with a string of disappointing results by January."

As we have repeatedly made clear, as recently as our last annual conference, our commitment is to closer economic and political co-operation in Europe. *[Interruption.]* But we have a different agenda for the Community from the Conservatives. We want a Community for people, not just a market for business. That is why we will continue our efforts to overturn the foolish opt-out from the social chapter, which is regarded as essential by all the other 11 member states.

I noticed that the Prime Minister's speech consisted of telling us that we should be at the heart of Europe, but for most of the time he told us how he had successfully disengaged us from it.

We also recognise that the British economy is and will continue to be closely integrated both financially and industrially with our EC partners. Those realities mean that Britain's industrial and economic performance depend crucially on developments in the European Community. But it also means that if we are to contribute to and gain from the Community, because it is always a two-way process, we must have a strong and dynamic economy. Under the Government we have been pushed to the sidelines principally because of economic weakness. That affects our stance in Europe just as it affects it over the whole range of Government policy.

We set out our view clearly, and at some length, in the reasoned amendment for which we voted on Second Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and we will reflect that view in further proceedings on the Bill.

In a curious sense, this debate and the ambiguous and anodyne motion upon which it proceeds has no formal parliamentary status. It is a device, a happening, a political event justified by the Government at different times and on very different grounds, to very different people, as both expediency and the tide of war within the Conservative party dictated.

Those of us who have a sense of political reality can see clearly through all these manoeuvrings. This debate has been turned by the Government into an occasion to garner support for a discredited Prime Minister and a discredited Government. We on the Labour Benches will not be conned by the Government's contrivances. We will vote against a Government who are undermining our society, destroying our economy and thereby wrecking our future in Europe.

5.16 pm

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Before I begin what I hope will be a brief intervention in the debate, which I understood was to be about Maastricht, I should like to make it absolutely plain that what I am going to say has been in no way affected by bullying from the Whips; it has not been affected by the recent structure of an anti-Maastricht mafia in the House of Lords; nor has it been affected by the widely publicised secret session of the 1922 Committee. In fact, I have to confess that what I am going to say will be purely my own thoughts.

I should like to begin by recalling to the House the end of the debate that settled that Britain would become a member of the EC. When I wound up that debate, I spoke about letters that I had received after the veto by President De Gaulle in 1963. One of them was from an ambassador who was accredited to the Community in Brussels during the negotiations. I quoted that letter, which said:

> "'When you left India some people wept. And when you leave Europe tonight some will weep. And there is no other people in the world of whom these things could be said.'"

I went on to say:

> "That was a tribute from the Indian to the British. But tonight when this House endorses this Motion many millions of people right across the world will rejoice that we have taken our rightful place in a truly United Europe".—[*Official Report*, 28 October 1971; Vol. 823, c. 2212.]

There was a majority of 112 in that vote. It was many times the size of the Government majority because 69 right hon. and hon. Members from the Labour party voted with us and 20 abstained. They defied a three-line Whip from their party to vote with us and among them was the present Leader of the Opposition. I greatly admired his integrity and I have continued to do so since, until this afternoon. I must say that I am saddened and dismayed by his performance and by the attitude which he has taken towards Europe. He knows full well that, if he had wished to attack the Government on their shortcomings or the Prime Minister personally, he could have immediately tabled a vote of no confidence. That is the customary practice in the House. He knows that, had he wished to comment on the fact that the Prime Minister had not carried out his obligations in delaying the discussion on Maastricht or dealing with the Danish proposals, he could have said so, and he could have urged the Prime Minister to speed things up. But neither of those things has he done. So today, for the sake of the plaudits from some of his Back Benchers, he has forsworn his integrity. Having done that, he will find that he will never be able to regain it.

Those of us who have followed these events in Europe for more than 40 years have longed for the time when we could feel that the Leader of the Opposition was genuinely in favour of the European Community. This was the first occasion on which we have had it, and today that situation has been thrown away. It is a loss to the Labour party and a loss to our country. And it is a loss which, I am afraid, cannot be made up.

What is not always realised here is that those people in Parliaments in the European Community have no comprehension whatever of what is going on with a manoeuvre of that kind. That is the damage that is being done by what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has said today. The damage is widespread, because we must face the fact that, in the Community as well as outside, Britain's position has become widely suspect—[*Interruption.*] I am stating the position, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman could have helped to deal with that.

The delay in action on Maastricht—in recognising the treaty—has caused dismay throughout the Community. The Prime Minister himself, said that, with the exception of Denmark, all the other countries will have ratified the treaty by December.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I normally listen with respect to the right hon. Gentleman, even though I do not always agree with him, but he is fundamentally wrong when he alleges that people in Europe are either dismayed at, or will not understand, the position taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). Moreover, I can tell the right hon. Gentleman why, because I personally discussed our position with Jean-Pierre Cot, the leader of the socialist group in the European Parliament, and with other European socialist leaders. They fully understand and support our position.

Sir Edward Heath: All that I can say is that, in the past five weeks, I have discussed the matter with Heads of Government in the Community, in Japan, China and worldwide. They do not understand the attitude of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Edward Heath: No, I cannot give way twice.

As far as this country is concerned, other members of the Community take the view that the delay is quite unjustifiable, and I say that bluntly to the Prime Minister. The fact that the Danish referendum, by a very narrow majority, went against the Government is no reason why the British Prime Minister and the British Government should have delayed our confirmation of Maastricht—none at all. The Prime Minister has a responsibility, as President of the Community for these six months, to try to find a solution to the Danish problems with the co-operation of the other members. It is not his responsibility to say that Britain, in the meantime, must fail to take action on Maastricht. The other member countries—10 of them—have all taken action and will have completed it by December. I wish that we had done the same.

I am therefore delighted that the motion says that we shall go on to Committee stage, but I am saddened again by the Prime Minister saying that part of it will be before Christmas and that we shall go on with the Committee stage next year. That is no indication to Europe that we are whole-hearted in being at the centre and in reinforcing Maastricht. The House is capable of dealing with the Bill in Committee immediately—there is nothing whatever to stop that. I hope that the Prime Minister will consider the impact on the other members of the Community by delaying still further the passage of the Bill.

Mr. Dalyell: Technically, what is there to stop the Prime Minister doing exactly that for which he asked—putting the Bill in on Monday? Although I have voted with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), albeit in 1971, I shall vote with my party tonight because this is a gratuitous motion that is about the Conservative party's political needs.

Sir Edward Heath: The hon. Gentleman, whose vote I acknowledge, is entitled to his interpretation of the motion, but to what does he object in it? He says that it is to achieve unity on this side of the House. Very well, but what is wrong with the motion? One thing that is wrong with it is that it talks about "a free market Europe". It is not a free market Europe and it never will be—a free market means a market that is open to the whole world. It is a single market for the members of the Community, for those who become associated with it and for those who later become members. To take one specific example, we have a quota system for textiles from the developing world —from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We have had that for many years and we shall go on having it. I am told that it is worth 100,000 jobs in this country. We are not going for a free market, but it is the use of such language that causes so much trouble inside the Community, particularly in view of the fact that the Prime Minister's immediate predecessor has now said openly that what she wants is just a free market and not a Community. That is what is causing a lot of trouble.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my right hon. Friend accept from one who, on a free vote, voted for our accession in 1971 that it is his concept now of a closed, protectionist Europe which he seeks to perpetuate that is so anathema to us? It has helped to perpetuate the difficulty in achieving a successful negotiation on the general agreement on tariffs and trade, particularly on agriculture.

Sir Edward Heath: I am not in the least out to maintain a protectionist Community. As I said before, when I negotiated Britain's entry I had to lower all our tariffs by a very large amount, which infuriated business and industry, but it was necessary. Is my hon. Friend saying that he wants to abolish all quotas and just let in all textiles from developing countries? Not for one moment, and he would not hold his seat if he did. Let us be realistic about the matter.

I want to say a word about another important matter —the responsibility of Ministers. We are told that the public do not understand what is really at stake. Very well, then the responsibility is ours for not explaining it to them. But what is also clear is that, when the Commission is acting, it is acting under the authority of the Ministers who approve their recommendations. Yet how often does a Minister stand up at this or other Front Benches and say, "Yes, I agreed to all that. It is not the Commission's fault. You can't blame the Commission, we accepted it"?

I hear complaints from my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), whom I heard the other day boasting on television that he did not understand two words of French. I do not know what there is to boast about.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend— [HON. MEMBERS: "In French!"] Peut-etre que mon ami peut dire a cette maison, what is meant by "acquis communautaire"? Just two words in English, so that we understand.

Sir Edward Heath: Non.

My hon. Friend"s problem is that the Commission keeps coming forward with proposals, but that is the structure of the Community. That is the way in which the Community has become, in 40 years, an outstanding success. It has restored the beacon countries of Europe to their present state of prosperity. It is the structure of the Community and the Commission that have achieved that.

It is deplorable that there is a constant attack on the President of the Commission, Jacques Delors, who has done a superb job.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): No.

Sir Edward Heath: Why does my hon. Friend say that that is wrong? The single market was settled six years ago. It was agreed by the British Prime Minister. Who has carried out all the work and shown leadership in getting the single market established? The answer is the President of the Commission. He is the one who has done it. It is because the Commission has been a success that the countries to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred—Sweden, Austria, Switzerland and Finland—want to become members.

The campaign by *The Sun* against Jacques Delors, urging people tomorrow to put up posters and speak of "Fawk Delors", is sordid, filthy and unworthy of any British newspaper. In fact, that newspaper is American owned and American directed. It makes me ashamed to be in a country in which it is published. It is—[HON. MEMBERS: "Australian".]

Sir Edward Heath: It is not. It is American owned because it is a renegade Australian who has gone to America.

Apparently, we are the only country that wants to get rid of the President of the Commission, and quite wrongly so.

Great emphasis has been placed on subsidiarity. Very well. I agree with what the Leader of the Opposition said towards the end of his speech to the effect that subsidiarity is necessary in some ways. However, we must take a positive attitude towards what will be done in the Community. If we are to be at the heart of it, we can do more things together than we can by saying, "We are not going to touch this."

At present, it is vital that the Commission and the Community concentrate on economic recovery for the Community as a whole. Subsidiarity has little to do with that. In fact, it has absolutely nothing to do with it. Where are the continuing discussions at the highest level about economic recovery in the Community? We hear nothing of them. We were told that the meeting at Birmingham had been called to deal with the flaws in the exchange rate mechanism, but they were not discussed. No one has yet told us what the flaws are or were. Many of us suspect that the flaws were to be found in us and not in the ERM. Until we face the facts—face reality—we shall never be able to overcome our present difficulties.

The difficulties that we now face are, in my view, some of the most serious that have confronted the United Kingdom since the second world war. I would say that there is absolutely no doubt about that. It will take time to overcome them. We cannot keep on saying, "Yes, recovery is just around the corner." We have seen what has happened in the United States as a result of a President taking that line. Our difficulties will take time to overcome, and in overcoming them we shall need friends. We need friends wherever we can find them and, above all, we need them in the Community.

To say after a meeting, "We have won everything, we have beaten them, we have got what we wanted" is not to

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make friends. It is a community. Very well, let us look after British interests, but let us look after Community interests as well. If we do not take that approach, we shall not make friends. As I said, we need them desperately at this moment.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that, if he were true to himself, he would admit that in his heart much of his European passion—his passion for the European ideal—is based on a severe distrust of the United States? On this day of all days, as a new President is elected, will he take the opportunity to reaffirm his belief in the special relationship that we have with the United States, which is of equal importance to the relationship that we have with the Community?

Sir Edward Heath: Of course, I offer my congratulations to the new President.

On the lawn of the White House, in front of President Nixon, I said that there was no such thing as a special relationship. Again, what is the impact of that on our colleagues in the Community? If we say, "We are special and you are not", what is the impact on south American countries, which are so close to the United States? In effect, we are saying, "You are nothing. We have a special relationship." To take that view is to show no understanding of international relations. That was fully accepted by the Americans.

The Americans do not refer to a special relationship. They take that approach because they do not want to upset the rest of those with whom they are working. What we have—some would say that it is more important—is an historic relationship. We can argue about how good it has been, and if we reflect on recent history, including the history of atomic weapons after the second world war, we might begin to doubt the strength of the historic relationship. Of course I want good relations with the United States, but I am not prepared to give up Europe because of relations with the United States. I am not prepared to do that for one moment.

Dr. Spink: I am indebted to my right hon. Friend for giving way. Given the election result in the United States, does he agree that it is likely now that protectionism in the United States will grow? That makes it even more important that we support the Government tonight to reinforce our relationship with Europe, which is so necessary for jobs and prosperity in this country.

Sir Edward Heath: I would not like to commit myself to saying that the President-elect will go for tariffs and other policies of that sort. On the other hand, I agree with my hon. Friend that Europe is necessary for us from the point of view of industry, growth and financial investment in this country. These factors have already been damaged by uncertainty. Talk to any of those who are involved in investment and they will say that, the longer the uncertainty continues, the more investment in this country will be damaged. That is true. That is why I am urging that the process be speeded up.

Mr. Cryer: That is right!

Sir Edward Heath: The hon. Gentleman wants to get out of Europe in any event.

We must recognise that the Community is essential to us and that we must work in it and with it. We no longer run the world, although some behave as if we do. It is—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members on the Front Benches below the Gangway must not have arguments across the Chamber when other Members are speaking.

Sir Edward Heath: We do not run the world, Europe or the United States.

There are those who are contemplating abstaining or voting against the Government. In more than 42 years in the House, and having been associated with my party for about 50 years, I accept that there have been major differences.

Mr. Skinner: The Conservative party has them now.

Sir Edward Heath: They are serious difficulties.

I cannot recall, however, any episode in which those who have taken a different view from that of the Government were prepared to endanger the life of their Government. I look back to the India battles at the beginning of the 1930s when I was at Oxford. That group was never for one moment prepared to endanger the then Government.

Mr. Skinner: Did the right hon. Gentleman support it?

Sir Edward Heath: I was not a Member of the House at the time.

I look back to the Suez problem, which arose in the 1950s. That, of course, was the time when the Suez group was operating. At no point was it prepared to damage the then Conservative Government.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Well reminded.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) was a Whip then.

Sir Edward Heath: Yes, I was. I respected the group's views. Its members were always ready to assure me that in no circumstances would they damage the Government.

Some of my right hon. and hon. Friends hold views about Maastricht and the European Community as a whole that are different from mine. I know that some of them never wanted to belong to the European Community. I have always respected their views. I do not believe, however, that it is right for them tonight in any way to endanger the outside world, the Conservative party or the United Kingdom by voting against the Government.

5.39 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Once again, I find myself following the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir. E. Heath) in a European debate. By and large, I could not find a single point of disagreement with what he said—*[Interruption.]* It is often the case that on specific issues one can agree with those from other parties. Indeed, it is often the case that, when that happens, the nation benefits.

The right hon. Gentleman expressed sadness about the position adopted by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and the many others who showed great courage in 1972 but who have now decided to change their minds—*[Interruption.]* I shall seek to show that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is, I greatly regret, driven more by opportunism than by anything else.

The question before the House this evening is probably the most important question with which we have dealt in recent years. It is about Britain's future in Europe, not about the survival of the Government. That is the central issue at stake today. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has a deservedly fine reputation as a parliamentary debater. I believe that, when he looks back on his speech today, he will find that it did not enhance that reputation. The whole of his speech—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) says from a sedentary position that we are frightened of losing our seats—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) wants to intervene, he should do so in the proper manner; otherwise he must restrain himself.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Member for Workington might reflect on this fact. In 1972, we voted on a matter of principle, and we voted for Britain's future in Europe. There was a deeply unpopular Government at the time, and we heard exactly the same charges against us from Labour Members then that we hear now. They said that we would never be forgiven. However, within three or four months, we had won the by-elections in Sutton and Cheam, Orpington and Berwick-upon-Tweed. Two years later, we won our largest vote ever, because we stuck to our principles when the Labour party did not stick to its.

I want to deal with the matter that took up practically the whole of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech, the central question whether we are debating a motion of confidence. His speech, which turned on a lawyer's legalistic analysis of text rather than anything substantial, must be set against his statement the day before yesterday that this was a "virtual confidence motion". If he examined Britain's constitution, he would realise that there is no such thing as a "virtual" confidence motion.

The way to judge a confidence motion is by a single criterion—if the Government lose the vote, will there be a general election tomorrow? The answer is no, as all right hon. and hon. Members have conceded. Instead, there will be a vote of confidence, which the Government will win —turkeys do not vote for Christmas. On Friday, we will wake up without a general election but with Britain's future in Europe desperately damaged. We will not vote for that.

There is a paradox in that there is a clear majority in this House in favour of ratifying the Maastricht treaty. People outside the Chamber and those viewing our debate from Europe will find it extraordinary that a decision that should be taken on whether it benefits our country is instead being swept to one side in pursuit of what I am bound to call discreditable opportunism.

If the right hon. and learned Gentleman had tabled a confidence motion, we would have voted for it. If there were an opportunity to remove the Government, we would not miss it. I take second place to no one in my wish to get rid of the Government, and I will not miss the first opportunity to achieve that. However, that is not on offer this evening.

If the right hon. and learned Gentleman chooses not to table a confidence motion but instead asks his hon. Friends to vote against something with which they agree in order to show support for a motion that he has not dared to table, he will not win the trust of this country.

Mr. John Smith: I note that the right hon. Gentleman increases his attacks on the Labour party according to the intensity of the representations he receives from his followers throughout the country. They will understand what I mean when I accuse him of staggering naivety. He knows that, if the Government win the motion, they will use it as justification for public expenditure cuts, their economic policy and other matters. The right hon. Gentleman will have to explain to his party and his voters why he was conned across the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Ashdown: When someone runs out of arguments, he indulges in just that sort of name calling. There is an argument for saying that, by voting against the Government, we could damage them. But the central question we must consider is whether we would damage the nation more. The Labour party will inflict damage on the Government, but, as I believe I can show, it will inflict ever greater damage on the country in the process.

There are sincere reasons for voting against the Government's motion——

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman, to whom I will give way later, has always argued his case, as have the hon. Members for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and my hon. Friend the Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey)—who was elected on the basis that he opposed the treaty. I disagree with him, but he is entitled to his view as, indeed, are others. I accept that they have a case to put, to which I and the nation will listen with a great deal of respect. At least they are doing what they believe to be in the national interest.

However, those who want to assure Britain's future in Europe but who vote against the motion are putting party political interest before that of the nation. That is the main charge that I level at the Labour party.

Another case that may be made by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and those who vote with the Labour party tonight is that we may so damage the Prime Minister that he would have to be removed. I would weep no tears for that. But we must judge the issue against the national interest. Will it do Britain's condition any good for the current Prime Minister of a Tory Government to be replaced by the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke)? The answer to that question is no. Will it damage the country if we do not ratify the Maastricht treaty? The answer to that is unquestionably yes.

Other reasons have been advanced for voting against the motion tonight. One that we have heard articulated is that the motion is unnecessary. That was the first reason the Labour party gave for voting against the motion—until someone pointed out that this debate is being held precisely because the Labour party had requested it on 1 June, a request followed up later by the Labour party's spokesman on foreign affairs.

The second reason advanced was that Maastricht was imperfect. I accept that argument; we were the first to state

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some of the treaty's imperfections. But unless the Bill proceeds, we shall not be able to amend those imperfections later.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East argued that to vote for the Government tonight was to give the Labour party's imprimatur to the opt-out of the social chapter. Then, why did the Opposition not vote against the Bill on Second Reading? They never did so; they abstained. Neither I nor my party want the social chapter opt-out or the monetary union opt-out, but if Maastricht goes down, the social chapter and monetary union go down with it. Only if we ratify the Maastricht treaty can a future Government—hopefully a more European one—readopt both clauses, which we want to see.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the leader of a party that has fought for people's rights year after year, does the right hon. Gentleman not accept that our democratic system will be greatly damaged if the Bill is pushed through without the people having the right to express their view? Could we not put a stop to the bogus nonsense and attacks by one party on another if we simply agreed now to give people the right to a say? Would that not stop all the nonsense of people concentrating on each other's motives?

Mr. Ashdown: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. As he may know, I have always supported a referendum on the matter, and I hope that one will be agreed under the Bill. I agree that the Bill involves a shift of sovereignty—one that I recommend to the British people and in which I passionately believe—but the House does not have the right to give away sovereignty that it does not possess.

Sovereignty comes from the people. I believe that there should be a referendum. If there were a referendum, we should not be seen to take our people into Europe, which I strongly recommend they enter, depending on their ignorance or in the face of their hostility. That has always been my view, and will remain so.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman: I have given way a number of times, and should like to make progress. I am aware that we are approaching the time for the 10-minute rule to be applied to speeches.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has just this minute said that he is not prepared to give way. I clearly heard him say so.

Mr. Ashdown: I shall make a little more progress; then I shall happily give way.

The last reason which is given for voting against the Bill, and which lies at the heart of the Labour party's amendment, is that we should wait for the Danes. I cannot imagine a more demeaning attitude for the country to take than to have to shelter behind the skirts of the Danish people. Every other nation in the European Community has ratified or will ratify the agreement without waiting for the announcement from the Danish people on their reconsideration.

Only one question needs to be asked by the British people and the House: whether Maastricht is in Britain's interests. I believe that it is. Whether it is regarded by the Danes as being in Denmark's interest is totally irrelevant.

At the heart of the Labour party's amendment is the belief that the debate should be delayed for a further six weeks. What the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East would have us believe was a great and towering issue of confidence is merely an opportunity for the Labour party to sit on the fence for another six weeks. That is not a convincing argument.

Mr. Wareing: Last Friday, I talked with a Liberal Member of the Swedish Parliament, who said that, in two years, the Swedes are to have a referendum on whether to join the European Community. The Swedes are carefully watching the way in which the large countries such as Germany, France and Britain are treating Denmark. Does not the right hon. Gentleman believe that, if we are to persuade the Swedes and other small countries to join the European Community, we should treat them fairly?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman completely misunderstood the position—as he so often does. It is not a question of treating the Danes fairly. Of course we should listen to them and seek to do what we can to accommodate their views. But that does not have any bearing on whether it is in Britain's interests to join the Maastricht process. It is in Britain's interests, not Denmark's, which is the issue that the House and the country must address.

Mr. Cryer: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: No, I wish to make considerably more progress before giving way again.

Let us consider the Labour amendment. The Labour party wants a six-week delay. What happens in those six weeks? First, severe damage will be done to the respect in which this country is held abroad. I have no doubt that the voice of this country in its EC presidency will be undermined during the six-week delay.

Beyond that, what is the six-week delay about? It is about a Labour party that went to the electorate in April to ask them to vote for something, and now ends up voting against it. It is about considerably more damage being done to the British economy. It is about the fact that the uncertainty that now acts as one of the primary blocks against trying to get the country out of recession will remain for a further six weeks. It is about the fact that the inward investment on which we so much depend in reviving the economy in order to save jobs will not improve for a further six weeks.

Therefore, we shall pay for the Labour party's six weeks with more lost jobs and a deeper recession. One night of fun in Westminster for the Labour party will result in tens of thousands of additional lost jobs in Britain.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: No, I shall not give way.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not persist, as the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has just made it clear that he is not going to give way.

Mr. Ashdown: The economy is in a mess, and the Government are culpable. Of course the Government's economic policies are the origin of that mess, but there is one certain way to make that mess worse and to lose more people their jobs: for the motion to fall and the Maastricht process to be delayed. That would result in this country's economic mess getting worse, not better. The Labour party's action tonight will have brought that about.

Not long ago, a sensible article in *The Observer* said:

> "The Government is not going to be able to solve the economic crisis unless it secures a European solution."

Correct. It continued:

> "The ingredients of a practical alternative to that grim future"—

by which the author meant the Government's recession—

> "are to be found in the Maastricht treaty".

Correct. The author concluded:

> "It is essential that these are acted upon . . . to-day."

The author of that article was not the Foreign Secretary or the Prime Minister, but the then leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). That is what he felt, but tonight he will vote against those sentiments.

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has written one of the best books produced by any Member of the House in recent years on the European question. He said:

> "The Labour party must sustain its new commitment to the European Community. A switch back to outright opposition—or even to scepticism—would lack any credibility."

He is right. I am only sorry that he has decided not to support his words in the Lobby tonight.

We will vote not for the Government but for Britain's future in Europe. Tonight, we will vote not for the Prime Minister but to save jobs and to get the economy going again within the only context that makes that possible. This country's tradition does not lie in isolation from Europe. Our history has always been involvement and participation in Europe. Twice this century, when Europe has faced its darkest hour, this country has made great sacrifices to ensure that we play our full part. Now, when Europe again is facing considerable economic problems and when we are seeing rising nationalism and deepening threats to peace in Europe, it cannot be in the interests of this country to abandon that tradition.

I finish with a letter that appeared in *The Observer*, which I saw on Monday night. It spoke of an old man who was seen by the graveyard in El Alamein. Looking at the rows of white crosses ahead of him in the desert, he said, "This is the reason why I believe the Maastricht treaty must be ratified: that must never happen again." The question before the House tonight is whether that old man, in that single sentence, was able to express more wisdom than the whole of the House in this debate tonight.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the House that speeches between now and 8 pm must be limited to 10 minutes.

6.3 pm

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): I agreed with much of the impressive speech of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), but I rise to tell the House for the first time for some time, in case there should be any muddle, that there is no unanimity in Southend on the European Community. Therefore, in the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), for once I should like to give my views.

The debate is ostensibly on a motion to proceed with the Bill. We all know that, if we want to, we can proceed with the Bill anyway. The debate is taking place because the Labour party and many of my right hon. and hon. Friends wanted it. If we proceed to debate the Maastricht Bill, either now or in a few weeks' time, we shall still have the opportunity to amend it, throw it out or do whatever the House wants to do. All the fuss and debate revolve around a Labour amendment to delay the proceedings of the Committee for six weeks. *[Interruption.]* That is what Labour's amendment says. I said "ostensibly" because we all know that other considerations lie behind it.

In reality, the House is making an amazing fuss about very little indeed. All of us will have a chance to say more if the Bill is considered, but the basic principles are clear.

Fear was expressed that the Bill might be pushed through. Goodness knows how the Bill will be pushed through. It will have the longest Committee stage of any Bill since the war. I shall be very surprised indeed if it is pushed through.

Let me give the House my views, for what they are worth, which I suspect is not much. I think that it is essential for the United Kingdom to stay in the European Community; not every hon. Member agrees, but the overwhelming majority do. All the old arguments still apply. I am strongly in favour of completion of the single market and of attracting inward investment. There are some signs of people involved with inward investment being worried about what will happen if we do not ratify Maastricht. I must say to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), to whose experience I bow, that I am in favour of much freer trade. Indeed, I fear that action may be needed on textiles, to which he referred.

There are both undesirable and desirable provisions in the treaty. If I believed, for example, that ratification of Maastricht would lead to Mr. Martin Bangemann's view of affairs prevailing, I should not be in favour of it. It is interesting that no one has mentioned Mr. Bangemann, which shows that no hon. Member takes his predictions seriously. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I shall look forward to hearing from my hon. Friends in due course.

I do not believe in a federal Europe, and nor do the Government, the House and the Opposition. I believe that Maastricht represents if anything a step back from federalism rather than a step towards it. Of course Maastricht is not ideal. I do not know any hon. Member who thinks that it is. I am not mad keen on it. I go further than many of my hon. Friends: it would have been much better if it had not happened at all. It was thrust upon us and we had to take part in it. It would have saved us much trouble if the French had voted against it, but they did not and we must face the facts of the real world rather than of the world that many of us would like.

Do we want to be in or out? We cannot take an a la carte approach and choose the parts that we want. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister returned from the meetings in Maastricht at the end of 1991, was he received with derision by the House? Was there universal opposition to what he came back with? Not at all. It was a triumph. We were told, and I believed, that my right hon. Friend had achieved remarkable success in getting the British point of view accepted. I remind the House of the

[Mr. Paul Channon]

motion that was passed on 19 December 1991, with the support of most of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. It reads:

> "This House congratulates the Prime Minister on achieving all the negotiating objectives set out in the motion that was supported by the House on 21st November; and warmly endorses the agreement secured by the Government at Maastricht."—[*Official Report*, 19 December 1991; Vol. 201, c. 555.]

I repeat:

> "This House . . . warmly endorses the agreement secured by the Government at Maastricht."

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and many hon. Friends—who, I read in the newspapers, hold slightly different points of view now—supported that.

The negotiation was a great success. I have a copy of the Dutch magazine to which my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) referred in the speech by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister:

> "The third main protagonist in Maastricht is the British Premier John Major. He was the winner of the negotiations."

I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup: that is a quotation; it is not I who said that. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wanted "an opt-out from the EMU" and he got it. The magazine went on to describe that what happened at Maastricht was a resounding British success. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister managed to defuse the issue; he did not compel this country to go in for the social charter—I know that there are differences between the two sides of the House on that. We were not committed to economic and monetary union; we were not committed to a single currency; and we made progress towards subsidiarity.

Of course there are worrying features of the agreement, at least from my point of view. The Commission itself described it as expanding many of their existing responsibilities and bringing in new policy areas. Yes, there are things that are not perfect in the Maastricht agreement. We also know that all over Europe there is increasing concern about the powers of the Commission and the way in which it is out of touch with public opinion in the various member states. If that were not so, we would not have had the situation in France, we would not have had the situation in Denmark and we would not have the powerful body of opinion in this country against the powers wielded by the Commission, or at least against the way in which it chooses to exercise its powers.

What happens if we say no to the Maastricht treaty, if we say no tonight and eventually do not ratify it? Do hon. Members think that it will make the centralising tendencies of the Community better or worse? I believe that it will mean that this country will be in a very much weaker position, not a stronger one, if we stay in the Community. Of course, if I were a Member who believed in our getting out, that would be a different matter. Those hon. Members who want to leave the Community have an entirely different point of view. But for those of us who want to remain, how do we remain as an effective negotiator if we do not in the end sign what we have agreed in a free negotiation and which the House has approved by an enormous majority? Who apart from us in the Community will argue for less Commission control or more subsidiarity?

I say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that we must make real progress in Edinburgh on subsidiarity. It has been an amazing achievement by the Government, but it must be there in black and white, meaning something rather than a pious message. We must win Mr. Delors' prize. Mr. Delors' monetary prize will, I hope, be won by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary when he gets to Edinburgh.

Mr. Hurd: I will buy you all a drink then.

Mr. Channon: My right hon. Friend can buy us all a drink—well, he may well be right, but he must win that battle because it is very important for the future of the Community and for the future of the Bill as it passes through the House.

The House has the power to alter or throw out the Bill; neither the motion nor the amendment will affect that. We will debate the Bill in due course. It is ridiculous that we have turned this debate into such an enormous occasion and that we have had the Labour party turning away from its position of supporting the European Community and the treaty in order to try to make some cheap party political capital out of the genuine concern among some of my hon. Friends about parts of the Maastricht treaty. The Labour party seeks to exploit that. I understand why, but the House must not let itself be fooled: there is nothing of merit in the Labour party's case. All it can put forward is this idea of amending our motion to make the line-by-line consideration take place a month later.

I urge my hon. Friends, if they are in any doubt whatsoever, to support the Government motion. It will not prevent them from proposing amendments to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill later if they want to do so, nor will it prevent the House from taking a view on the Bill or throwing it out in the end. The amendment is merely a device to exploit the very understandable differences of view on the Government side of the House. I urge my hon. Friends not to be taken in by it, and to support the motion.

6.13 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I begin by congratulating my Front Bench on the decision to oppose the Government in the Division later this evening. It is a course of action that I and many colleagues urged on them, and I am naturally delighted that they have taken the advice and reached that decision.

The stated reason for the decision is that this evening's motion and the whole debate have very little to do with the issue of Maastricht but everything to do with bolstering the flagging fortunes of a discredited Prime Minister; but I want to make it clear that, for myself and perhaps for others voting on this side of the argument this evening, there are other and perhaps even stronger reasons for doing so.

I shall be voting against the motion, for instance, because I believe that it is premature. It is premature because it flies in the face of the assurance that the Prime Minister gave in September that we would not reconsider the matter until the Danes had resolved their situation. The Danish Government have, of course, put forward their proposals, but there is no guarantee that the Danish people will listen to those proposals any more than they did when they decided the matter in the first referendum. Nor is there any guarantee that the requirements of the Danish Government will be accepted or even entertained by other European leaders. The Foreign Office has revealed that it understands that very well, and Mr. Delors' initial response shows all too clearly that arrogance and disregard for public opinion which got us into the Maastricht mess in the first place.

I shall vote against the Government this evening because, of all the provisions in the Maastricht treaty which one might or might not wish to support, it is surely perverse for our Government to turn their back on the social chapter, the one provision in the treaty that offers at least the chance of a people's Europe rather than a bankers' Europe. This is the one provision that gives some protection to working people right across Europe against the depredations of employers looking for the lowest wages and the poorest working conditions.

I shall vote against the Government this evening because the Prime Minister has consistently misled his own party, the House and the country about the true effect of the treaty. The Prime Minister claims that it is a decentralising treaty. He says that the provision about subsidiarity has real and precise meaning. That simply flies in the face of the actual provisions of the treaty. The treaty is clear, and we must understand that when our partners write these words they mean them.

The treaty is clear: it establishes a European union of which henceforth we are all to be citizens. Mr. Bangemann spoke the truth. Why should he do otherwise? It is as plain as a pikestaff to anyone that the treaty is designed to be a major step towards a federal Europe. The very term is itself inadequate to describe what is aimed at. What is aimed at is a unitary state, a European superstate with centralised political institutions, and it does no credit to the Prime Minister, in that maladroit way, to say that Mr. Bangemann is wrong and that his own interpretation is right. The most charitable thing that we can say about the Prime Minister is that he appears not to understand the treaty that he negotiated.

I shall also vote against the Government tonight because of what the treaty has to say about economic and monetary union and a single currency. It is ironic, is it not, that we are again being beguiled with those seductive messages from the captains of industry and the leaders of our economy to the effect that we must accept Maastricht for the sake of our economic future. Hardly a dot or a comma has been altered in the similar protestations and messages in support of our membership of the exchange rate mechanism, uttered with the same certainty and confidence just eight weeks ago. The reality is that to accept Maastricht would be to throw this economy once again into the abyss; to entrench in permanent and irreversible treaty law all the mistakes of the ERM which created a deepening recession, destroyed jobs, homes and businesses and blighted lives.

That is what we now face by way of the treaty of Maastricht on economic policy. We must not accept it. The provisions of the treaty simply fly in the face of the best economic interests of this country. How can we accept a treaty that sets up an independent central bank which is to control and decide all the major questions of economic policy in a way which is directly and specifically said by the treaty to be unaccountable to any other influence, let alone the democratically elected Governments of the Community?

How can we accept provisions which direct those bankers, if they need such direction, to concentrate exclusively on price stability, even in the depths of the worst recession for two generations? How can we accept convergence criteria defined exclusively in monetary terms; criteria which would require us, if they applied today, to lop £20 billion off public spending? How can that be accepted? What a breathtakingly audacious attempt this is by the bankers to secure for ever their dominance over elected politicians. No responsible Member of the House should give away such centrally important powers of self-government, and certainly not without so much as a word of consultation with those by whose authority we sit in the House.

What is proposed is not just a new arrangement; it is intended to be irreversible. That is the point of enshrining it in treaty law. No British electorate, in any subsequent British general election, could vote in a Government, even a party which stood on the explicit programme of implementing a different economic policy, who could produce a change of policy without a direct breach of our treaty obligations.

I make this case not just for the British people but for the people of Europe as well. I speak as a European politician as well as a British politician. Those who argue that the decision is whether we remain in Europe are frankly wrong. They are not only wrong; the reverse is the case. It is those who are pressing Maastricht who are jeopardising the European project because they will subject that project to such intolerable strains that it will burst asunder.

The argument that somehow tonight's vote can be skated over, that it does not matter, that there will be other opportunities—as we heard from the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon)—is insidious but wrong. So, too, is the argument that we have heard so often that we should just accept this step because it will take us to the heart of the negotiations where we can influence events.

We know from Mr. Delors' own lips that there is to be no negotiation; no change to the treaty. Once we accept it, if we accept it tonight, that is that. Whatever the Prime Minister says tonight to his Back Benchers about the nature of the decision, be in no doubt that, if he wins, he will say tomorrow that Maastricht is back on the rails and Maastricht will then be ratified.

I say to all those who now have to make up their minds that we shall all be put to the test tonight. We shall all have our own reasons. None of us need accept the motivations ascribed to us by others. Some will decide out of genuine conviction, others, on the Liberal Democrat Benches, will prefer pious posturing, and some will be willing dupes of deliberate blandishments and threats.

But the decision will depend on perhaps a small group; people who understand their responsibilities, who know the great struggle for democracy in this country, who know what is at stake is this country's future in Europe. Those people will lift their eyes to a longer horizon. They will understand what is at stake. They will exercise their responsibilities in a proper manner and with proper regard to the interests of the people not only of this country but of Europe.

I do not know how many those people will be. They may be few in number, but, for the sake of Britain and Europe, I pray that they are enough.

6.23 pm

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), not just because I disagree profoundly with every word that he has uttered for the past 10 minutes, but because, in the few minutes available to me, I want to address my remarks to those such as him who are not just interested in whether tonight we vote for postponement of the Committee stage for six weeks or more but who, like him and like some of my hon. Friends, do not believe in the Maastricht treaty at all, do not want to see it ratified, and do not want to see us progress further with our continental colleagues towards a closer union.

All hon. Members will have noticed that, in all the eloquent words uttered by the hon. Member for Dagenham, he offered not one single word of an alternative. He wanted to turn the clock back. He assumed that life could go on as it had in pre-Delors days; no Maastricht treaty, no change, just an economic area. But it is not like that. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said clearly, the other 10 countries will certainly ratify the treaty before Christmas. We have no reason to believe that the Danes will not ratify too within the next year—*[Interruption.]*—no reason at all.

In any event, my hon. Friends should look around them. On 1 January 1993, if all goes well, the European economic area will come into being, along with the internal market. The seven EFTA countries will all have a full part in that. Those seven have accepted the full body of EC legislation, existing and to come, dealing with the internal market, social policy, environment and competition. On top of that, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden and Finland have applied for full membership of the Community, Maastricht and all.

Are those countries all wrong and the hon. Member for Dagenham and a few of my hon. Friends, whose sincerity I respect even if I think that they are blind, all right? Or have those new applicants who accept the Maastricht treaty looked back in history, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) did, at the past 40 years in which, year on year, Germany, at the heart of the Community, has had a growth rate 1 per cent. per annum higher than us, and France, at the heart of the Community, has had a growth rate 0·5 per cent. higher than us; and have they decided that that is the example that they want to follow rather than that of Britain, which is constantly at the fringes of the Community, a late entrant, always asking for exemptions from this and that, and regularly getting poorer than its continental neighbours?

I remember well the time when the deutschmark was 12 to the pound. It was then 10 to the pound. It was then four to the pound. It is now between 2·40 and 2·50 to the pound. If we back away from the Maastricht treaty, not only will it scare off new external investment in Britain—there are already signs of that happening as I see in my constituency—but the deutschmark rate will fall to 2, 1·50, to 1, and we shall progressively become poorer while those in the Community who move to closer union will become richer.

That will be the unalterable tide of history. Those who say that we should beware the Maastricht treaty because it is federalism and will lead on to this, that or the other never come forward with any alternative. I agree with those who say that this is not a perfect treaty. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary did a marvellous job of negotiating in difficult circumstances. The treaty is not well drafted, it is difficult to read and there are parts in it that none of us likes. But our partners, our friends in the Community, are getting on with it. We have to be there too, to change it, to make it better, but also to see that Britain is more prosperous than it otherwise would be.

I make my position clear. Some years ago, I worked in Canada for five years, just when Canada was negotiating its free trade arrangement with the United States. I know how painful and difficult it was to create that free trade market in north America. Mexico is now part of it. Any idea that we could join a north Atlantic free trade area now is turning history back 25 years.

I have been many times to Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Singapore as a business man. They are all developing their own free trade areas within the Pacific rim countries. Do those of my hon. Friends who wish to oppose Maastricht seriously believe that we can stand back, a little England, on the edge of the continent and have inward investment, prosperity, full employment? It is just not possible.

I strongly agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath); we need to do a better job of explaining the treaty to everyone in the country. We should not run away from it. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will take that point on board, and will tell us what he has in mind. I do not think that he should emulate the document put out by a number of EC members, which takes the form of a small card; nor do I think that the lengthy 140-page consolidation of the treaty is quite right. I strongly recommend something like this pamphlet headed:

> "Info-pratique—Maastricht—faites votre choix. Les 35 points clés pour voter."

I am sure that all hon. Members on both sides of the House will want to read that document, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will find a means of ensuring that similar documents are delivered to every household in the country at Christmas or thereabouts, so that it is available to the public when we are debating the Bill's Committee stage. There should be no deficiency in the provision of information. Although the decision must be made in the House, it is possible to ensure that our constituents are much better informed than they are now. A pamphlet summarising the terms of the treaty is undoubtedly needed.

Let me say a final word, which I address particularly to Opposition Members—many of whom I know well, and many of whom I know to be, at heart, strong supporters of Maastricht. I suggest that they return late from dinner tonight. Perhaps their taxis will be blocked; perhaps they will find some other good reason not to be present for the vote. I believe that they could all benefit from practising the wisdom of a Denis Healey or a George Brown, and turn up late after a good dinner in order not to vote in an embarrassing way.

Let me remind Opposition Members of the time in the 1970s when they were in government with a small majority. When the debate concerned defence or Northern Ireland, Conservative Members did not vote to bring the Government down; we followed our principles rather than trying to defeat the Labour Government on issues in which we believed. Many hon. Members who think as we do on the Community now sit on the Opposition Benches, and they should be honourable enough not to be here to vote. If they do not take such action, they—like their new leader—will earn the contempt of the British people, which will hang around that new leader's neck like an albatross. He will never forget it.

The new Leader of the Opposition has done an incredible thing. In one great leap, through his wobble and his hypocrisy, he has made his predecessor seem a paragon of consistency and principle. I never thought that that would be possible, but the Leader of the Opposition has achieved it.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you ask the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) to withdraw his allegation of hypocrisy?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I must say in all honesty that I did not hear the word "hypocrisy", but, if the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) used it, I am sure that he will withdraw it.

Mr. Renton: As you agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you were not listening with full attention. What I said was that the Leader of the Opposition had shown, or practised, an example of hypocrisy that he would never forget. I think that that comment has the general approval of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate has been conducted with full-blooded enthusiasm by hon. Members on both sides of the House. The right hon. Gentleman might be advised to make it absolutely clear that he alleged no hypocrisy on the part of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Renton: It is certainly true that I was not calling the Leader of the Opposition a hypocrite; I was saying something rather different.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): He repeated exactly what he had said before.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We do not need sedentary remarks.

6.34 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): This seems to be a debate for short speeches, and I sincerely hope that mine will be the shortest of all.

I believe that the comments of the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) were addressed to people like me, who have always strongly supported the principle of closer union in Europe. It seems a bit much, however, for a former Government Chief Whip to appeal to Opposition Members to stay away so that his wretched, discredited Government can remain in power, and he will not get away with it. There are a number of words for such behaviour, and certainly the right hon. Gentleman used some ugly words when he described my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition as a hypocrite. That was nonsense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now stretching the Chair's patience. Let us return to the debate.

Mr. Home Robertson: I think that I am right in saying that the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex withdrew his comment. If so, we can leave it at that.

As I said, I have always strongly supported the principle of closer European union. Along with my constituency party, I campaigned for a yes vote in the referendum; I only regret that I did not join my hon. Friends the Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) in the Lobby on Second Reading of the Maastricht Bill. Had I done so, the Bill would have been given a majority of 245. Nevertheless, we shall have further opportunities when the Bill reaches its later stages. I intend to vote for an "opt-in" provision relating to the social charter and all the other bits and pieces in regard to which the Prime Minister dug his toes in—and tried to claim credit for doing so earlier in the debate.

I come from a country that has shared its sovereignty with a powerful neighbour for a long time—ever since 1707—and I do not share the hang-ups of Conservative Members and my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about a development along those lines in the Community. I hope, indeed, that the Community will develop in ways that will give smaller countries like Scotland a stronger and more direct input into the affairs of the Community, as well as their own affairs.

Let me stress the important point that I put to the Prime Minister when he made his statement last week. Subsidiarity must not stop at Westminster. It would be a travesty if the Länder of Germany, such as Bavaria, were given more power according to that principle, while Scotland and Wales continued to be administered from Whitehall like colonies, governed by Westminster legislation. It would constitute the grossest irony if the European Council assembled in Edinburgh, of all places, and agreed to a package that would deny subsidiarity to the people of Scotland.

The Maastricht treaty—with the opt-outs negotiated by the Prime Minister—is certainly far from perfect.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Ha!

Mr. Home Robertson: Let me remind my hon. Friend of the deliberations that took place at the Labour party conference, which resoundingly supported and endorsed a resolution that stated:

> "This Conference reaffirms Labour's vision of Europe with Britain's future at the heart of a European Community which is economically prosperous and which has high standards of social and environmental protection and citizens' rights . . . Conference believes that the Maastricht Treaty, while not perfect, is the best agreement that can currently be achieved."

That resolution was overwhelmingly supported. Another draft resolution, which stated:

> "This Conference calls on the Parliamentary Labour Party to oppose ratification of the Maastricht Treaty",

was overwhelmingly rejected.

As I have said, the treaty is not perfect, and we must vote for improvements to the Bill. That is the approach that we should adopt, and I am confident that the official Opposition will adopt it. If it is appropriate, I intend in due course to vote for the Bill's Third Reading.

If the motion had been genuinely and substantively about Europe, I would have voted with the Government in the Aye Lobby; but it is not. It is a paving motion—a gimmick. According to our procedures it is completely redundant. Indeed, in response to a point of order, Madam Speaker specifically clarified that point earlier.

[Mr. Home Robertson]

There is no need for the motion, because there is nothing to stop the Government from going ahead with the ratification of the treaty. When they do so they will find that I, and most Opposition Members, approach it in a constructive and positive manner.

This is not a paving motion about Europe; it is a detour round some of the obscure back alleys of the Conservative party. Tonight we are dealing with the stepping stones by means of which the Prime Minister is trying to paddle through the morasses of Southend and elsewhere. It is no part of our job to help the Conservative party through such problems.

The motion is clearly one of confidence in the Government. We are told, "Yes, it is," and "No, it isn't," as different messages come out of different sectors of the Cabinet and the Conservative party—but to all intents and purposes we are dealing with a motion of confidence in the Government.

If, in my 14 years in the House, there were ever a Government which was not worthy of anyone's confidence, it is this Government. We could have argued that we had no confidence in the previous Prime Minister, but we always had confidence that she knew where she was going and what her policies were. Nobody can possibly have any confidence, in the strict literal meaning of the word, in the present Government. They do not know what is going on. Cabinet Ministers do not even have confidence in themselves. That is why the House should reject any notion of any kind of confidence in the Government. We certainly should not help them to plod their way through the morass that they have created for themselves with the motion.

I repeat that when the Bill comes back before the House I shall view it constructively, and I am likely to support its Third Reading. However, the motion before us has nothing to do with that. It is designed to save the neck of a discredited Prime Minister, and I sincerely hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will vote in that spirit.

6.41 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was the speech of a very clever lawyer with a very bad case. If his mood had been a little less ungenerous, and if the Labour party were in a less uncertain and ambiguous position, he would have given credit where it was due, and acknowledged what has happened right from the start of the Maastricht debate.

I am talking about what has happened not only since the treaty was signed, but way back, when there was first pressure for the intergovernmental conference—which this country resisted—and then for the conference to give birth to the treaty text—about which this country had doubts—and then when the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary went to Maastricht with a mandate to warn against excesses and to secure what they could for this country—which they did brilliantly. All that time, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the House of Commons—let us, as a House of Commons, take credit for this—have called it right about the unfolding Maastricht programme.

We are the ones who warned that there were excess elements, and dangers, in going full out for an imposed timetable, monetary union and a high political union. And now we are hearing the voices of pro-Europeans all round the continent, both inside and outside the Community, saying that we were right, and that the foot flat on the accelerator was the wrong approach, whereas the British stance, and our example, was right.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: No, unfortunately I cannot give way, because of the 10-minute rule. Otherwise, I should be happy to talk to the hon. Gentleman.

Having reached the point at which this country is protected from some of the excesses of Maastricht, we are now in a strong position to move forward in Europe and to work for two aims. My personal view is that we should get over the hurdle and ratify the treaty, because we have work to do in formulating a new treaty.

I am sorry to burden my right hon. and hon. Friends with the prospect of a new treaty, but we need one to provide for the new priorities in Europe, which were not entirely foreseen at Maastricht but which are becoming clearer all the time.

Let us be clear about the goals we are fighting for. One of those lies before us, only eight weeks away. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) has said, a gigantic market, the largest single free trading area ever created by trade negotiators in history, is about to come into being. It will include not only the Community but the European Free Trade Association countries as well—and, I hope, thereafter the Visegrad countries.

On 1 January, in only eight weeks' time, there will be a consumer mass market of 375 million people, covering 46 per cent. of all world trade, with a GNP of about $7,000 billion—I am afraid that that sum is worth more pounds now than it was last week. That is a fantastic achievement, and a high road to great prosperity and opportunity for all the nations in that great economic space—the Community countries plus the European economic area signatories.

Our task in drawing up a new treaty will be to defend and maintain that huge trading operation, that huge economy dominating world trade, in a way that does not allow it to be eroded by protectionism or centralism, and does not allow political busybodies and interferers of every kind to undermine that colossal achievement. We must get on past the Maastricht treaty and begin to design the kind of treaty needed to maintain and strengthen that huge achievement in totally new conditions, which are different from those which existed when the Community began and which hold grave new threats, especially from instability in eastern Europe.

For that reason we, the British—after all, we have called it right all along—must begin to shape the new treaty. I want to see us get over the Maastricht problem, accept the ratification of the treaty while recognising its many inadequacies, and move on to the new tasks ahead.

First, we want a Europe in balance and equilibrium. We do not want a Europe of trains, buses, momentum and destinations, of blueprints and inevitable destiny. We need powers in a treaty—a constitution of Europe—to prevent that. As the Prime Minister said, that is needed to overcome people's deep worries that there will be a continuous slippery slope down which all the powers tumble into the spin drier of the Community. We do not want that, and we need a treaty which can lock in the brakes and barriers to prevent it.

The word with which we conjure to achieve that end is "subsidiarity"—and we have only just started on that. The seed is in the Maastricht treaty, but it is a tiny seed, hardly fertilised. An enormous amount of work is required. We need subsidiarity-plus, and that will not be secured entirely even by taking matters forward in Edinburgh—which I am sure will happen. A new treaty will be required to entrench genuine forces of subsidiarity, and a real reverse thrust into the Community structure to prevent it from going the wrong way.

The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has recently been advised on subsidiarity by a great many lawyers. I am afraid that the lawyers all agree—it is usually a matter for alarm when lawyers all agree—that subsidiarity is not a precise legal concept. Indeed, the Counsel to the Speaker, in an excellent document which I believe was submitted to the Scrutiny Committee, concluded that subsidiarity was

> "a principle of policy which is far too imprecise to have any clear legal effect. The fact of unanimity among lawyers would ordinarily cause great apprehension to the public at large; but here it is having a constructive effect. Non-lawyers are having to make the best they can of proposed Article 3b".

In other words, it all falls upon the politicians—us—to make the best we can, or more than that, of making the political concept of decentralisation, subsidiarity or whatever one likes to call it, work.

That will require not only establishing subsidiarity as a political convention in the workings and processes of the Community, but backing it with new procedures, which will require legal force, and will have to be binding. By new procedures I mean, for example, ensuring that the House, our national Parliament—indeed, all national parliaments—can give a view on, and indeed check, all new initiatives, whether they come from the Commission or the Council.

It is important that the next treaty should provide for our Parliament to have a much earlier say on proposals before they reach the legislative stage—before the Council of Ministers decides on them, or before the Commission initiates them. The Maastricht treaty does not provide that; we must go beyond it and build on it. We must deliver safeguards which will lock in the process of building a flexible, diffuse Europe instead of a centralised Europe.

Maastricht was sadly deficient. We must build on it. It was inadequate to deal with the problems of eastern and central Europe. It has been suggested that we should have a commissioner for eastern Europe. I have no doubt that the priority task of Europe should be to prevent the countries of eastern and central Europe from disappearing into fascism and militarism, of which there is great danger. That will require huge political effort, which will not be sufficiently sustained by Maastricht. We must build on the treaty to ensure that eastern and central European countries do not slide into militarism.

We shall need new institutions to cope with enlargement of the Community. We speak glibly about our desire to see Switzerland, Austria, Sweden and so on in the Community. However, to enlarge the Community will require new institutions. The work has to be done. The treaty and the constitutional procedures must be established.

We shall need to complete the single market, which we think is all in the bag. It will come into effect on 1 January, but we have only just begun. It will be a vast new task to complete to make that single market operate genuinely. Even greater tasks will be required to ensure that the whole thing is not destroyed by the breakdown of the GATT negotiations. There could be no greater catastrophe than such a breakdown at a time when the planet is beginning to slip and slide into deflation. It would be an utter disaster, for which those who say that we can settle for Maastricht could never be forgiven.

I have described the tasks which a new treaty requires. The question is, who will take the initiative in pushing forward those ideas? Will we be dragged along unwillingly while others make progress? I hope not. I hope that we will recognise what has to be done.

People talk about being at the heart of Europe, but we always have been. This nation has spilt a great deal of blood over the centuries and in recent times. Many families have lost relatives. Their lives were given up by Britain being at the heart of Europe, preventing it from destroying itself yet again and turning to yet more new blueprints and sinister destinies.

So do not let us be told that we are not at the heart of Europe or that it is a new idea for us to be so. We have always been at the heart of Europe. Britain has played a fundamental role in ensuring that Europe remains a balanced, free and open democracy. Where we have failed, catastrophe has resulted.

From the beginning none of us—neither Conservative nor Opposition Members—wanted the Maastricht process——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Ten minutes is ten minutes.

6.51 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I agree entirely with the concluding words of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell). None of us ever wanted the Maastricht treaty. It is a good thing that the House has an opportunity today to discuss the issues connected with that treaty. I remind the House that the reason why we are having the debate is the sea change that has occurred and the events that have taken place since the Danes had the courage to say no.

No one should deny that the Danish referendum had a remarkable effect. It got rid of the sense of inevitability and helplessness which most people in most of the countries of Europe felt. People felt that their political elites were doing things over their heads. People did not believe that they had any chance of arresting the process. However, the Danes succeeded in arresting the process.

It is interesting that Mr. Mitterrand's immediate reaction to the Danish result was to announce a French referendum. He believed that he would bury the Danish no in an avalanche of French yeses. Three months later, Maastricht was put to the test of French opinion, and the French gave their consent by a similarly narrow margin. Of course, the French are the founders of the treaties.

Just before the French referendum, Britain had the brutal shock of the pound being forced out of the exchange rate mechanism. Such events made people, not only in Denmark and France but in Britain, think. The plain truth

[Mr. Peter Shore]

is that there is now far more knowledge and far more criticism about what is in the treaty among people not only in Britain but elsewhere.

One of the Prime Minister's most important remarks this afternoon was when he asked what sort of Europe we were developing through the Maastricht treaty. I agree that that is probably the most important question. In spite of the Prime Minister's assertions and the reservations which the British Government wrung from our reluctant partners in the European Community, the commanding text of the treaty remains.

I remind hon. Members on both sides of the House of the opening declaration of the treaty on European union. It said that the member states were

> "Resolved to mark a new stage in the process of European integration . . .
>
> Resolved to . . . establish an economic and monetary union including, in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty, a single and stable currency, . . .
>
> Resolved to establish a citizenship common to nationals of their countries,
>
> Resolved to implement a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defence policy".

Those are not small matters. They are the essence of national sovereignty. To be a self-governing nation is to make decisions in those areas.

I have never heard of a sovereign independent country which did not have its own currency. Yet a declared objective of the treaty is to establish a European state. Who can doubt that the purpose is to establish a European state? The Prime Minister dismissed those matters as European guff. I hope that he was misreported. Those matters are written into the treaty. If he said that they were European guff, he made precisely the same error as his predecessor made with the Single European Act. She did not read the text sufficiently clearly, closely or seriously.

Mr. Cash: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No, I cannot, much as I would like to.

I draw attention to a point which has not attracted sufficient attention. Mr. Bangemann made a speech in Berlin yesterday in which he spoke about what virtually everyone on the European continent takes for granted in political circles. The speech was not an ambush of the British Government. He simply took it for granted that there was nothing interesting in what he had to say. He said that, in the Maastricht treaty,

> "the goal of a federal European state was spelt out for the first time,"

and that

> "subsidiarity presupposed the idea of a federal European state".

I have always found that entirely convincing. It is implicit in all the speeches made by the more fanatical pro-Europeans in the Chamber.

Dealing with the idea that subsidiarity might lead to the return of some of the powers that Governments had previously exercised, Mr. Bangemann said that the inadequacies of Community decision-making could not be remedied by returning power to the member states, and that the subsidiarity debate must not lead to a "rolling back". It is too bad. There is an awful lot of disappointment implicit in those words. He also said that more and more decisions could be taken only at European level.

Lastly, to encourage us, Mr. Bangemann said that the next step after Maastricht's ratification should be the evolution of the EC treaties into a European constitution. Drafts of such a European constitution are already talked about in the European Parliament.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) understands all this. He revealed in the debate on 24 September his understanding that a single currency leads to a single government and a single country. Do not let us deceive ourselves about what we face. The Prime Minister showed some skill in finding a little space between the trunk of the Rome treaty and all that has sprung from it, and the pillars of foreign and defence policy, immigration and home affairs. A little space could be found there, but it is my belief—this is certainly the understanding throughout Europe—that those pillars will merge into the trunk at the very next intergovernmental conference in 1996, which specifically refers to the revision of the treaty, taking account of the objectives expressed in A and B of the common and general clauses.

So there we are. Against this background, subsidiarity is a figleaf. It does not deal with the return of powers or the prevention of powers leaving the United Kingdom. It refers only to the methods by which the European state can implement its policies in the member states—perhaps in a slightly more agreeable way. Perhaps the regulations, to take an obvious example, will become directives. Perhaps we could find some even looser form of directive than has yet been legally defined. As long as the nation state does what the Community wants, then the forms that it adopts to do so can be a matter for subsidiarity.

In the end, it will not be the Government who decide what powers belong to the nation state and what powers belong to the Community. That is all decided by the treaties, and the interpreter of the treaties is the European Court.

So much for subsidiarity, one of the issues that was to be clarified by the Prime Minister and his colleagues before the Bill returned to the House. What about the Danes? They are asking for major derogations. They do not want economic and monetary union, or citizenship, or anything to do with defence. They want a legally binding derogation. That is possible only if it takes the form of a protocol or an amendment to the treaty. A declaration will not do.

Of course, Mr. Delors immediately told the Danes that that was not on. He told them that they could not have a change in the treaty—they could only have a declaration. We have not yet got very far with solving the Danish question—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Devlin.

7.2 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): It is appropriate that we take part in this debate with poppies in our lapels. As we watched the unfolding tragedy in Yugoslavia this summer, it would have done no harm to reflect that it was the prospect of further wars in Europe that led to the foundation of the European Community.

From the very start, the Community has been a political, not merely an economic, entity. It has been designed to stitch together the fabric of our separate nations so as to prevent them from being rent asunder by Europe's age-old rivalries, which are now beginning to resurface. It was foreseen by the founders of the Community that the cold war would not always divide Europe.

Britain, an island, has always been suspicious of continental combinations. Our geography has traditionally allowed us to stand aloof from our European neighbours and to concentrate on trading with the wider world on preferential terms bought by military might.

Those days are over now, and our small country must look to the future. It has taken nearly 30 years for Britain to come to terms with our changed circumstances, and to catch up with the unfolding European Community. Being late entrants, we have not had the opportunity to steer the Community away from its more disastrous policies, such as the common agricultural policy. But we now have the best opportunity to lead the continent since Churchill's call for unity in 1946.

There is no point in our being reluctant members. If all we do is criticise, we throw away the opportunity to shape Europe. If all we do is complain, no one will listen to us. The Prime Minister declared in his acceptance speech that he wanted us to be at the heart of Europe. He has shown that the best way to steer ourselves away from greater centralisation in Brussels is to be one of the big players in the negotiating process. That was how, in the case of the Maastricht treaty, he was able to secure a deal dismissed by many beforehand as impossible.

Now, for the first time in any European Community treaty, Maastricht contains an article specifically remitting anything best done at national level to national Governments. Britain opted out of the social chapter and reserved the right to decide later on a single currency. It was thus that the Council of Ministers agreed in Oslo on 4 June to proceed with ratification.

It is not our way to renege on an agreement negotiated in good faith. Moreover, it is an agreement which for the first time gives us weapons against the centralisation in Brussels. It creates a union, but not one that supersedes nation states. Foreign policy and home affairs are specifically reserved as national pillars.

If this treaty is delayed in its ratification, as the Opposition want, that puts at risk our new role in Europe. We would have to fight all over again the battles that we have won in the past two or three years, or be consigned to the slow lane of a two-speed Community. The Government have worked hard to propose a new and effective agenda that is in the best interests of this country.

First, the Community must be good for British business and British jobs. Coming as I do from the northern region, which has been one of the greatest recipients of inward investment resulting from this forward-looking policy, I know the benefits that it has brought. So it must be a Europe of free trade, where our goods can compete on equal terms.

Secondly, we must ensure that only decisions which need to be taken at European level are taken there, and that we do not become overburdened with the minutiae of unnecessary regulations. Indeed, we want rid of some of the existing ones.

Thirdly, we need to encourage new members such as Austria, Switzerland and Finland to join as soon as possible, not least because they will be net contributors to the Community. That will lessen the burden on our own hard-pressed economy. We also want the east European countries to become members as soon as their economies are in a fit state to enable them to do so.

Travelling extensively through Europe this summer, I found many people in Austria and Sweden asking when we were going to ratify the treaty, because they wanted to join the Community at the earliest opportunity and they wanted to be part of the new, closer union that is to be brought about.

If we do not bring in eastern Europe in the near future, we will find that its citizens vote with their feet and cross the borders into the countries of the west. Travelling through Europe, one could not help noticing either, especially in eastern Europe, the emergence of a new German super-power on our doorstep—an economic power permeating the whole of central and eastern Europe. It will become ever stronger as it overcomes its own domestic difficulties.

With Europe in a state of flux following the collapse of communism, never has there been a greater opportunity or need for British leadership. Never have we stood to gain more from this challenge. At this crucial time in Europe's history, I hope that hon. Members will agree that it would be wrong to retreat to the sidelines. I ask all Members to look at the text of the motion on the Order Paper.

What will be achieved by the Government's failure to carry their motion? An overwhelming majority in this House is in favour of the Maastricht treaty. The treaty and the process will go on in Europe, and that will affect this country. If the motion is not carried, we will merely repeat the mistakes of the past and ensure that any new leader or new Government coming into the breach will have to pursue the same policies from a much weaker position. That cannot be good for our country. I urge the House to support the Government.

7.8 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Reluctantly I have to admit that there was not much in the speech by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) with which I disagreed. I have long been a staunch supporter of Britain's involvement in the EEC. I was one of those who voted for our entry in October 1971 when a lot of these youngsters were not around, and I maintained that position by breaking ranks with my party early in 1972. I, along with my right hon., learned and revered Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), am one of the six parliamentary survivors of that happy band. My support has not wavered over many many years, and I was never open to the "Shall we, shan't we?" casuistry of the party over the years. My support is such that, as the House will recall, I—along with my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—voted a few months ago for the Second Reading. My hon. Friend and I were the only two Labour Members to do that.

Then came this little oddity, the paving motion—an innocuous little thing with no word of which I can disagree. It lacks the word "Maastricht", which I would rather it had contained, but the ways of Prime Ministers are devious and, in the case of the present Prime Minister, timorous.

Had the motion contained that naughty word "Maastricht" I might have been constrained to vote for it —yes, I am a staunch supporter of the Maastricht treaty even though the Government have mucked it up—but then politicians on both sides of the House started to exercise their imaginations on the motion. Lo and behold, the issue became a vote of confidence. Although I cannot find those

[Mr. Andrew Faulds]

words in the Government's innocuous motion, I am assured by hon. Gentlemen with greater political nous than I—and with perhaps slightly less political integrity —that such it is, or has become with skilful manipulation and some considerable misrepresentation. So in my innocence, which I have maintained over 26 years in this place, they have convinced me that this is, indeed, an issue of confidence.

I do not usually go along with the mob, especially when it is an excitable mob. I have voted against my party on Vietnam, on arms for Israel in 1973, on east-African Asians and on the EC, and on each issue I was absolutely right, as the House will now realise. I must confess that I do not relish the prospect of being skinned alive on Parliament green if the Prime Minister were to win by one vote and I had abstained.

I must say to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench, however, that, for an old timer like me, enough is really enough. As we fought the election as ardent Europeans and our conference heartily endorsed that stance—which perhaps some of my colleagues ought occasionally to remember—I now expect the parliamentary Labour party, and its Front-Bench spokesmen in particular, to support strongly the progress of the Maastricht Bill. There must be no erosion of our European position. There must be no obstructionism in Committee. *[Laughter.]* The laughing would suggest that some berks —I mean, some hon. Members—are going to try it. I hope that they will be roundly defeated. There must be no abstention on Third Reading. As a pro-European I shall certainly vote for Third Reading—regardless of what devious position the party may by then have adopted. What will be interesting at that Third Reading will be to know under which Prime Minister we are then serving.

7.14 pm

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) made an admirable speech, and I honour him for that, even if I do not agree with much of what he said.

The Leader of the Opposition opened his speech by congratulating Governor Clinton on becoming President-elect of the United States. As I watched the American election results in the early hours of this morning and saw the celebrations of the Democrats' victory, I recalled our own election night on 9 April. When my result was declared at Great Yarmouth town hall, I told those who had elected me that I could not celebrate that victory while so many people in my constituency continued to be out of work.

The message that came from the United States via our television screens last night was clear and strong: President Bush had not addressed the jobs problem; he had seemed to leave the recession to sort itself out and had had no coherent economic programme; and he had lost touch with the people of America. I have to say to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that, if he does not address the problem of jobs, establish a coherent economic programme and regain touch with the people of this country, he will go the same way as George Bush—only quicker. I do not want to see that happen, but I feel that this Maastricht Bill, and the debate on it, is monstrously irrelevant to the real issues that face the Government and the country.

Various right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken —including my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, whose remarks will no doubt be reiterated by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary—have said that the Maastricht Bill is a means of establishing a climate in which jobs will be created. I see no evidence of that, except that there will be jobs for the boys—the boys in Brussels and Strasbourg.

I admired my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's opening speech, but I wish that the Government had told us exactly what benefits Maastricht, if ratified, would bring to Britain. Those of us on the Conservative Benches who have doubts about Maastricht have heard ourselves described by the Home Secretary and the chairman of the Conservative party on the radio and television as

"the tail wagging the dog".

My vote is as good as my right hon. Friends' votes.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, for whom I have the greatest respect, and whom I believe to be a most distinguished occupant of that great office—even if, with typical modesty, he is not listening to what I am saying—cannot reduce honourable and deeply held convictions that go across the party divide to what he has described as "internal squabbles". He demeans himself by using that epithet to describe views that are contrary to his own but that are held with a sincerity and conviction equal to his own.

I am told that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister says that we must trust him. Of course I trust him. I do not have the same trust in President Mitterrand, Chancellor Kohl, Mr. Delors and the rest of the Euro-elite. I do not mean that those statesmen are any less or more trustworthy than statesmen in any other country. What I mean is that their interpretation of what the Maastricht treaty means cannot be relied upon to coincide with my right hon. Friends' interpretation, or—more important —with judgments made by the European Court when the Commission seeks to enforce a decision in the United Kingdom in years to come.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) said, no one has mentioned one German whom I trust implicitly and whose assessment of the Maastricht treaty was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). His assessment of what the treaty really means is the same as the assessment that I made when I voted against Second Reading in May. That man is Mr. Bangemann. It is no good the Prime Minister saying that that eminent Vice-President of the European Commission was being silly and ill-informed—although perhaps he was silly to let the cat out of the bag at a time of considerable inconvenience to my right hon. Friends.

The Prime Minister tells us that Mr. Bangemann, in interpreting the Maastricht agreement as a step towards a federal Europe, cannot know that because he was not in Maastricht at the discussions when the treaty was negotiated. When the European Court in Luxembourg is required to adjudicate on some issue relevant to the United Kingdom and the judges find that we have not interpreted the treaty correctly, and therefore find against us, will we be told that their judgment is silly and ill-informed because they were not present when the treaty was agreed?

Subsidiarity is the fundamental issue. We all know that it means different things to different people, even when they speak the same language. It is a sure thing that it means different things when they speak 12 different languages. Lord Mackenzie-Stuart, the President of the European Court from 1984 to 1988, described the treaty definition of subsidiarity as

"a prime example of gobbledegook, embracing simultaneously two opposed concepts."

He was President of the European Court for four years and called it "gobbledegook", but he suffers from an enormous disadvantage as he was not present at Maastricht when the treaty was agreed.

Due to the short time available, I must confine myself to fewer remarks than I had intended to make. When we made a mess of the exchange rate mechanism—I told my right hon. Friend Lady Thatcher that we should not have joined—and things did not work out, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that the scales had fallen from his eyes—or at least I read that he said so. I may be wrong, in which case someone will correct me. The scales fell from my eyes some months ago. That is why I voted against the Second Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill in May. In two years' time, when something in the treaty has been interpreted as lawyers say it should be, but in a way that my right hon. Friend does not accept, will he say that the scales have fallen from his eyes?

My hon. Friends have urged me to vote with the Government and not to let my right hon. Friend down, although the Government motion, and the debate, is of his making. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) made it crystal clear from the Labour Benches that he and his fellows view this as a vote of confidence in the Government and I cannot join them, since I have no confidence in the Labour party to handle the United Kingdom's affairs in Europe, out of Europe or wherever we happen to be in 10 years. I cannot join them in the Division Lobby in their squalid attempt to——

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman has chickened out.

Mr. Carttiss: I do not care. The Opposition are a classic case of chickening out. They have been talking Europe, promoting Europe and wanting Europe, yet tonight they intend to record a vote against Europe. I shall vote against them and against the Government and for a referendum —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"]—so that the people of this country can decide.

7.23 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): This has been an excellent debate on the position of the United Kingdom in Europe. I stress that because we are now in Europe and we must make the best of it for all the United Kingdom.

There has been only one sour note during the debate, which unfortunately came from the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), in his offensive and arrogant personal attack on the Leader of the Opposition. At one stage, I had to check that the new Leader was not a woman, such was the vigour of his personal attack.

Hon. Members who have served in the European Parliament for many years have had to endure many boring resolutions. Hon. Members present who were there will recall them. We went through a list of meaningless statements such as, "This Parliament accepts that the earth goes around the sun," that "The Single European Act was passed in 1986," and recognising that "Today is Wednesday 4 November 1992," and so on. Judging from the Government's motion, they have become very European in their thinking, because it is anodyne and mundane—a truly European motion.

Unfortunately, the motion is unnecessary. There is no good reason for this debate. Denmark's position has not been clarified. The Danes have come up with proposals, but they have already been shot down by the President of the European Commission. We now know that subsidiarity will not be made clear until after the Edinburgh Council meeting. The two provisos which were to be clarified before we could make progress have not been resolved.

The Prime Minister seems determined to make Maastricht a personal issue and so we are forced to vote on the motion. The Ulster Unionist party has been consistent in its attitude towards the Maastricht agreement. In the recent general election campaign we were the only party which stated clearly in its manifesto that we were opposed to the agreement. Let us not forget that it is a treaty for European union. That is spelt out in detail in the agreement, and for the Government to pretend otherwise is to avoid the truth facing us in this debate. It creates European citizenship, which is also defined in the agreement. It goes further and it extends Community control over our security, immigration and, eventually, defence policies and will extend major control over our economic policy. The Maastricht agreement is another step towards a federal Europe, which many Europeans in the 12 countries of the Community want.

I served with Martin Bangemann in the European Parliament, and I know him well. What he said yesterday is true. I was surprised to hear the Prime Minister say that the Commission had dissociated itself from Herr Bangemann's statement. I looked in the press today and there did not seem to be any rejection of his statement by the Commission. I should like a further clarification that the Commission has not condemned him for what he said yesterday.

I notice that our Liberal colleagues are nodding in agreement with the statement that Herr Bangemann was reflecting the real thinking within the European Community, and the final objective of a united states of Europe—a federal Europe. We must face that in this Parliament.

Of course, the opt-out clauses in the agreement have been praised, but they would isolate the United Kingdom within the Community. Opting out isolates us, so it is not the answer for those people who say that we do not want to be isolated in Europe.

Some people say that they do not want a two-tier Europe but, once again, the Maastricht agreement lays down the formula for creating that, because it will lay down which countries will join monetary union and which ones will stay outside. There will be two systems within the Community.

Subsidiarity still has to be clarified in Edinburgh. Some business men, but not the majority, and some business organisations—in Northern Ireland most business men would not identify with the comments of some business organisations—fear that if Maastricht is rejected we shall lose a market of 340 million people, but that is nothing. If Maastricht disappeared tonight, which it will not, there would still be a European Community and 340 million

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people living in it, and the single market would still start on 1 January 1993. They will all be there for business men to benefit from, and I wish that they would fully understand that.

I am sorry that the Prime Minister and the Government have decided to deny the people of the United Kingdom a referendum. Denmark, France and the Republic of Ireland were given one, but we have been denied the right to express our views on whether or not we want Europe to be further involved in the internal policies of the United Kingdom.

From a local point of view the cohesion fund is important to Northern Ireland. It has been denied to us under the Maastricht agreement and promised to the Republic of Ireland. The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has often mentioned how unfortunate it is that that assistance is to go to the south rather that to Northern Ireland. The one way in which to ensure that there is no disparity in this matter is to bring an end to the Maastricht agreement and therefore to the cohesion fund. We would then have a level playing field for Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Ulster Unionists strongly support greater co-operation in Europe on the basis of sovereign states. We reject federalism, common security and defence forces, common European citizenship and a European central bank, which would have adverse implications for our national economic policies. Ulster Unionists would not sell the United Kingdom short in Europe, but some members of the Government obviously would.

Tonight we will call upon Her Majesty's Government to recognise the strength of British people's opposition to the Maastricht treaty and to await clarification of Denmark's position. They should let the people speak through a referendum. Alas, the Government seem intent on giving even greater control to Brussels. A delay in the proceedings on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and a decision to hold a referendum in the United Kingdom would be well received not only by our citizens, but by the majority of the citizens in Europe. We saw what happened in Denmark where 50 per cent. of its citizens were against Maastricht—a similar number were against it in France. I believe that at least 50 per cent. of Community citizens would welcome a decision to give the United Kingdom people the right to express themselves.

It seems that the Government have closed their ears to those appeals and, that being so, Ulster Unionists have decided, unanimously, that they have no alternative but to support the Labour amendment this evening.

7.31 pm

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): I hope that the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) will forgive me if I do not comment on his speech, but I am sure that he will understand that my time is curtailed by the 10-minute rule.

I speak as someone with no love for the way in which Europe has developed in the past 10 years. I have had some experience of that development, because on a number of occasions between 1983 and 1987, when I was a Minister in the Scottish Office, I found the European Commission beginning to intervene in what my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary called some time ago, "the nooks and crannies of our national life." It intervened to the extent that distillery workers' jobs were in danger of being sacrificed in the interests of 300 geese. At that time, I decided that this was not the Europe that we had voted to join in 1971 and that we had voted to support in a referendum in 1976.

The Europe of nations, the Europe of the common market, which was the Europe that we had supported, had been hijacked, in effect, by those who saw a European superstate and a European federation as the direction in which they wanted to go. That direction is not one that I would or could support, nor am I being asked to support it tonight.

We were led to believe that such a Europe was inevitable because of the train analogy. Hon. Members will recall the number of times that we were told that, if we were not on that train, we would not be part of Europe. We were told that, if we were not in the driving cab, we would have no influence on the destination of Europe. One thing I know about trains is that they are run on a railway track, that that track ends at a single destination and that one cannot diverge from that rail on the way.

That myth did a lot of damage to the European cause. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set off for Maastricht, I was sceptical about whether he could achieve some of his stated objectives because I believed that the firmness of the railway track would prevent him from doing so. The achievement of Maastricht was that the Prime Minister came back and showed that Europe was not a train on a single track, but a tanker, very slow to stop and very difficult to turn, but something that could be turned. The significance of the Maastricht treaty was that it showed that the beginning of that turn had started.

All right, we can have our doubts about the word "subsidiarity" and of course it lacks definition. The important thing about subsidiarity is that the concept of devolving power from the centre of Europe to nation states has been given voice. We can build on that. I accept that, at the moment, we alone have the right to exercise the opt-in provision on the single currency. I am prepared to wager, however, that by the time that single currency is established in 1996 or 1997, other countries will ask for the same right to express their views on it. That is healthy.

It is also important to note that defence and foreign affairs have been excluded from the areas of competence. The Maastricht treaty was the first European treaty that enabled nations to say that they would retain their right to self-determination and would co-operate only where we could all agree that such co-operation was necessary. That the Community has shown that it can turn makes it important to me that the Maastricht treaty is ratified. Much mention has been made today of Mr. Bangemann and federalism. Some time ago, he talked about prawn-flavoured crisps, but he was wrong about them and he is wrong about federalism.

Maastricht did not create any vast change, but it is significant because the train analogy has been replaced by that of the tanker—a tanker slowly turning. The turn that started with the Maastricht treaty can be built upon. We can and must turn more, but we can achieve that only if we are still on the bridge and at the helm. That is what ratification of the treaty means.

We have an opportunity to play a role in turning the great European tanker because underlying currents in Europe are running in our direction. We witnessed that with the vote in France. There have been murmurs about change in Italy, while in Germany there have been discussions about the importance of retaining the mark. We can be the natural leaders in achieving change because we were the first to recognise the need to make it. We can do that only if we retain our credibility.

The concept and the movement towards a new Europe of nations are much bigger and greater than the semantic arguments we have had about the commas and semicolons in the treaty. I am a lawyer and I love having black letter arguments about what words mean and in what context, but our neighbours in Europe think that that is completely mad. They look at wider meanings, directions and momentum. We often find ourselves at a disadvantage in Europe because we look at the letter of the law while our European partners look at the concept that lies behind it.

Tonight is an occasion when we must look above and beyond the text of the treaty. We must consider what would happen if the treaty did not exist. Those who are against the treaty have failed to offer an alternative. I am frightened by their lack of recognition of the fact that failure to ratify the treaty would destroy our ability not only to lead the move towards that new Europe but ever to seek any special treatment for this country again.

I fear that those who say that we should turn our backs on Maastricht are taking a tremendous risk—the black risk of a centralised Europe, the risk that Europe will go on without us if necessary, and even if we are part of it, our colleagues will say, "You've had your chance. In future you can take it or leave it."

In my constituency, Honda is busy creating 4,000 jobs. We cannot leave Europe without creating enormous disruption in our economy. If we stay in Europe, I do not want to be part of a Europe in which we were dragged along by the decisions of others. I want to be part of the decision-making process.

I said at the beginning that I did not want to be part of a European superstate. Equally, I do not want to find myself in a country that is outside a European superstate, with our industries unable to penetrate it.

Supporting Maastricht to achieve further change requires a degree of faith. None of us can prove what will happen either way, but nothing worth while in history has ever been achieved by logic and law alone. It requires inspiration and will. Every battle and every great change in history tell us that.

A wind of change is blowing through Europe in the east and the west. For the first time in my political life, the direction of Europe can be changed and we can lead that change. To those who talk about national pride, I must ask, "What pride will there be if we turn our backs and run away from the challenge that we are now offered?" I am prepared to make that act of faith and to take that risk, which is why I shall wholeheartedly support the Government in the Lobbies tonight and when the Bill is considered in Committee.

7.40 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I disagree with the previous speaker because I believe not only that we should not proceed with the Bill but that the Maastricht treaty is the wrong treaty at the wrong time for Europe, as Europe has developed in the past few years.

At the heart of the treaty is the pursuit of economic and monetary union and a common currency. The pursuit of economic and monetary union will intensify the recession throughout western Europe and cause considerable damage to western Europe's industrial base, which is not as strong as people sometimes think. Indeed, it is weakening most of the time. The pursuit of economic and monetary union also poses a real risk to social cohesion and the social fabric of the member states of the European Community.

At the heart of economic and monetary union lies the goal of price stability, which is doublespeak for zero inflation. Price stability is really the new gold standard. To achieve price stability, member states' monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies are to be corralled and converged, despite the diversity of those member states' economies. The money supply will be dealt with by an autonomous central bank that will control monetary targets and the growth of money. Fiscal policy—public spending—will be enshrined and dealt with by the treaty, and exchange rate policy will be dealt with by the movement within the European monetary system, as has happened already, towards irreversible fixed exchange rates. In those three areas of policy, all the decisions are taken away from democratically elected Governments and placed in the treaty or in Community institutions.

I read a publication today by a Conservative lawyer who suggested that we were in breach of the treaty by not re-entering the EMS. I do not know about that—it seems rather extreme—but I have little doubt that, if the treaty is eventually ratified in the House, we shall be back in the EMS within six months, perhaps even sooner.

It will not all happen a long time in the future. The Prime Minister fairly pointed out that the second stage of monetary union—the opt-out provision does not affect the second stage—starts on 1 January 1994 with the setting up of the European Monetary Institute. That body will have no teeth and will be able to issue no directives. But it will be an important body because two of the functions that it must deal with will be, first, to try to work out common monetary indicators and targets in readiness for setting up the autonomous central bank. Secondly, it must try to establish a uniform consumer price index by which means the goal of achieving zero inflation can be met.

That is the reality of what will happen. It will be deflationary but much worse than that, not only because Europe is going through a difficult recession and will continue to do so for some years, but because of the single market and the Single European Act. We hear little about the single market. It is an enormous market, which will lead to considerable rationalisation of European industry. In Europe today, we have eight or nine car firms, if we count General Motors and Ford of Europe. The United States of America has existed for a long time on two and half car firms, if one describes Chrysler as a half. Europe will be unable to maintain seven, eight or nine car firms in the next five to 10 years, with the momentum and process of a single market and the Single European Act.

The steel industry, too, will be affected. Europe will be unable to have two or three steel companies in each EC country. All that rationalisation, quite apart from the Maastricht treaty, will cause considerable problems. Factories will close, jobs will be lost and unemployment will increase. Those problems are difficult enough, but on top of those we shall throw the deflationary Maastricht treaty into the pot, with all the effects that it will have on European industry.

What will happen if we reach that gold standard—price stability—or do not quite reach it? What benefits are likely

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

to come from it? I spent some weeks of the long recess reading literature on price stability and zero inflation. There is a considerable amount of it in Europe and the United States. Most of it is gobbledegook and comes to no real conclusion about the benefits of so-called zero inflation and price stability. Eventually, it reached metaphors, saying that price stability is the tip of the iceberg. The benefits above the iceberg can be seen but far more benefits lie underneath that iceberg. We are not quite sure what they are but they are certainly there. In my opinion, a better analogy would be with subatomic physics and quarks. Apparently, those quarks, or particles, can be seen only by the high priests of the mysteries and when the high priests of the mysteries are not looking at them they are not there.

Those are benefits from zero inflation and price stability. The European high priests may be able to see them—nobody else can—and when they are not looking at them they are not there. So I am not sure what is supposed to be the benefit of driving all the diverse economies of Europe, from those of Greece to the United Kingdom, towards that great goal of zero inflation and price stability.

The people who will suffer on that journey will not be the European bureaucrats or the European political class. They will do well out of it. Indeed, cocooned in their glass and steel offices and their limos, they will do better. I see that the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), is amused at the prospect. They will churn out more and more paper, destroying more and more Brazilian rainforests, and will benefit from all that. Those who will suffer will be industrial workers, the unemployed, the poor and the disadvantaged—those unable to be part of that rationalisation and that treaty of deflation. Neither will they have much hope of changing the policy because we are taking economics out of politics. Adam Smith talked about the political economy. That will no longer exist and all that will remain will be an economy decided by institutions, bankers and unelected bodies. All those people who will suffer as a result will have little hope. Elections will become rather deceitful. We shall pretend that we disagree on certain matters but the whole economic question, like judges' salaries and the Consolidated Fund, will be fundamentally enshrined. People will be able to do nothing about it because it will be outside the role of democratic Government.

That is not a healthy position and makes no sense. If we ratify the treaty by means of the Bill, it will be a dangerous nonsense. The House of Commons has a good tradition of puncturing dangerous nonsenses. I hope that we shall have the courage to do so tonight.

7.49 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The Leader of the Opposition began his speech by applauding the election of Mr. Clinton, as he then was, to the White House. I do not know whether he is aware that President Clinton campaigned on a policy that would take United States investment from Northern Ireland in the advocacy of the MacBride principles. I remind the House that MacBride was a former chief of staff of the Irish Republican Army and that thousands and thousands of dollars have been spent by the Government on trying to counteract those principles which would do great damage to the Northern Ireland economy.

I do not welcome the proposal of the new President to interfere in the affairs of Northern Ireland by sending a special envoy to beat our heads together to make us see a united Ireland as he wants to see it. The new President should keep out of Northern Ireland affairs. After all, his own state of Arkansas is one of the two states of America that have no civil rights legislation. Let him put his own house in order before he comes to Northern Ireland to set our house in order.

I am glad that the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is on the Government Front Bench because I hope that he will convey what I have said to his boss, the Foreign Secretary. I hope also that his boss will convey his remarks to the right people. I am sorry that I had to waste valuable time, but what I have just said had to be said.

I am amazed that those who are all for Europe are advocating a breach of the treaty of Rome. The treaty makes it clear that there can be no vital change to it, until every partner agrees that change. The Common Market is prepared now to engage in an illegal act, and I say that on the basis that the Maastricht treaty has been stopped by the outcome of the referendum that the Danes held.

There was much laughter in the Library when we read the Danish document because we thought that we had missed a vital report. In fact, the Danish people stated:

> "As a result of the referendum of 2 June, the Bill on Denmark's ratification of the Maastricht Treaty lapsed."

Consequently, the 11 countries that signed the treaty are faced with a real problem which can be solved only by all 12 countries together. So, until Denmark agrees the treaty, there is no treaty. We must make that clear. I see that some hon. Members are shaking their heads. They can do so as much as they like but that does not alter the facts and the law.

I happen not to believe in the treaty of Rome. I do not like it. But why are the advocates of the treaty not prepared to carry a banner for it and argue that we should go legally about this business?

It is no use telling us that France does not police the treaty. I agree that it does not. Similarly, it is no use telling us that the Italians have one inspector in 10 factories when we in Northern Ireland need five if the law is to be kept. There is no point in taking up those issues and at the same time proceeding illegally with a treaty that cannot be ratified until Denmark agrees it.

The Danes have made it clear what they are against, and the things with which they do not agree go right to the heart of the treaty. It is the axe laid at the root of the tree. We are told in a document:

> "Denmark does not participate in the so-called defence policy dimension . . . Denmark does not participate in the single currency and the economic policy obligations . . . Denmark will have no obligations in connection with citizenship of the Union . . . Denmark cannot agree to transfer sovereignty."

Well done, Denmark. I am glad that it does not agree to transfer its sovereignty. The document continues:

> "As a result of this, the objectives of the Union set out in the common provisions of the Maastricht Treaty will not apply to Denmark on the above points."

At the end of the Foreign Office's comment—it is a typical Foreign Office paper—there appear these words:

> "With the publication of this memorandum, we know clearly what Danish intentions are, and that at the end of the

> negotiations the Danes propose to consult their people again."

They do not propose to do anything of the sort. They are saying, in effect, that they will accept the treaty only if their conditions are met. Unless they are met legally, they will not go back for a second referendum. They know that if they did so it would be rejected. That is what the people of Denmark are saying.

Let us consider subsidiarity. Subsidiarity comes from dogma of the Roman Catholic church, which I know little about. It is devolution of power from the hierarchy to the lower regions. Who made so many countries in Europe the hierarchy? When did they get such power? Others in Europe are saying to us, a national Parliament, "We shall give you this, that and that." Where did they get that power? Did Parliament vote them all that power? They tell us, in effect, that they will release certain parts of their power.

I was at the European Parliament in Strasbourg; so was the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who is sitting with his feet resting on the Government Dispatch Box. He did not stay very long because he had a lunch appointment. That was his great submission to the European Parliament. I do not blame him for that. The President, Mr. Delors, made an interesting contribution to the debate. He spoke about four things, and I am sure that the Minister remembers them. The President talked about transparency, efficiency, proportionality and nearness. He said that he would describe subsidiarity as a "presence of mind" on the basis that it "cannot be defined". He added:

> "It is like the academic debate between the Jesuits and the Dominicans."

I think that I know who the Jesuits are, but in this debate I am not sure who the Dominicans are. However, if the high priest of the Maastricht treaty cannot define subsidiarity, how are we to do so?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the high priest is not a signatory to the treaty, nor one of the high contracting parties to it.

Rev. Ian Paisley: He is the general director of the treaty and the man who will put it into operation. He has the President of France with him. It is wrong for the Prime Minister to say that Mr. Bangemann's view is not accepted by any Government in Europe; it is accepted by most Governments in Europe. I have sat as a member of the European Parliament since the first elections and I have listened time and time again to ideology about Europe. It seems that it is focused on centralism and not real federalism. Centralism is far stronger than federalism. It means that the crumbs from the rich man's table will be given to the recipients.

I regret the remarks of the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor). My party has campaigned on these issues more than any other party in Northern Ireland and those issues appeared in its manifesto. The manifesto that was produced by the right hon. Gentleman's party was not the only one that dealt with these matters. I am a consistent anti-marketeer. I do not sit among the big battalions in Strasbourg. The Official Unionist Member sits with the Christian Democrat ranks, which are adamantly for Maastricht. I do not sit with them. I sit alone. I raise my voice—I shall continue to do so—against something which I believe is detrimental to the United Kingdom. Let no one go down a side alley this evening. We are debating whether we shall accept the Maastricht treaty, not whether we are coming out of the Common Market. What the treaty——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I call Mrs. Margaret Ewing.

7.59 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In speaking today, I represent the views of the joint Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru group in the House. I remind hon. Members that all seven of us cast our votes in favour of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and therefore contributed to the majority of 244 on Second Reading. The fact that those seven votes were cast in that way might not have appeared to be important on that occasion, but I give a clear warning to both the Treasury and the Opposition Front Benches that this is a multi-party Parliament and no one should arrogantly assume that the votes of the smaller parties will be automatically cast in any particular direction.

I have missed only about eight minutes of today's debate. There has been a sense of unreality about it with each hon. Member interpreting the motion in his or her particular way. Some have said that the debate is about ratification of the Maastricht treaty, which it is not. Madam Speaker gave a ruling on that earlier. Others have said that it is about confidence in the Prime Minister. However, the only party that had the courage to table a motion of no confidence in the Government's handling of the Bill was the joint Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru group. Had our amendment been selected, we could have had a much simpler debate because we could have dealt with European issues and where the Government stand on them.

The Government have set a dangerous precedent by saying that they are holding this debate because the Opposition asked for it. If that is so, I assure the Government that this opposition will be asking for many more debates on vital issues. For example, my fishermen would very much like a debate on the common fisheries policy.

We are debating what is called a paving motion. In Scotland, the pavements are covered with crazy paving —and the Government's motion falls into that category. It makes no sense to anyone either inside or outside the House. Hon. Members have said that people in Europe do not understand what the debate is about, but I suspect that the majority of people in the United Kingdom do not understand either.

I wish to make clear why we are voting against the Government tonight. We would not have tabled a motion of no confidence if we had not meant it. The Bill was flawed at the start by the Government's cavalier attitude to the Maastricht treaty—the other 11 partners had their copy, while they went home with ours. It is like the advertisement for a certain brand of lager, "I've got mine." It was hailed as a great victory. That set an example to the other member states so that they would want an a la carte menu on the treaty. The Government's attitude has flawed the concept of moving towards closer European union.

The United Kingdom opted out of two aspects of the treaty. The Danes now want clear opt-outs on four aspects and they have made it clear that they want that to be legally binding for an unlimited period. It will be difficult to ensure that the Danes ratify the treaty. They have said

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that, assuming that the four opt-outs are accepted by the other member states, another referendum might be held as late as November next year. It will be a long time before the treaty can be ratified.

The Government have shown themselves to be extremely weak in allowing the backwoodsmen on the Conservative Benches to set the agenda on Maastricht during the past few months. Those Members have narrow attitudes; they believe that civilisation stops at the white cliffs of Dover. They have now driven even the Prime Minister, who said that he wanted to be at the heart of Europe, to say that he is the biggest Euro-sceptic in the Cabinet in an attempt to get them to vote for him. That is pitiful. The Government have been weak and vacillating. There should have been a straightforward debate which would have allowed us to move immediately to the Committee stage. Instead, we have this waste of everybody's time.

I want the Foreign Secretary to think about a few specific points; as the Government currently hold the European presidency, they should have considered them carefully already. Every hon. Member who has spoken tonight has mentioned subsidiarity and said that it is gobbledegook. Indeed, even the Foreign Secretary has said that it is an unlovely phrase. The Danes, who visited us in Parliament yesterday, said that it was a strange example of Eurospeak. The concept that was supposed to bring Europe closer to the people has been defined in such a way that no one understands it. The Government have a responsibility during their presidency to deal with the question of subsidiarity. The motion says only that a "framework for decisions" was established at the Birmingham summit; it does not mention the decisions themselves. That is a dilatory approach.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Government have not budged an inch on the concept of subsidiarity as it relates to Scotland and Wales. They maintain their selfish attitude of keeping it as a concept purely between London and Brussels.

Mrs. Ewing: Indeed. I had intended to say that the concept of subsidiarity sits uneasily with many on the Government and the Opposition Front Benches. Britain is the most unitary state in the European Community. We want to move away from centralisation. Subsidiarity should mean Parliaments in Scotland and Wales, directly elected by our peoples. We could then participate as equal partners within the European Community.

The Prime Minister held out the idea of subsidiarity as a key victory in his negotiations, but he has quickly forgotten it and is leaving it to rot on a shelf somewhere. The Committee of the Regions is often cited as an example of subsidiarity. We believe that Wales and Scotland are nations, not regions. However, the Committee of the Regions is an aspect of subsidiarity that should be dealt with during the United Kingdom's presidency. Naturally, we have reservations about it being a consultative body. It is rather like the Prime Minister taking stock of the constitutional position at the election—the exercise goes on for ever. I am always wary of extensive consultation. A committee that is purely consultative will obviously be weak. In the absence of Scotland and Wales having their own Parliaments able to send people to that committee, there is a responsibility on the Government to ensure that those who do represent the United Kingdom reflect the political aspects of Scotland and Wales. The whole political landscape must be accurately reflected.

There is a prospect that the committee might develop further. I do not want it to be like the Economic and Social Council, just making a comment here and there. It should develop beyond a consultative role and possibly even into a second chamber within the European Parliament. That would be a great step forward for real democracy within the European Community. I hope that the Foreign Secretary will deal with those issues.

Because of the 10-minute rule, I shall not deal with other matters such as the cohesion funds, which are a vital aspect of the treaty.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The 10-minute rule no longer applies, but self-denial would be welcome.

Mrs. Ewing: I shall conclude as I am conscious that many other hon. Members wish to speak and they, too, have been sitting in the Chamber throughout the debate.

Having given the Bill a majority of 244 on its Second Reading, at this stage in the United Kingdom's presidency we should have been much further along the road to ratification. We should have been in the Committee stage. We should have had a constructive debate on various aspects that concern people, whatever their views on Maastricht or Europe. Instead, there is just a mishmash that has caused confusion. The Government did not get their act together and table a straightforward motion to move the Bill on to its Committee stage. My hon. Friends and I have no option but to show that we have no confidence in the Government and we shall vote against their motion.

8.9 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Hegel, whose works are to be found in the Library of the House, observed that the great crises of history are clashes not of right against wrong, but of right against right. A striking feature of the debate on Maastricht has been that both the federalists and the anti-federalists have, with validity, claimed the treaty as an advance for their own cause. However, the federalists are also bound to concede that the treaty marks a much smaller step towards the fulfilment of their long-prepared design than they hoped that it would be in those heady days when Mr. Delors held out to the European Parliament the prospect of 80 per cent. of economic legislation and, possibly, of social legislation emanating from Brussels in a few years' time, and the Delors plan was being devised.

Correspondingly, my right hon. Friends are entitled to be proud of their achievements during the arduous negotiations that culminated at Maastricht. They denied the federalists the wholesale extensions of Community competence proposed during the Dutch presidency. They established the concept of a pillared Community, with major areas of intergovernmental co-operation falling outside the scope and processes of the treaty of Rome. In that way they established a new concept of the union to which member states are required to aspire. The British right to opt out of European monetary union and the equivalent right that the Danes are bound to be granted mean that the centralists do not have a clear road open to them for the creation of a unitary European state, even if the difficulties with convergence are ignored.

My right hon. Friends' achievements at Maastricht applied a powerful brake to the federalising process and opened the prospect of a different sort of evolution of the Community, much better suited to the individualities of its constituent peoples. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister deserved the praise that he received from the Conservative party when he returned from Maastricht, and he deserves a clear endorsement tonight so that the House can proceed briskly with ratification of the treaty. The more reluctantly and slowly we proceed, the more the standing of my right hon. Friends and the Government in Europe will be undermined, and with it their capacity to act effectively in our interests. I would remind some of my hon. Friends that politics is about obtaining power, using it to good effect, and certainly not about throwing it away.

Isolationism has never been a part of Britain's tradition. I indeed recollect Baroness Thatcher saying, in 1979:

> "our island is our base and not our refuge".

Heine has an image of Britain as a great sea monster, crawling back to its island cave, but that was only after we had done the job that we had to do to defeat Napoleon's attempt to establish a European hegemony and, afterwards, at the Congress of Vienna. After the Congress of Berlin, Bismarck paid tribute above all to Disraeli's brilliant diplomacy. Twice in this century Britain, vigilant for her own interests in Europe, has chosen to go to war on the European continent, once in support of Belgium and once in support of Poland. Our engagements have always been both European and global.

Disraeli observed that real statesmen are inspired by nothing other than an instinct for power and a love of their country. On both counts, Britain needs to be at the heart of European decision-taking. It is simply too effete, too dangerous for us not to be.

It is a truism that Britain lives by trade, and 60 per cent. of our exports go to the European Community. It is crucial that we exercise a powerful influence on the Community's trading policies, although many of them have been less than admirable. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for the enormous personal commitment that he has made during his presidency in seeking to achieve a rational and constructive position for the Community in the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations.

If, in the future, we are to be perceived as marginal to the European Community, inward investment will cease to come to this country in any worthwhile sums. I would not fancy our prospects were we to attempt to set up as a Singapore of the North sea. Our fellow citizens do not generally evince the characteristics that have enabled the people of Singapore to make the success they have of their economy, and I say nothing of the Singapore style of government. Were we to try to go it alone, in my view we would be wiped out economically by the true Singapores, the new industrial powers of the Pacific rim.

Vital British economic and diplomatic interests need to be secured through the Community. We should grasp the opportunity to do that with alacrity and in positive style, through rapid ratification of the treaty.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister needs to resume his task, on behalf of Britain, of leading the debate and setting the agenda for the reform of the Community. In recent years Britain has set the pace for at least three major advances within the Community: the single market, the pillared Community, and the acceptance within the Community of the desirability of enlargement. In addition, important work has been set in hand by Britain during its presidency to put flesh on the bones of subsidiarity. Once ratification is behind us, there is the need and opportunity for Britain to continue to lead the Community's development.

One of the agreements at Maastricht was that there should be a further intergovernmental conference in 1996. It is vital that we ensure that the propositions on the table for decision in 1996 are ours and not, this time, those of the federalists.

As the events of the summer have shown, there is a large constituency across the peoples of Europe for our view of a less centralised, less authoritarian and less grandiose Community.

Mr. Rogers: I have enjoyed the hon. Gentleman's speech up to now, but exactly where does he believe that Europe should go? Having served at the European Parliament with other hon. Members present when the Spinelli report was drawn up after close perusal of Europe's future development, I know that all the Conservative Members in the European Parliament supported the Spinelli recommendation for closer European union. What is the hon. Gentleman's vision of Europe? The Prime Minister says that he is in, but wants to move out. What do the Government want from Europe?

Mr. Howarth: I am happy to respond to the hon. Gentleman's invitation. Britain must continue to lead the member states in the redefinition of the powers and procedures of the Community institutions so that subsidiarity becomes truly entrenched, the Commission is, in future, more modest in scope, and the European Court of Justice ceases to aggrandise itself. Even more importantly we need to lead the development of policies within the Community. We must lead the economic debate so that the Community puts behind it sectional subsidies and protectionism. We must secure acceptance that cohesion on a continental scale is no more likely to promote general prosperity than socialist redistribution on a national scale. We need more of the peoples of Europe to recognise that European monetary union, a single currency, would not only be impoverishing but mean the destruction of essential national self-determination. We should underline the terrible inadequacy of a so-called European Community that jeopardises the fragile economies and democracies of central and eastern Europe by restricting its imports of their food, iron, steel and textiles.

All those are important and difficult arguments, and powerful vested interests will have to be overcome. But we shall have allies, not least the Germans, who have no interest in losing the deutschmark and the Bundesbank, and to whom the cost of cohesion on top of their existing costs in the new lander would be intolerable. The Germans in any case are more naturally interested in their relationships with the countries of central Europe and the European Free Trade Association than with those of the Mediterranean.

The experience of the French referendum has shown that there is a huge body of opinion against a federal, homogenised Europe, even a Europe run by enarques.

[Mr. Howarth]

There can hardly be a Frenchman who does not acknowledge the truth and force of Sir Winston Churchill's observation that

> "the Almighty, in his infinite wisdom, did not see fit to create Frenchmen in the image of Englishmen".

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that many people have the view that federalism is not about centralisation but about decentralisation?

Mr. Howarth: There has been a great deal of quibbling, and sometimes wilful semantic confusion, in the debate on Europe. Federalism has been interpreted in the debates that we have had in recent months and years as a movement towards a unitary European state, and it is that to which I refer.

The old leadership in France and Germany does not have long to run. With the natural effluxion of a short space of time, and by virtue of his own abilities and of Britain's standing, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will emerge as Europe's senior statesman. But the precondition for that is that my hon. Friends agree to ratify the treaty and allow my right hon. Friend to seize the opportunities that are open to us in Europe, if only we will take them.

8.20 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Many hon. Members have said that their decision on how to vote is motivated by high principle and that other hon. Members who will cast their vote in a contrary way are engaged in some venal calculation. I am in a fortunate position. My principles and venal calculations lead me to the same conclusion: I shall vote against the Government tonight because I do not believe that hundreds of years of struggle to achieve basic democratic rights have now reached their apex in Europe and that we should pass many of those most vital and important powers to a committee of unelected bankers to take decisions that effectively govern and control our economy.

My venal motive is simple: to remove that shower on the Benches opposite as rapidly as possible. I do not care if there is only a one-in-a-million chance of the Government being brought down—I will take it. My duty is to my constituents, who are being thrown out of work, who are losing their homes and who are seeing their basic services devastated by Government cuts and by cuts imposed on local authorities. The sooner that lot opposite are thrown out of office, the better. The way in which they have conducted the Maastricht debate alone shows that they no longer deserve to lead this nation.

We are trying to come to terms with a Government policy as though it were in the middle of a great grey blancmange—one dives in, feels something in one's hands but it slips through like mush. What does the Prime Minister believe? What does the Tory party want? Are they committed to a move towards a united Europe? Are they committed to hanging back? If they are committed to the latter, they should vote against Maastricht, which is the logical second stage from the ERM and which leads inevitably to monetary union and a common central bank. If hon. Members do not want that, they should vote against the motion, because it will be no good whingeing in 10 years' time, "I didn't mean that when I voted to support Maastricht." That is what Maastricht is all about, and it has been the drift of the European Community for the past 15 years. The first stage was the move towards the creation of a genuine common market—a complete barrier-free Europe—and then a common currency and central bank.

The weakness is that there is no common democracy to control those great central institutions. If the Government and the pro-Europeans were saying, "We are going full speed towards a genuine, united, democratic union of Europe", we could debate that, but they are not. I find myself very much in agreement with the nationalist parties and Liberal Democrats about creating a genuine democratic Europe, but that is not what is on offer to the people of Europe. Maastricht is about winding down our democratic rights. It is about a major shift of power from ordinary people to great and unaccountable financial institutions. We shall be reduced to a body of no more relevance than the average county council subject to rate capping. That is not what I came into power—*[Laughter.]* one day, we shall get some power as well—into politics, to see.

My opposition to the motion is not personal. I think that the Prime Minister is a nice guy. If he were a family's neighbour, he would feed their cat and water their roses when they were away on holiday, but he does not have a clue where the British economy is going, so I shall take every opportunity to bring this painful period for the British people to an end as rapidly as possible.

The Liberal Democrats have made a crass mistake by allowing the Government to set the terms of the debate. I am pro-Europe but against that lot over there and I have not the slightest problem about going into the Lobby to reject a fatally flawed treaty. I have not debated with any Liberal Democrat at public meetings or on radio or television programmes without hearing that person say, "This is a flawed treaty. It is not the treaty that we want. We are really unhappy with this. We would have created something better." Why accept this inadequate treaty that is damaging for the British people? They should throw it out and fight for what they believe in, as those of us who are genuine European federalists are prepared to do.

The peoples of Europe will be soured against European co-operation when they see unemployment worsening and their social wages being ratcheted down under the structure created by the treaty. Only a few Opposition Members have debated the issue tonight. Which Conservative Members have honestly told us what they would do if the Maastricht treaty were in operation in Britain today and the Commission and Council of Ministers instructed the Government to reduce their borrowing requirement to comply with Maastricht law? Where would they make the tens of billions of pounds of cuts if the treaty were in power, because that is what the treaty says? Would they make them in the military sector or in social security? Would they savage further capital works? Why ratify a treaty that they cannot live with now, hoping that somehow the British economy will be better in five or six years' time?

The truth is that for Britain, one of the weakest European nations economically, to lock itself into this situation until it has created a growing and dynamic industrial economy—the modern economy of which the Leader of the Opposition spoke—is disastrous. Maastricht creates an economic unit, with all the benefits for the successful and large corporations and the most dynamic economies, but are we creating a mechanism for the redistribution of wealth, which is effectively what the nation state is? How would Britain have survived if we had redistributed only 2 per cent. of GDP by central Government activity? Britain would have fractured long ago, and that is the flaw of the treaty. If we were creating a Europe that was going to take vast amounts of wealth from the most wealthy parts of the European Community and use them for the poorest parts, we would be creating a mechanism that could function, but that is not what is on offer. The small amount of funds, in relative terms, which is available may assist Greece, Portugal and Ireland—nations with relatively small economies—but Britain stands to suffer most in the move towards European integration unless its economy is re-energised and there is manufacturing growth. There will not be enough wealth from Brussels to save our people from the pain of this treaty.

In a sense, this debate has many of the echoes of the debate when the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, now Prime Minister, took us into the exchange rate mechanism. What were we told then? There was an overwhelming majority in favour, a huge consensus. Sadly, most of my party went along with the consensus. It was the biggest consensus in British politics since the consensus to appease Hitler, and it was as devastatingly bad. We have lost two years of our life as a nation. We have seen 1 million people added to the unemployment figures, as those who criticised the level at which we joined the ERM accurately predicted. We are now seeing stage 2. We are in an incredible mess. I hope to God that enough Conservative Members will put their nation and constituents before their loyalty to propping up a broken-backed Government who are locking us into a treaty that will devastate their constituencies, as it will devastate ours.

8.29 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): We have had a debate as distinguished as the hour deserves. We have heard historic speeches from both sides of the House.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) warned us of the financial consequences of the ever-greater integrating approach of the Community to the management of our economies. He pointed out that it has been a vain attempt because the economies of western Europe are not converging but diverging and to seek artificially to bring them together, which is what the Maastricht process is all about, could lead only to further disasters following that of our withdrawal from the ERM and the withdrawal of Italy, which were wholly predictable and which the Government were warned about in advance.

Then we heard the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) whose credentials in these matters are second to none. He pointed out the serious problem of citizenship. Citizenship is not something for us to wish away. We cannot vote in this matter without the assent of the British people. Who are we to say that they should have additional citizenship of the union—and I quote from the proposed treaty—with its attendant duties and responsibilities, unless they, the British people, assent thereto? In this debate, certainly from the Government side, there has been all too little reference to the British people. So many people allege that there is a democratic deficit in Europe. The democratic deficit is here in Westminster, and if we tonight, on behalf of the British people, allow this proposed treaty on European union to proceed, we will betray the trust which is ours and which was conferred upon us at the last election.

I sought, in what may have appeared to be an arcane intervention in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, to point out that the action of parliamentarians, acting according to their conscience in what they regard as the national interest, can be for the greater good not just of their country but of Europe as a whole, and I referred to the decision of the French National Assembly on 30 August 1954 to vote on a procedural motion—funnily enough, it was not on the issue but on a procedural motion—not to go ahead with the ratification of the European defence community. It was a community which was more political in intention than militarily practicable, and the French deputies had the good sense to realise it and vote it down.

The Western European Union, with its assembly, with its armaments control agency and its standing armaments committee, ensued and the WEU, as a bulwark of our western security in Europe, has endured to this day, so much so that it is to the WEU that, under the proposed treaty of union, the execution of union policies—I say that deliberately, the entity's policies—in defence could ultimately be assumed if the Maastricht treaty were approved.

It was, with hindsight, a development that everybody could approve of because it strengthened Europe's defences and strengthened our mutual co-operation, and it did so on a basis which could endure—that is, of co-operation which is freely sustained by the will of independent sovereign states.

If the union, that integrated entity, goes ahead as the proposed treaty suggests, we know that an artificial creation of this kind without the majority assent of the peoples of the 12 countries of Europe cannot endure. We have seen artificial unions and they do not last. The union that is most akin to what is proposed is paradoxically the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It was not a federal structure but a union, and a union is what Maastricht proposes. The glue was a common ideology and, apart from the ideology, there was, of course, the threat of coercion, the big stick of the party apparatus, the KGB and the military.

There is nothing like that in this, but all I can say is that it is not even a federation. If a federation were proposed, with appropriate checks and balances between locally elected legislatures in the constituent countries of the federation and with a central parliament with appropriate competencies, all would be well, but it is not to be like that. The proposed treaty on European union suggests a highly integrationist approach. There is almost nothing in it about the rôle of national parliaments; there is more in it about the rôle of the regions, funnily enough, than there is of the national parliaments.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends not to let this opportunity for a historic decision on behalf of our people slip by. If Her Majesty's Government, in winding up this debate, were wise enough to say that they would bring legislation to the House to make possible a referendum so that the British people could decide, they would have my support; but unless they can do that, I shall vote for the Labour amendment and against my Government. Some will say that in so doing I am being disloyal. Those who say that should have heard the admirable speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss).

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

He spoke many home truths. A number of home truths have come out in the debate—truth will always out. Commissioner Dr. Bangemann's intervention in Berlin was a home truth that needed to be expressed, and he is at the heart of Europe, after all. The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), who has a long and respected experience of European affairs, said that Dr. Bangemann spoke with authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth spoke with the authentic voice of conservatism and for the principles that can on occasion transcend transient party loyalty.

We must make sure that what we do tonight is the will of our constituents. In the general election campaign there was a virtual conspiracy of silence on the proposed treaty of European union because at the time it suited the three main parties that it should not come up. I even voted for the Second Reading of the Bill. Only when the Danes, by their brave action in the referendum, caused me and others actually to read what the treaty proposed did I change my view. If anybody has any doubts about what this debate is all about, I ask him or her to read the treaty, the treaty and nothing but the proposed treaty.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Wilkinson: Not at this moment.

Read not what right hon. and hon. Members say is not in the treaty or what derogations we have secured, but the treaty, because in it is spelled out the irrevocable objective of the signatories of the treaty: an ever-closer union from which there will be no withdrawal without the great pain and grief which attend upon any divorce, particularly of parties who have gone into an enterprise with good will but perhaps without sufficient appreciation of what is at stake.

Mr. Allason: I share many of my hon. Friend's reservations about the Maastricht treaty which he has urged the House to read. Would it be incorrect to say that he should read the Government's motion? It is tremendously anodyne and there are many of us who voted against the Maastricht treaty and will continue to do so but who find it perfectly possible to support the Government this evening.

Mr. Wilkinson: There is much sophistry around in the Palace of Westminster and at no time more so than when a debate of this nature is forced upon us.

I was about to say that loyalty works both ways. We should not be put into a position where we are made fools of. The anodyne motion—supposedly anodyne—is gravely deficient on two cardinal points to the extent of being blatantly disingenuous. First, we cannot presuppose what the Danes will ultimately democratically decide in their second referendum, and until that second decision the treaty is dead; it does not exist. Secondly, with regard to subsidiarity——

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is not the central point of the Government's motion that it progresses the Bill which ratifies the Maastricht treaty? I, for one, do not want that to take place.

Mr. Wilkinson: My hon. Friend is right.

I thought from reading the *Evening Standard*, which as a London Member I do, that the Prime Minister had his reservations after our withdrawal from the ERM about pressing ahead regardless. Everyone has his or her formative influences. Those of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister were probably in the bank and those of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary were, rather as today, on the diplomatic cocktail circuit in Europe and elsewhere. Those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones)—well, when the Prime Minister spoke of creeping competencies, I understood what he was talking about.

I had my formative influences flying aeroplanes. No pilot would press on regardless, letting down through cloud, knowing that there were mountains underneath, if he wanted to survive. We are being asked in the Government motion to do something that is clearly foolish. All it can achieve is to unite the Labour party, which is fundamentally divided on Europe, against us and so discredit the Government who were paradoxically seeking thereby to enhance their reputation and standing for the forthcoming Edinburgh summit.

How bringing a majority of 21, and one of more than 200 on Second Reading, down at best to single figures and probably to a minus quantity would somehow enhance our credibility at Edinburgh, I cannot for the life of me understand. That is why it is not acceptable for the Conservative party to be made fools of. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth was right when he spoke those home truths so eloquently. I hope and pray that we will take our destiny in both hands and do what we know to be right by voting for the Labour amendment and against the Government tonight.

8.43 pm

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): When we speak of Britain being at the heart of Europe, we should consider for a moment what that means to our constituents. What should they reasonably expect? For the people of Hartlepool as for others it should mean, above all, employment opportunities. It should also mean standards of living that match those of Germany, a quality of infrastructure on a par with that of France and public services that compare with those enjoyed in Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Yet we in Britain are at the bottom of the European league on jobs, divisions between rich and poor, falling spending power and deteriorating public services. We are, in short, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) observed earlier, in a desperate mess in this country.

I do not blame the Government and their present head entirely. They are the enthusiastic inheritors of a slide that they have done nothing to reverse and, in most senses, have made worse. They have failed to use the economic opportunities available to us in the 1980s and, as a result, have failed to prepare us for the challenges of the 1990s. They have also signally failed on what this debate is ostensibly about—their record on Europe and, in particular, their attitude to Maastricht.

As they are asking us to vote tonight in favour of their policy on Maastricht, it is as well to ask precisely what that is. Maastricht has become for the Prime Minister a totem, not of his European policy but rather of his personal credibility. I do not mean simply the absence of the word

Maastricht from the motion, though that surely has its own symbolic significance. It is that he defines the nature of his position on Maastricht not by how much he is participating in its processes, but by how little; not by the parts of the treaty to which he has opted in, but by the parts from which he has opted out.

The Prime Minister is bitterly opposed to the social chapter. Even now, he cannot or will not say what his views are on a single currency. He is even unable to say definitively whether he still believes in managed exchange rates even though, a few weeks back, that was supposedly the crux of the Government's economic policy. Therefore, Maastricht for him is little more than a legal document, a treaty to which he is committed without, apparently, being committed to what it means. It has become, in his hands, a mere paper transaction.

We have reached the absurd position where the Prime Minister's justification for the Maastricht treaty rests on almost nothing more than his having given his word to his European partners that it would be ratified and his desire that that promise should not suffer the fate of all his other promises. But on the actual issues, the moves that give meaning to the process of Maastricht, he is silent, agnostic or opposed.

The key point that I want to make, therefore, is that the Government, under the Prime Minister, are now incapable of leading this country towards the greater European co-operation that Maastricht seeks to implement. This is the pro-Maastricht, pro-Europe case for opposing the Government's record on Europe in line with my party's official conference policy.

The result of the incompetence and machinations of the past few weeks is to leave the Conservative party in the position where it can do no more than offer grace words in support of Europe, while making it clear that no practical action will follow as a result.

Therefore, I want to argue not why Maastricht should be ratified under this Prime Minister who does not believe in its essential elements, but why Maastricht itself is right for Europe and, most important of all, right for Britain.

Whatever its imperfections, the treaty is the best way forward for the European Community. It enshrines the social chapter in Community law. It creates a social cohesion fund for the benefit of less prosperous regions. That will be crucial for my town and the north and needs to be strengthened if we are to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the single market.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mandelson: The hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I am speaking against the clock.

The treaty improves environmental and consumer protection——

Mr. Whitney *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) has been here long enough to know that if another hon. Member does not give way, he must resume his seat.

Mr. Mandelson: The treaty improves environmental and consumer protection and makes a significant advance in overcoming the EC's democratic deficit. It is vital that the European Parliament's ability to oversee the work of the Commission is enhanced and that the power of co-decision with the European Council is strengthened.

We must, however, ask another question, about our own work in the House. Maastricht extends the scope for intergovernmental co-operation, which is desirable and gives the lie to the claim that the treaty creates a federal Europe. None the less, we must also strengthen Westminster's ability to hold the Commission and the Council properly accountable. Without that, the Community's bureaucracy and democracy will remain badly out of balance, which will make it difficult for us to win the necessary popular support for the Community's development.

I do not underestimate the difficulty of achieving that, in relation to the economic and monetary aspects of the treaty, which are the foundation of the Maastricht process. That is particularly true in the wake of black Wednesday. The forced withdrawal of sterling from the exchange rate mechanism—which is, after all, the key building block of economic and monetary union set out in the treaty—made many suppose that it was the Euro-system, not the weakness of sterling and the surrounding events, that was at fault.

Let us be clear about this. The crisis of black Wednesday was born out of the fundamental weaknesses of the British economy. It was as much the product of 11 years of Thatcherite neglect as that of two years of Majorite incompetence. Public doubts and disinformation about Maastricht, however, have been fed further by those who argue that, having left the ERM, in one bound we are free and can now insulate ourselves from further European economic and monetary integration. That is a deeply dishonest message to peddle.

I share the strong feelings of all hon. Members who are in despair at the scale and depth of the recession—who daily witness in their constituencies the destruction of Britain's manufacturing base, and who daily see the victims of unemployment.

Mr. Cormack: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mandelson: The hon. Gentleman will have to forgive me if I do not: others wish to speak.

Opposition Members want action now, and action at home, from this weak and feeble Government. We want action to kick-start recovery, to begin to return the unemployed to work and to make householders secure in their homes again. There is so much that the Government could do to lift the economy out of recession, if only they had the will to do it. Yet, in the long term, it is the gravest of illusions that Britain can solve its economic problems by acting alone. It is disingenuous to argue that the way out of our economic decline is to operate within a purely national framework of policy that ignores the huge interdependence of Europe's economies. That applies particularly to monetary policy, and to the levels of interest and exchange rates.

When it comes to monetary policy, national independence of action is as much a part of history as is the British empire. That is why the Government need to plan now—as soon as is reasonably possible, and at a level that can be sustained—to resume Britain's membership of the ERM, within a practical timetable. That remains necessary

[Mr. Mandelson]

for the achievement of macro-economic stability, without which long-term planning for investment and growth under any Government will certainly be undermined.

Although the Government have not specifically ruled out a return to the ERM at some point, they certainly seem to have cooled on the idea. If that is true, the Government's support for economic and monetary union, and their stated desire to be part of the Maastricht process, can hardly be taken seriously. The Labour party has consistently argued that, for Britain's membership of the ERM to work successfully, accompanying policies are required to strengthen the industrial base of the economy. That is all the more true and all the more necessary now, as part of any timetable for re-entry to the ERM.

The choice facing Britain is clear. We can wish away the growing interdependence——

Mr. Whitney: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We all understand that hon. Members are reluctant to give way when the ten-minute rule is in operation, but surely at this stage, in the interests of debate, an hon. Member who is reading out an essay ought to give way, as every other speaker has done.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) knows very well that it is entirely up to the hon. Member who has the floor to decide whether to give way. That is well established, and there is no doubt about it.

Mr. Mandelson: Had the hon. Gentleman been present during any part of our earlier proceedings, I might have been more inclined to give way to him.

As I was saying, the choice facing Britain is clear. We can wish away the growing interdependence of Europe's economies. We can try to set out our own interest rates, unaffected by levels in the rest of the European Community—as long, of course, as we are prepared to suffer the devaluation that will be necessary to sustain them. I strongly believe, however, that, in the long term, such independence is unsustainable. We are not free agents outside the ERM, any more than we were free agents inside it. Inflation would follow from the depreciation of sterling, and an interest-rate premium would be demanded by the money markets as a result.

The alternative route is for us to play our part in building cross-national institutions to cope with that economic and monetary interdependence within Europe. We can have our say in developing the policies that dictate the European benchmark. Instead of railing at the power of German monetary policy, and seeking to insulate Britain from it by staying outside the ERM and eventual monetary union——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I understood that the rules of the House permitted hon. Members to refer to copious notes, but the hon. Gentleman is definitely reading every word of his speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is certainly the practice of the House for Back Benchers, at least, not to read speeches; but I defy anyone to determine precisely when an hon. Member is reading and when he is using copious notes.

Mr. Mandelson: Thank you for your support, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Instead of railing at the power of German monetary policy and seeking to insulate Britain, we should seek to Europeanise that policy. A monetary policy implemented by a European central bank, acting within a framework of objectives set by the ECOFIN Council, has a far better chance of achieving rational co-ordination of policies—including interest rate reductions across the board—than the present arrangement, in which, like it or not, the Bundesbank determines its own priorities and others must simply respond. That approach is at the heart of the Maastricht process. That is why, rather than opting out of those crucial developments in Europe and putting Britain on the sidelines of monetary union, the Government should use the moves forward in the treaty to construct a long-term strategy for truly sustainable growth and employment. That is where Britain's true interests lie—and that is where secure employment for my constituents will come from.

It is tragic that the Government's lamentable lack of vision and purpose in their European and economic policies is putting that prospect further and further out of reach.

8.58 pm

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I should be grateful if you would tell me how long we have before the closing speeches. I want to make my speech brief and to the point.

Madam Deputy Speaker: My understanding is that the Front-Bench speakers would like 25 minutes each, which means that the first should begin at 9.10. However, that does not mean that the hon. Gentleman has to fill the time between now and then.

Mr. Booth: I shall bear that in mind, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am grateful for your guidance.

The debate has demonstrated the feelings in the country. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have said that they are in favour of Europe and yet against Maastricht—or that they are for their party but do not intend to go down its main line. It has been a case of tip-toeing not so much through the tulip fields of Maastricht as through the poppy fields of Ghent.

Hon. Members will be grateful to hear that I have consulted the people of Finchley on the issue—[HON. MEMBERS: "What did she say?"] I shall support the Government. We cannot play ducks and drakes with our exports; 57 per cent. of our exports go to Europe, and we cannot play risky games with those. As other hon. Members have said, our trade is the life blood of our nation. Nevertheless, I recognise the deep feelings not only among Conservative Members but among Opposition Members. I recognise the depth of agony that runs right through the nation on the issue.

We have been told that we had a debate last December, but that was six months before a certain document—Cm. 1934, the "Treaty on European Union"—was published in May. We have been told that we had an election—but both sides agreed on Maastricht. We have been told that we had a main debate in the summer. Yes, but that was before the Danes made their decision.

On 23 January 1975, the then Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, set out two grounds when he announced his referendum. He said that, on an issue of deep constitutional importance, on which there was a deep division in the Government, there might be a referendum. There are benefits from a referendum. My people in Finchley would have the benefit of more information. There would be more debate and more choice, and we should give more power to our negotiators in Europe.

I have listened carefully to all the objections to a referendum. On a previous occasion, one of my right hon. Friends said that no one read referendum papers—or at least that only 10 per cent. of people did. But nowadays, such debates are conducted on television. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, understandably, has said that we as a nation must make our decision on the issue before Edinburgh. That is quite right—but there are four weeks before then. It took only three weeks to hold a general election. Why can we not have a quick referendum?

Then there is the "mixed up" argument that the issue would be mixed up with other issues such as the economy, as happened in France. But in France, one of the main parties argued against Maastricht, whereas in this country all the main parties are in favour of it.

Some of the people who oppose a referendum say that the question is too complex. That is an insult to the British people. Are we really saying that our people are less intelligent than the Danes, the Irish and the French? Of course we are not. *[Interruption.]*

Some say that there may be drafting problems with a referendum. We had one before in 1975, so why can we not have one again? It is also said that to have a referendum would involve a U-turn by the Government. I and many other hon. Members go—or at least, used to go—to the Court of Appeal every day. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, I must observe that there is an increasing buzz of conversation in the Chamber—and it is not confined to one side of the House.

Mr. Booth: Many hon. Members have been to the Court of Appeal. No one would regard the decisions that it takes every day as U-turns. Its decisions to change its mind are based on new information. We in Britain and Parliament have new information about the depth of anxiety about Maastricht among the people whom we represent. That is a new circumstance, and we must learn from it.

It is said that to call a referendum would be weakness. It is never weakness to trust the people. The House of Commons has been in existence for almost 800 years. It has grown great and become the mother of parliaments by trusting the people. We should do that again in this crisis. I call on both Conservative and Opposition Members to support me.

There is nothing to fear from a referendum but fear itself. If the vote is tight tonight, I call on my colleagues, particularly on the Front Bench, to use courage and common sense and to show confidence in their case, which I shall support.

9.5 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): In the five minutes that I have, I wish to call into question the central theme that the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), have put to their party, the House and the country in the past few months.

They have suggested that, for the first time in the evolution of the European Community, they have rolled back the advance of centralism; they have cabin'd and to some extent confin'd the scope of the European institutions, especially the Commission and the court. I hope quickly to prove in two ways that what the Foreign Secretary and the Minister have suggested is not the objective truth.

In the past year or so of negotiation, the Government have slowed down what would otherwise have been a faster advance towards centralism. They rest their case on two issues—subsidiarity and the erection of pillars of the union separate from the trunk of the Community.

Mr. Hurd *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spearing: I see the Foreign Secretary nod.

There is enormous doubt about subsidiarity. Even if the principle is defined, after competitions and 20-page documents from Mr. Delors, the Foreign Secretary knows that it is not applicable to matters in which the Community has exclusive competence. I tabled a written question in which I asked the Government to define exclusive competence. The Minister of State replied on 23 October. He said that topics within the exclusive competence of the Community included single commercial policy and single agricultural policy. Undoubtedly they would include the single market, too. However, he said:

> "It is not possible to draw up an exhaustive hypothetical list."—[*Official Report*, 23 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. *409*.]

In other words, subsidiarity—if it is successfully defined—will apply in a relatively small area and, I suspect, at the margins.

The other issue is that of the pillars—A to S at either end of the treaty. They apply to single foreign and security policy. Can the Foreign Secretary separate foreign and security policy from defence policy? I do not believe that one can separate them. They are two sides of the same coin. As the Foreign Secretary is aware, article J.2 of the treaty makes it possible in certain circumstances for majority decisions to be made in such matters.

I put it to the Foreign Secretary that our armed forces would not be loyal simply to the Government and the monarch of the day: they would be loyal to the policy of the European union and its president for that six months. That is absolutely essential to the concept of citizenship also found in the new treaty. Curiously enough, it is found in the trunk of the treaty of Rome, in article 8.

There, as the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) reminded us, we find the duties of citizenship. If there will be no change, as the Prime Minister misleadingly implied at Brighton and again today, and if we all remain British citizens, what is the purpose of making us union citizens in a twinkling of an eye on the stroke of midnight at some future date?

I assert that the citizen of the union would also be the monarch of the day, and that the monarch in Parliament would assume the duties of the citizen of the union. So the theoretical sovereign power would assume these duties, whatever they turn out to be and whoever interprets them.

The idea that we have rolled back the advancing powers of the European Community is false. Their advance may be slowed down by Maastricht, but it is because the Government have tried to give the House the wrong

[Mr. Spearing]

impression that we should vote against proceeding further with this Bill—unless and until the Danes have decided whether they can ratify it. If we proceed before that, are we not undermining the principles of democracy itself?

9.10 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I have sat through almost the whole debate. Once we had got rid of the boorishness and the false points of order made by Conservative Members during the speech by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition, it became a good-natured and enjoyable debate.

Many of the speeches from both sides were well worth hearing, and I shall refer to some of them in detail shortly. The arguments about the need for the House to debate today's motion and the significance of its outcome have been kaleidoscopic: give them a shake and they all appear to change before our very eyes.

Some have argued that the debate is about some huge and fundamental principle. I do not believe that. Others have argued that it is about the whole future of the Maastricht treaty. I do not share that view, either. Even wilder allegations have it that the future of the British economy is at stake tonight. Would that that were so, with a discredited Government facing possible defeat.

In many respects, the House would have been better employed debating the various crises that our country faces in economic, industrial and social policies. There seems to be a Cabinet meeting every day, and still Ministers cannot get things right. Just as the Government have failed the British people at home, so they have failed and continue to fail our country in Europe.

The British presidency of the Community has been a fiasco. The British Government have sought the lowest common denominator in the European Community time after time. This Conservative Administration has failed to give a lead. I heard a speech claiming that Britain was leading Europe. I wonder what our European Community partners think of such arrogance on the part of supporters of the Conservative Government.

Far from taking the lead, the Government have failed to give a lead. They have failed to take any initiative during their presidency—on economic recovery in Europe, on the disastrous unemployment in the Community, and even, tragically, on the Community response to the appalling conflicts in Yugoslavia, which was misjudged.

Stripped of the hype and misrepresentation of recent Community events and their significance, this debate is really on a motion about procedure, but a motion with the prime objective of trying to re-establish the authority of an increasingly accident-prone and embattled Prime Minister, who is trying to establish his authority over his increasingly querulous party. We do not intend to help him in that objective, and those who do so intend will be required to account for their actions to an angry and incredulous British public.

As the Prime Minister has struggled over the results of his own misjudgments, of which the coal crisis is merely the latest in a long and sad line, and as the Cabinet meets to consider public expenditure cuts and possibly a public sector pay freeze, who really believes that an incompetent Conservative Government deserve the support of opposition parties?

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: Not for the moment.

All that—and the various changes of explanation for the wording of the motion that we are debating tonight —was graphically set out in the editorial in *The Sunday Telegraph*, referred to by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition. That editorial continued:

> "There must always be a strong presumption against rebellion if the country is to be run successfully."

That is the point made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath).

> "But"—

said *The Sunday Telegraph*—

> "the problem of which all Tory MPs are acutely aware is that the country is not being run successfully."

That is the reality of the circumstances we face, and there is not much sign of confidence, in the wider debate that is taking place in the country, in the Government's ability to get things right.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman said that he would.

Dr. Cunningham: No, I did not, and I do not intend to.

What of the speech made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup? The right hon. Gentleman grossly misrepresented the position of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition and, what is more, he quite erroneously ascribed—to European socialists, at any rate—views that they simply do not hold. I asked him to withdraw what he said. He did not do so. I repeat that he was wrong to say it.

I understand that Conservative Members are somewhat sensitive about the Opposition's charge that the motion is a motion of confidence in the Government in disguise. I can only say that any suggestions of that nature have not come from us—*[Laughter.]* Oh, no. They have come from the Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State for Wales, the President of the Board of Trade and, most emphatically, at the end of his speech, from the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, who urged his right hon. and hon. Friends not to vote against the Government tonight. Pleas for support and confidence in the Government are coming not from us but from members of the Cabinet and other Government supporters.

I have a thing or two to say about the speech made by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), which was strong on sanctimony and weak on judgment. The right hon. Gentleman spoke immediately after the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup but seemed to deny that this was an issue of confidence in the Government, even though that had been the tenor of that right hon. Gentleman's closing remarks. We need no sanctimonious lessons from the right hon. Member for Yeovil, who lost part of his share of the vote at the general election, who has lost support in the country since, who once changed his mind on his party's defence policy in a single afternoon, and who has made many other U-turns since.

Mr. Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I am not giving way.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Do I understand that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) does not wish to give way?

Dr. Cunningham *indicated assent.*

Madam Speaker: In that case, hon. Members must resume their seats.

Dr. Cunningham: Perhaps the speech that took the prize for the greatest cheek was that of the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton). In a distinguished parliamentary career, the right hon. Gentleman has been, among other things, a Government Chief Whip who has bullied, arm-twisted, cajoled and threatened hon. Members into the Lobby against their better judgment for all sorts of reasons, but who came to the Chamber tonight to tell Labour Members not to go into the Lobbies—the denial of half a career's work as a member of the Whips Office.

Mr. Renton: What the hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten, but I have not, is that there are some hon. Members with honour sitting behind him. I suggested to them that they should not come here in time to vote but should take the liberty of a long dinner, so that they could save their honour rather than act hypocritically.

Dr. Cunningham: I am pleased that the right hon. Gentleman recognises that the hon. Members in the House who have honour are on the Opposition side, and not sitting behind him. What is more, they have more honour than he has, and a lot less pomposity.

I admired the speech of the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), although I did not agree with what he had to say—

Mr. Ashdown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: In a moment. I am referring to the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood, and when I have finished I shall give way. He spoke with great courage and clarity about his convictions. Even though I did not agree with some of his arguments, I shall welcome his commitment to support us in the Lobby.

Mr. Ashdown: Since the hon. Gentleman is talking of honour, I wonder how he can with honour recall that, three or four weeks ago, he vociferously suggested and recommended to the French that they should vote in favour of something that he will vote against tonight.

Dr. Cunningham: If the right hon. Gentleman thinks that the vacuous motion tabled by the Government is about the principles of Maastricht, greater European integration or greater commitment to the European ideals, among all his other faults, he simply cannot read. It is not about those issues at all.

I do not wholeheartedly share the views of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), but I must pick him up on one thing. He said that there was an almighty effort to get a French yes because of the rejection of the treaty in the Danish referendum. Whatever the size of the majority in the French referendum, it could not negate the fact that the Danes had voted no, and the fact that, until an accommodation of the Danish problem is clearly agreed, the treaty cannot be ratified.

That was confirmed by none other than the Prime Minister, writing in the *Evening Standard* on 21 September, when he said:

> "The plain fact is that the Maastricht Treaty can only come into force if it is ratified by all member states. In Denmark they have voted against it and, unless the people there change their minds, the treaty cannot go ahead . . . But I made it clear that I will not bring the Maastricht bill back to the British Parliament until the Danes have made their intentions clear."

I also applaud the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) and for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson), and I congratulate all those Conservative Members who spoke, even though I may not agree with what they had to say, who had the courage and the decency to ignore Tory central office instructions to launch bitter and abusive personal attacks on my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition.

The motion is simply procedure dressed up as principle—saving face dressed up as substance. Even the president of the Liberal Democrat party called the motion a "contrivance". The Foreign Secretary told the House last week that it was about the

> "authority of the Prime Minister".

The Secretary of State for Wales said on BBC television:

> "These are very important issues. We have to show our confidence not only in the Government but also in John Major."

In those circumstances, and given the repeated claims for support for the Prime Minister from his right hon. Friends, how do the Government believe that it would be possible for the Opposition to do anything other than oppose the motion?

The Government's position tonight has nothing whatever to do with principle; we have that on no less an authority than that of the Foreign Secretary, who said at the Conservative party conference in Brighton:

> "If huge matters of principle are at stake, collisions are sometimes inevitable. But that does not apply here".

The right hon. Gentleman said that no great issue of principle was involved, and that remains the case with the motion before us.

So there we have it: principle does not apply. There is no mention of Maastricht in the motion. It is contrived, it has no substance—no confidence. It is, as Oscar Wilde might have put it, "the motion which dare not speak its name". That is the type of motion that we are being asked to approve tonight.

How did the Government come to inflict this latest crisis on themselves—for clearly it is all the Prime Minister's work? Step by step, he has added to the confusion at the heart of his Government, in the House and in the country.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): The hon. Gentleman and his party have made great play of the fact that the Government's motion makes no mention of Maastricht. Would he please mind telling me what the European Communities (Amendment) Bill is about if it is not about Maastricht?

Dr. Cunningham: In that case, why not mention it in the motion?

On 24 September, the Prime Minister set out for the House the two conditions that needed to be met before the

[Dr. Cunningham]

House should be asked to proceed with the Bill. The first was the common one, which was well known and agreed on by both sides of the House—an accommodation for the Danish Government and their people. That condition was never contested by any members of the Conservative party or of my party. There was general agreement in the House on that requirement.

Without being pressed and without any political duress, the Prime Minister added his own second condition—the need for a clear definition of subsidiarity. At that time, no one in the House challenged what the Prime Minister said. It was a generally agreed position, and one which the Labour party had constantly occupied since the result of the Danish referendum in June.

Very little has changed since 24 September. It is true that Denmark has published its demands—the so-called national compromise—which mean that the Danish position will be discussed and agreed by the 11 Community members before Denmark can put any "accommodation" on the treaty to the Danish people. Of course, no such accommodation has been agreed, and nor is it likely to be before the Community summit in Edinburgh at the earliest.

That was confirmed by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), during a BBC interview on 28 October, when he said:

> "When it's approved by the Danish Parliament all the member states will look at it. But I am pretty confident that by the Edinburgh Council we will be able to have a position that might be acceptable to the Danes."

That is what the Secretary of State's principal Minister for Europe said "might be acceptable".

The reality is reinforced by the letter from the Prime Minister of Denmark, Mr. Poul Schluter, to our Prime Minister, dated 30 October. The right hon. Gentleman claimed that the letter was his report to Parliament. It was not a report from Her Majesty's Government to Parliament; it was a letter from the Danish Prime Minister. Moreover, if it was a report to Parliament, why was it placed in the Library of the House of Commons as late as 2 pm yesterday, with no notification, formal or informal, to any Opposition party or anyone else in the House? It is an odd way for the right hon. Gentleman to keep his promise to make a report to Parliament.

Even in that document, the Danish Government say:

> "Denmark and the eleven other countries which signed the Treaty are therefore faced with a real problem which can be solved only by all twelve countries together."

Earlier in the same submission to the President of the Council, they say that there will have to be negotiations leading up to the European summit in Edinburgh before there is any hope of an agreement being reached.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

There is no question of the Danish accommodation having been resolved at the present time. We now know from the Foreign Office memo, which the Prime Minister carefully skated over and which was leaked to the press a few days ago, presumably in the Government's latest contribution to more openness in Community affairs, that, quietly and privately, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is not optimistic about the Danish demand.

The memorandum said:

> "The memorandum is unlikely to be acceptable as it stands to member states and some of them may make this clear. We may therefore have a difficult negotiation ahead of us which could play awkwardly with the paving debate and the reintroduction of the Maastricht Bill".

That is the real view of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about the Danish demands and this matter.

It is interesting that the sanitised version of the Foreign Office memorandum, placed in the Library, has had that passage removed from it altogether. Those words appear in the leaked memorandum but not in the one placed in the Library for the information of Parliament. I wonder why.

The Danish Government, it goes on to say,

> "have effectively had to swallow, as their own proposals, a document put forward by the Opposition. The proposals will need to be sold by Ellemann-Jensen, who will not believe in them."

That is the real view of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about the circumstances we face.

We also know that the Prime Minister's demands for an agreed definition of subsidiarity have not been met. People have said that tabling this amendment to this nonsensical procedural motion will make no difference to the position in the House if it is defeated. No one really believes—not even the Liberal Democrats—that, if our amendment is carried and the motion is defeated tonight, it will have any impact on the Committee stage of the Bill other than simply to delay it until after the Edinburgh summit. A vote for our amendment tonight cannot negate the vote on Second Reading of the Bill. We have made our position on the European Community clear at our conference in Blackpool. I stand by those decisions, as does my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition. They are set out in our document, "Europe: Our Economic Future", which was approved overwhelmingly by the Labour party, and it remains our position.

The Labour party has already made it clear that the Maastricht treaty that we wanted would have been somewhat different from the one that the Prime Minister wants. We wanted a more democratic approach to European decision making. We wanted a much more socially conscious approach, as reflected in our support for the social chapter. Irrespective of the outcome today, which is not really about the Maastricht treaty anyway, Labour's position, as already stated, is support for Europe, and it will be in no way diminished.

The Government's motion fails the Prime Minister's tests on Denmark and on subsidiarity. That is why we have tabled the amendment, which does not and could not negate other decisions of the House. It simply proposes awaiting the Edinburgh Council, which is only five weeks away. The real reason for the Government not being prepared to wait that long is that the Prime Minister wants to take on and humiliate the opponents in the Conservative party. That is the reason for today's debate; that is why we are here.

In normal times, that would be a questionable judgment, but now, with the Government all in pieces, with all coherence gone, it is surely complete folly. The amendment would almost save the Prime Minister from himself, if only he could see it. It would allow time for the Edinburgh summit finally to decide the outstanding issues on subsidiarity and on accommodation for Denmark. Then, and only then, should we proceed to consider the Bill in Committee. That is why I urge the rest of the House to join us, the Opposition, in the Lobby.

9.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): This has been a spirited debate but a complicated one, as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has said. He compared it to a kaleidoscope. Now that he has shaken the kaleidoscope the situation is even more confused than it was when he began to address the House. Few motions can have received so much analysis. All sorts of interpretations have been placed upon it as if it contained long extra passages in invisible ink, but there are none. The motion means what it says.

The survival of the Conservative Government is not at stake. What is at stake is the survival of a credible European policy for the United Kingdom. There are Opposition Members who believe in a European policy for Britain that is based on the success of the Community, and they have made some sacrifices for that belief in the past. I have not been enormously enthused by their excusing speeches today. It remains to be seen whether those Members will allow themselves to be driven off their beliefs when the main motion is put to the House.

The speech by the Leader of the Opposition was on a motion of no confidence that he has not tabled. If that is how he feels, why has he not tabled the motion? The answer is that he hopes to lure some of my hon. Friends into the Lobby with him. His speech showed clearly the trap, and on the whole when traps are set in the sight of the victim they do not catch him.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House—and certainly some of my hon. Friends who sit behind me—have through the years wanted nothing to do with the European Community, and that is still their view. For them, the amendment and the motion have no attractions. The great majority of the House, however, believes that Britain and British interests are secured by joining energetically in the European Community.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: No. I shall make some progress.

Most of us—the great majority of us—have broadly the same idea of how the Community should work. We believe in a Community that is based on the effective work together of nation states, whose roles and institutions enable it to intervene—that is the Community—only where it is necessary and proper for it to do so—for example, in enforcing a single market. The words "necessary and proper" are in the Birmingham declaration, which was agreed by all member states.

Most of us reject the idea of a European superstate. We believe—certainly Conservative Members do—in a Community that is based essentially on the principles of the free market. We believe also in a Community which is ready to admit new members as they qualify and wish to join. All this is just about common ground for most of us—almost all of us—on the Government Benches and for many beyond us.

The question that divides us is whether these aims, which we share, are best advanced by ratifying the Maastricht treaty or wrecking it. I am sure that it is better to ratify it. That is not a question that will be decided today because before it can finally be decided Parliament will want to undertake detailed study of the Bill and the treaty. I welcome that. Indeed, we will have a more detailed parliamentary examination than any other member state. That is right because there is a whole multitude of questions and anxieties being tossed to and fro by the media and by individual citizens. This House is the place for those questions to be pinned down, to be definitely posed and answered and for anxieties to be stated and either confirmed or disproved. That is what the Committee stage will be about.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) took a different line in his speech. He is a familiar and, on the whole, agreeable figure in the House. However, we do not know very much about his opinions. For many years as shadow Chancellor his economic policy consisted of denouncing the Chancellor of the day and then shadowing his policies. We do not know much about his social or foreign policies. However, we thought that we knew one thing—that he was clear that Britain's place effectively lay in Europe. He has a long and good record on that. As the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) reminded us, the Labour party conference recently emphasised support for the Maastricht treaty without caveat. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was hustled to the stake when he stepped out of line.

I had an illuminating Saturday morning last month when I was in Brussels meeting some of my Foreign Minister colleagues. Some of them happen to be socialists. They were in Brussels that morning because they were attending a meeting of European socialist leaders. Several of them—more than one—came to see me with great relief on their faces. They said, "Your parliamentary difficulties are over. We have just met that nice Mr. Smith and he has assured us that the Labour party will abstain and abstain and abstain." They regarded that as the height of statesmanship. In the circumstances, I understand why. When I pointed out that the Labour party was not quite as simple as that and that possibly even the right hon. and learned Gentleman was not so simple, they dismissed me as a ruthless cynic. I did not expect to be proved right quite so quickly. The truth is that the one principle, the one policy for which the right hon. and learned Gentleman is known and respected is the one principle, the one policy that he has today clearly abandoned.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman, taking a lawyer's tortuous path through the argument, spent a great deal of time analysing the Government's motion and explaining why he could not support it. We all remember that long before we published our motion he said that whatever we tabled he would oppose it. He must think that we have remarkably short memories.

After the vote tonight the House will turn its attention to other matters. Next week my right hon. Friend the Chancellor makes his autumn statement. There is no doubt that the domestic agenda is full and pressing. However, I cannot accept the proposition that the debates about our place in the Community are irrelevant to our concerns about the economy. As some of my right hon. and hon. Friends have said, the perception that Britain is a fully committed player in the Community is vital in attracting investment. American and Japanese firms do not come here for the weather; they come here because we have certain specific advantages—and at the moment one of them is continuing access to the economic arrangements within the Community.

I wish to deal with two points that have taken up a great deal of time in the debate. The Danish Parliament—with [[illegible] *Hurd*]

the support of seven of the eight parties in it—has now approved proposals that, if accepted by other member states——

Dr. Cunningham: If.

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I said "if" accepted—would form the basis on which the treaty could be put back to the Danish people. The Danish proposals match our views on topics such as subsidiarity and the open way in which the Community works. The Danish proposals for economic and monetary co-operation aim for a position broadly the same as that already negotiated for this country.

The Danes have made it clear that they are not seeking to reopen the text of the treaty. They are essentially seeking to clarify how the treaty will be applied to Denmark in certain key respects. I had a long conversation yesterday with the Danish Foreign Minister who confirmed the Danes' approach on his visit to London. During our six-month presidency of the Community we must quickly take forward discussions among the Twelve. We aim to agree at Edinburgh on a political framework for a settlement of the Danish proposals. Having listened to the Minister and studied the first reaction across the Community—which was not unanimous—to the Danish plan, I believe that there are reasonable prospects for such a settlement.

The hon. Member for Copeland made heavy weather of the issue, but usefully read out an extract from an *Evening Standard* article by my right hon. Friend [illegible] Prime Minister. If the hon. Gentleman studies what I have said and what my right hon. Friend wrote in that article, [illegible] will find that we are exactly at the position sketched by my right hon. Friend at that time.

We have not solved all the problems, but we have never said that we would not bring the treaty into Committee until the Danes had solved all the problems. We have said that we need to be clear about their intentions. We are clear about their intentions. I believe that there is a reasonable chance—I do not want to deceive the House—that at Edinburgh we shall be able to reach an agreement that will enable the Danes to go back to their people.

Mr. Enright: What is the position on European citizenship, as that is crucial to what the Danes are saying? If the Foreign Secretary is renouncing European citizenship on the part of the United Kingdom, that is a basic departure from previous statements.

Mr. Hurd: Our position is exactly that agreed by all member states at Birmingham. Citizenship of the union brings our citizens additional rights and protection without in any way taking the place of their national citizenship.

The issue of subsidiarity has dominated much of the debate. We made good progress at Birmingham. The Birmingham declaration makes it clear that in future the presumption will be that action will be taken at a national level. As one veteran remarked at the conference, that is a huge change from the vocabulary used in the early years of the Community when it was assumed that Community action was, in itself and without question, a blessing.

There are people, like Commissioner Bangemann yesterday, who cling to that faded belief, although I think that it is fading. But having had meeting after meeting in the past few months, I am certain that the climate on that crucial issue—on which the House concentrated—is changing in Europe.

No one who listened to the discussions at the Birmingham summit could believe that there was any prospect of a united states of Europe in the lifetime of the people here. Some people may regret that, but that is the tenor of the discussions.

Mr. Moate: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way on an issue that is of fundamental importance to many of us. The other day the Prime Minister was quoted as referring to the treaty's preamble, which contains so many of those federalist ambitions, as Eurowaffle. How can those of us who have consistently opposed federalism and the move to a centralist authority be reassured that signing the treaty when it contains those words will not have major legal and political significance?

Mr. Hurd: I shall develop the point. The point that I am trying to make is that the climate is changing. Those who believe, quite genuinely, that there should be a steady, inexorable movement towards a single Executive and single Parliament are now on the defensive rather than on the offensive. I do not claim more than that. I do not claim that their voices are silenced, but I am sure that they are on the defensive.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) will not accept that. He listens only to the voices that he most detests. He likes to cling to his nightmares. He said to us today that everybody except the Prime Minister and British Ministers believe that there is this inexorable move towards centralism. Perhaps I could quote from the article that the federal German Chancellor has placed in *The European*. I do not know what relationship it has to what Mr. Bangemann said, but Chancellor Kohl wrote:

> "We have not laid the foundation stone with Maastricht for a European superstate which reduces everything to the same level and blurs the differences; rather we have committed ourselves to a Europe constructed on the principle of 'unity in diversity'. In a strong aside against Brussels"—

this is the agency report—

> "he says: 'We must all ask ourselves in a self-critical way what kind of impression this mania for rules and regulations makes on ordinary people and whether we are running the risk of bringing the European unity process into disrepute.'"

There is more on the same lines. It gives the absolute lie to the notion that we in Britain are solitary and isolated in pressing for changes in the Community on these lines. We are not. We are in an increasing body of opinion pressing in that way.

Mr. Peter Shore: The right hon. Gentleman's whole case is that the body of opinion is changing. The body of opinion has changed only because of the impact of the Danish no vote. It is not a change of fact or a change in the text of the treaty; it is a change entirely in presentation so that gullible people in this country will accept that there has been a change when there has not been.

Mr. Hurd: The change was there at Maastricht. The change was there in the British arguments at the negotiations. The change was there when we defeated the Dutch centralising draft in September 1991. The right hon. Gentleman is perfectly right—I want to be fair to him—that the Danish referendum and the debate in this country, in France and in Germany has added to this movement

—of course it has. It is affecting people's views and opinions and that is quite right. It is affecting them in a way for which we have been pressing over many years.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend know that in *Management Today*, which came out only a few days ago, 69 per cent. of the 3,000 readers who were requested to reply said that they wanted a referendum, and that 68 per cent. said that they were against the Maastricht treaty? Those are business men in this country.

Mr. Hurd: I have not had the advantage of studying that census. I do not think that it fits into the point of the argument that I have reached. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has explained why we believe that this place, and particularly this House, is the place for the detailed examination and then the final decisions on the treaty of Maastricht.

There is now an article on subsidiarity in the treaty. There was no such check in the treaty of Rome or in the Single European Act; now there is such a check. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney and I agree that much that has happened in the debate in different countries has shown that we are working with the grain of public opinion. We are not waiting for the article to be ratified and to become a legal obligation; we are making it a political fact. That work has gone on since the Lisbon summit in June, and was carried forward in Birmingham.

The Commission has been asked to produce examples of past legislation that fails the test and should be removed from the statute book. We have our own list to offer. Already, the Commission is changing. The number of legislative proposals from the Commission so far this year has dropped to 48, compared with the 118 that it had planned. That compares with about 150 in each of the past two years. We are working in the Council, too, and will discuss again on Monday new procedures so that we, the Ministers of the different countries, can test subsidiarity before discussing merits.

This will take time. My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) is quite right to urge us to press this, but I must say to him—and this was part of his argument—that the idea that we can press this successfully if we are hanging back and are seen to be hanging back on the ratification of the treaty is fruitless. The fruits of the Edinburgh Council meeting can be taken into account as the Bill proceeds through the House, but for the Prime Minister—and this is the point I made earlier—to go to that meeting without the clear backing of the House would be to put him, as he said, in a weak and vulnerable position.

I agree with the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) about the importance of the treaty for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The new Committee of the Regions, as she will agree, has the potential. It can be important. It depends how it works out. But we certainly do not believe that it should be underrated, and she knows very well the importance for those parts of our kingdom of the structure funds and of the point that I have already made about inward investment.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) made a striking speech in which he said that what we have to do in eastern and central Europe is the most important job for the Community at present. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister took a British initiative and invited here last week the Prime Ministers of Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. That is exactly the kind of initiative which we are taking but which will wither unless the framework of the treaty of Maastricht is carried through.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) —I am sorry that I missed his speech because I was out —and also the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) tried to indicate to the House that the Commission would have a sinister strength in the pillars, that is to say, in foreign policy, security matters and Home Office/immigration matters. That is not so. The Commission is present now in our discussions on foreign policy because if one is discussing Yugoslavia and sanctions one is discussing matters in which the Commission has a role, and it is useful for its members to be there. But they do not have—and the treaty excludes them from having—the monopoly of initiative, and there is no jurisdiction in these matters for the European Court. So it is quite a different system and the presence of the Commission and its ability, among others, to make proposals is entirely reasonable.

In answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) and his plea for more information, we intend to issue reasonably soon—maybe next week—a booklet which explains the treaty.

This Community of Europe, among other things, is a forum of continuous debate, and this is natural in a community of 12 democracies. The debate on the future of Europe is not over and the centralisers are still active, though now on the defensive. But one does not stop the debate by refusing to ratify the treaty. If we did that we would merely ensure that in the debate the voice of Britain was muted and that the opinions of Britain carried less weight. We would increase the possibility of combinations forming on the continent which would deeply affect the prosperity and security of these islands but in whose policies we would have no say.

The treaty includes several of our own British ideas. We negotiated out of it obligations that we believed would be damaging for us. This is the only agreed framework for the Community over the next five or six years, and I am quite clear in my own mind that no agreement is possible at this time on a different basis, as the Danes themselves have recognised. If we wreck the treaty by refusing to ratify it, the Community will pass through a period of bad-tempered confusion. In that atmosphere, I would judge that there would be no enlargement of the Community—it would not be possible—that the single market would be spoiled and that investors and traders would be uncertain about Britain's place in Europe and therefore uncertain about our future. Within the treaty we can continue to press our own ideas as we are now doing with success on subsidiarity.

The Labour party leadership has shied away from the test. It has tabled an amendment. Once it comes to the point, it has decided to evade it. I hope that the House will take a different view. Let us have some self-confidence in our approach. Let us take advantage of the changing climate of opinion in Europe. Let us drive forward our own British ideas within the framework which we in Britain have helped to negotiate. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 313, Noes 319.

Division No. 82] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(B[illegible]mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rucllf)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*

Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter

Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley

Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Spr[illegible]ain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel

Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 319, Noes 316.

Division No. 83] [10.17 pm

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter

Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John

Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House notes that the European Communities (Amendment) Bill received a majority of 244 at its second reading and was committed to a Committee of the whole House; acknowledges that the House was promised a debate prior to the committee stage; notes that the Danish Government's intentions have now been clarified; recalls the Lisbon Council's commitment to subsidiarity, the Birmingham Council's agreement on a framework for decisions to implement that principle and the practical steps already taken to achieve it; recognises that the United Kingdom should play a leading role in the development of the European Community to achieve a free market Europe open to accession by other European democracies, thereby promoting employment, prosperity and investment into the United Kingdom; and invites Her Majesty's Government to proceed with the Bill in order that the House should consider its provisions in further detail.

PETITION

Pit Closures

10.31 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. I have other business to deal with.

Mrs. Mahon: This is the humble petition of the residents of Halifax—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber please do so quickly and quietly?

Mrs. Mahon: The petition—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is totally unfair on the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), who is dealing with business of the House. Will those hon. Members who are leaving do so quickly and quietly so that we may proceed with our business? Mrs. Mahon, please try again.

Mrs. Mahon: The petition reads:

That the recent announcement of pit closures has filled the people of Halifax with deep concern because of the consequential loss of employment for miners. They are also concerned because of the effect these pit closures will have on employment in related industries. They believe that this short-term policy will be to the long term detriment of the people of Yorkshire and of the nation.

Two thousand, one hundred and ninety eight people in Halifax have expressed their concern by signing this petition because they feel that they are neither economically nor socially justified.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that the Honourable House will take measures to see that these pit closures do not proceed.

And your Petitioners, in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.34 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): After such a momentous debate, it may seem somewhat of an anticlimax to talk about the operation of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991—in relative terms, it is. However, the Act is of great importance to some 6 million dog owners in our country.

I immediately declare my interest as the owner of three west highland terriers, named Tammy Hansard, Madam Speaker Hansard and Ben Hansard. I am also the chairman of the National Advisory Panel for Pro Dogs.

The 1991 Act was passed with perfectly good intentions, it was fully justified and it was supported by the public. It was designed to reduce the threat of attacks by dangerous dogs. I will prove, however, that its implementation has been unfair and a disaster for many responsible dog owners.

When the pit bull terrier first came to the United Kingdom in the mid-1970s, strong representations were made to the Government to ban the import of those dogs. The Government considered that request but said that they could not ban their import because there was no way in which one could define that breed. Surely a dog should be judged not by its breed but by its behaviour and record. For example, a cross-breed of a labrador and a boxer could look very like a pit bull terrier. How many people would have the expertise to identify it on that basis, be they police officers, dog wardens or even veterinary surgeons?

Section 3 of the Act could affect every dog in the country—including the many dogs that are owned by hon. Members. Let me give an example of what could happen as a result of the Act. Let us suppose that a woman peacefully walking her dog in the woods, enjoying an afternoon stroll and minding her own business, is suddenly attacked by a man who may attempt to rape, assault or rob her. The dog, devoted to its owner, immediately goes to her defence and bites the man. The man runs off but within a few hours is detained and charged by the police. He is sent to court and then to prison for assault or whatever. It is quite possible, however, that, as a result of the Act, that woman's dog will be destroyed and the woman will have a criminal record for life. That cannot be right.

Another specific example involved my wife. In the early 1980s—long before the introduction of the legislation—my wife was walking our dog in my constituency. A large, aggressive man came towards her and asked, "Are you Andrew Bowden's wife?" When she said yes, he verbally abused her and put his clenched fist right under her nose. He did not hit her, but my wife was very frightened. Our west highland terrier, which was at her side, growled and showed her teeth. The man turned around and ran.

As the Dangerous Dogs Act stands today, that man could go down to the local police station and say that that dog had caused him worry and strain and that he had felt threatened by it. He could demand action and the police would have to take action. Again, that cannot be right.

In view of the circumstances, it is not surprising that people have described the Act as a "dog haters' charter". Unless the Act is amended, it gives spiteful people every opportunity to settle scores against dogs and dog owners that they do not like.

I wish to make some positive suggestions to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, who I know is listening sympathetically to what I have to say and will pay careful attention to my points. In view of the instances that I have outlined and the possibilities that can and will arise unless the Act is amended, I ask him to consider these amendments. First, the courts should be given discretion in dealing with cases, particularly in relation to the destruction of dogs.

Secondly, having heard all the evidence, they should have the power to make a judgment between a savage dog that is a danger to society—we all want those dogs dealt with—and a pet dog that reacts to a situation of the type that I outlined. The law distinguishes between common assault, grievous bodily harm and bodily harm. Why should not the same principle apply to the Dangerous Dogs Act?

Thirdly, the description of the type of dog known as a pit bull is open to misunderstanding, misinterpretation and abuse. The courts should have a power, in those circumstances, to allow late registration. They have no discretion at present.

Fourthly, under the muzzle and lead section, the courts should be able to consider pleas of "reasonable excuse". If a dog were wearing a muzzle and that muzzle were taken off for 30 seconds so that the dog could have a drink, or if the dog were sick and in danger of choking, that should be justifiable to a court. Is it reasonable to say that, if the muzzle has been removed, the dog could be taken and destroyed? I cannot believe that that was the original intention of the House when the Act was passed.

The case for review of the Act is strong. It is supported by Pro Dogs, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the British Veterinary Association, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the Kennel Club, a world-renowned animal behaviourist, Dr. Roger Mugford, many magistrates, and a leading QC, Mr. Thomas Field-Fisher, who is chairman of the Battersea Dogs Home. Those are just a few examples of people who believe that an urgent review and changes are needed.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider those points carefully? The Act can be—and has proved to be on occasions—unfair and cruel. As a result of the Act, there have been suicides. Families have been devastated by the loss of deeply loved pets. Many of those who have been brought to court are responsible dog owners. Their dogs have caused no harm, but they have been seized from their homes, gardens and even cars and destroyed. That is not true British justice. The law must be changed. I ask my hon. Friend to act quickly.

10.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on his success in obtaining this Adjournment debate and on raising such an important subject. As a near parliamentary neighbour of his in east Sussex, I know only too well what an effective spokesman he is on this important issue and on many other subjects. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat), who is in his place, is also extremely concerned about the issue that my hon. Friend the Member for Kemptown has raised.

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

It is a little over 18 months since we saw the horrific injuries sustained by Mr. Tempest and the young Rukhsana Khan resulting from attacks by dangerous dogs. No one who saw those photographs and the pictures on our television screens could deny the need for some action to safeguard the public. That is why the Government took some action to give the public increased protection against dangerous dogs.

The House will recall that there was particular concern about those types of dogs which are specially bred for fighting. These are not pets or companion animals in the normal sense of that expression. Dogs such as the pit bull terrier are characterised by their fighting nature and by the force and ferocity of their attacks. That is why the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 places special controls on fighting dogs. These controls apply to any dog of the types known as the pit bull terrier or the Japanese tosa, to the dogo Argentino and to the fila Braziliero.

Section 2 of the Act enables my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to apply restrictions to any other type of dog which he considers presents a serious danger to the public. But equally the Act also contains more general provisions aimed at dogs of any type which are dangerously out of control in a public place. The Act therefore deals with the specific problems of fighting dogs and the problem of dangerous dogs generally.

Before turning to fighting dogs, I remind the House of those general controls which apply under the Act to a dog of any type which is dangerously out of control in a public place.

Section 3 of the Act gives the public additional protection against any type of dog. All dog owners must be aware that they are responsible for their dogs' actions. It is for them to control their dogs in public. A dog need not have injured anyone for section 3 to apply. It is sufficient that, by its actions, there are grounds for reasonable apprehension that it will injure someone.

Where a dog causes injury, an aggravated offence is committed. These provisions should encourage dog owners, many of whom are ready to take their responsibilities seriously—indeed, most, I am sure—to exercise greater control of their dogs in public. Not everyone is a dog lover, but even those who are can be put in fear by a dog of any size or type which is dangerously out of control.

The Act also clarifies the courts' powers under section 2 of the Dogs Act 1871 to impose controls on dangerous dogs. A court may make an order on complaint that a dog is dangerous and not kept under proper control, whether or not the dog is shown to have injured anyone. An order under the 1871 Act may require a dog to be muzzled in future, kept on a lead, tethered or excluded from specified places like, for instance, a school playground or a recreation area. It can also apply in and around a private house. It thus enables, for example, action to be taken by a neighbour where a dog represents a particular menace. These are important and useful provisions.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Kemptown has allowed me to sketch out these matters before I deal with the issues that he has raised. Before I respond to them, I ask the House to recall that the ultimate objective of the legislation as it applies to fighting dogs such as the pit bull terrier is the elimination from this country of such dogs. The Government continue to believe that fighting dogs, of which the pit bull terrier is the best known, have no place in our society. The 1991 Act therefore makes it an offence, inter alia, to have a specially controlled dog. It is also an offence to breed from such a dog. The legislation does, however, allow owners to keep such dogs for the remainder of the animals' natural lives, provided that they comply with stringent conditions. It is against this background that the operation of the 1991 Act should be seen.

Owners who wished to keep their specially controlled dogs were required to notify the police by 12 October 1991 that they owned such a dog. They were then required to obtain a certificate of exemption by 30 November 1991 from the index of exempted dogs. To obtain a certificate of exemption, an owner was required to have the dog permanently identified by the insertion of a microchip and by having the dog tattooed, to obtain third party insurance, to have the dog neutered and to pay a fee.

It has been an offence for anyone to have an unexempted specially-controlled dog since 1 December 1991. All these provisions received wide publicity at the time. I have no doubt that some owners who were unsure about whether their dogs were specially controlled erred on the side of caution and sought certificates of exemption. Those owners of specially-controlled dogs who did not wish to have their dog exempted could choose either to have the dog destroyed or to export it. Those who chose to have their animals destroyed within the specified period were eligible for compensation.

The Government believe it right that there should be strict controls on fighting dogs, but they have not been inflexible. They responded to the difficulties which owners in some parts of the country had in getting their dogs tattooed within the deadline. We therefore extended the deadline for getting dogs tattooed until 29 February, although owners were still required to have completed the other steps for obtaining a certificate of exemption by that date.

We believe that the 1991 Act and the exemption scheme established under it are working well. It would, of course, be surprising if it did not take those involved in operating the Act on a daily basis—the police, the courts and others —a while to become familiar with the legislation.

My hon. Friend has drawn attention to what he sees as particular problems with the operation of the Act. I will attend to some of those points in a moment. However, I must make it quite clear that the Government do not propose to relax the strict controls that the 1991 Act introduced. The need for strong action was acknowledged by the House at the time the legislation was introduced and we do not think it would be right to reduce the protection now afforded to the general public.

It has been suggested that the courts should be given discretion about whether to order the destruction of a dog whose owner has been convicted of one of the main offences under the 1991 Act, a point that my hon. Friend made eloquently. I understand the reasoning behind the proposal and I do not pretend that there will not be or have not been hard cases. The destruction of any dog is always a matter for sadness, but the Government believe that that must be the penalty for fighting dogs if the courts find that their owners have not complied with the relevant provisions of the law. If courts were allowed discretion to decide whether or not to order the destruction of a dog following the successful prosecution of its owner and if the court did not order the dog's destruction, the dog would have to be returned to the convicted owner. That owner, by his actions, would have already shown himself to be irresponsible. Similar arguments apply to destruction orders made in respect of a section 3 offence of having a dog dangerously out of control in a public place.

I also understand the view that a dog should not be liable to destruction simply, for example, for having its muzzle removed in public, a point made by my hon. Friend. However, it is not difficult to imagine what would happen if a dog in such a position were to attack. Less responsible owners would be encouraged to break the law and the public would rightly want to know why Parliament had thought fit to relax the strict regime. They would, with some justification, accuse us of contributory negligence. Incidentally, I understand that muzzles are available which allow a dog to drink without the muzzle having to be removed.

The problem of defining and identifying pit bull terriers was also discussed. This is not the time to enter into a debate about canine genealogy and the origins of the pit bull terrier. I shall just say that the pit bull terrier is not a recognised breed in this country and there are therefore no breed standards for the dog. It is not recognised as a breed by the Kennel Club. It can be misleading to talk in terms of pure pit bull terriers, as some do, as the dog of that type that we encounter in this country will be in almost all cases the result of the cross breeding of a bull terrier type with another type of dog to produce a fighting dog of strong build. It may be of interest to the House to know that the Dutch Animal Health and Welfare Act, which imposes controls on pit bull terriers in the Netherlands, refers to such dogs in the same terms as section 1 of our 1991 Act.

It was always recognised that there might be problems with the identification of pit bull terriers. It is a matter in the first instance for the police or local authority dog wardens to consider whether a particular dog is of the type known as the pit bull terrier where an offence under the 1991 Act may have been committed. If the matter proceeds to court and the owner disputes that the dog is a pit bull terrier, the owner has the opportunity to bring forward whatever evidence he or she thinks appropriate and may, of course, call expert witnesses. In the final analysis, it is rightly a matter for the courts to decide on the basis of the evidence brought before it whether or not a particular dog is one which is specially controlled under section 1 of the Act.

We are also aware that there has been concern that, to the untrained eye, a Staffordshire bull terrier may be confused with a pit bull terrier. Staffordshire bull terriers are not, of course, specially controlled by the Act. In view of the concern, a Home Office circular detailing advice about the operation of the Act was sent to the police and courts with a list provided by the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Breed Council of clubs and societies that are willing to give advice to the police, local authority dog wardens and the courts in cases where there is any doubt whether the dog is a Staffordshire bull terrier. That is further evidence that the Government have responded, where possible, to the concerns of the dog world.

However, I would not wish to give the impression that the Government do not understand the concerns that my hon. Friend has articulated so clearly. While I cannot give an undertaking that the Government will amend the Act as some would wish, we do keep the operation of the Act under review and my hon. Friend's comments will be borne in mind.

We are well aware of criticisms which are made of the Act. That is why, for example, when we issued further guidance during the summer on the operation of the Act, we reminded the prosecuting authorities of previously existing statutory provisions relating to the control of dogs, where the option of having a dog destroyed is either not available or is not mandatory. It is of course a matter for the prosecuting authorities to consider which legislation is the most appropriate in individual cases. We also draw attention to the desirability of expediting cases under the 1991 Act where the dog in question is being held in kennels.

The legislation is still relatively new and I am sure it is right that its operation should be examined closely, as my hon. Friend has done tonight. The Government will continue to listen carefully to my hon. Friend and others who wish to comment constructively on the controls. But at the same time I would ask that they bear in mind the Government's overriding duty to ensure the adequacy of the law to protect the public.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 5 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL
(By Order)

Read a Second time, and committed.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL. *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 12 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Regime

1. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress of the GATT negotiations as they affect the United Kingdom sheep regime.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): Sheep will be subject to the same general commitments as other agricultural products under a GATT round settlement.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that assurance. What is he doing to ensure that French farmers are not allowed to mess up the whole of the GATT round? He will know that the French people love to eat Dorset lamb but are often prevented from doing so due to unilateral action by French farmers. Will he ensure that the French Government act in a communautaire way in these matters?

Mr. Gummer: The problems that we now face arose largely because, although the European Community was willing to move substantially, it seemed impossible for the American negotiators to have enough authority to move in an equal way. I am sad that we should be in a position in which the GATT round is so in peril. I hope that it will be possible for both sides to come to a conclusion.

I pay tribute to Mr. MacSharry's work and his willingness to negotiate right to the end. I was not involved in the negotiations, but I was present nearby and was aware of what was going on from point to point. As President of the Agriculture Council, I thank him for the work that he has done.

Mr. Stevenson: Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that a serious disagreement between the United States and the European Community has been over the discredited and expensive oilseeds regime in the European Community? Will he——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Member that the main question refers to the GATT negotiations and the sheep regime. Perhaps he will direct his supplementary question to that point.

Mr. Stevenson: I intend to refer to the GATT negotiations, Madam Speaker, including sheep.

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member will heed what I have just said. We shall have a statement later on the negotiations generally.

Mr. Stevenson: Will the Secretary of State accept that, along with problems concerning sheep, the oilseeds regime is a big problem? Does he realise that if the European Community were to accept the GATT panel ruling relating to the oilseeds regime, progress on the GATT negotiations generally might be possible?

Mr. Gummer: I fear that the hon. Gentleman is perhaps not in as detailed connection with the oilseeds regime, or indeed with the sheep regime, as are many in the House. In negotiations of this kind, it is a mistake to undermine those who are trying to negotiate on our behalf as part of the European Community. I believe that Mr. MacSharry sought to do that fully, in accordance with the position of the Council of Ministers, which I represented as the President of that Council. When there is a mile to go and one side goes more than half a mile, it would be helpful if others were able to meet that progress.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that if we are now to be committed to a communautaire approach to all these matters we shall have to give a more sympathetic hearing to the French farmers, who are reluctant to hand over their German market to the United States? Is he further aware that those of us who think that our GATT arrangements are of profound importance to this country are concerned lest the deeper we get drawn into this European arrangement with the Maastricht treaty, the more difficult it will be to keep our trading arrangements with the United States on the friendly basis on which we want them to be.

Mr. Gummer: If we were not deep in the European Community, I would have been nowhere near those negotiations and the United Kingdom would have had no possibility of playing a part in the GATT agreement. Britain on its own would have had to stand aside and watch the European Community make GATT arrangements with the United States of America. That is why those who voted in favour of the Maastricht treaty last night were right and my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) was entirely wrong.

Mr. Ron Davies: It is in the interests of sheep producers as well as every other sector that we have a settlement at the GATT negotiations. I offer my personal support to the Minister in those negotiations. I know that he has just flown back from north America and we wish him well in achieving the settlement that he wants. Will he confirm, however, that at 3 o'clock this afternoon the Americans will announce retaliatory measures following the failure to reach agreement at the GATT round, principally on oilseed dumping by the EC? Will he also confirm that there have been two consecutive rulings by the GATT disputes panel against the EC on that issue? As Britain currently has the presidency of the Agriculture Council, will he now guarantee that he will not allow Britain's commercial interests to be prejudiced due to unfair protection by European Community farmers?

Mr. Gummer: First, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his election to the shadow Cabinet. I know that we shall have some sharp exchanges, but they will be fair and honourable and I welcome them—[HON. MEMBERS: "Resign."] To resign for being honourable and fair seems a sad attitude to take.

The truth is that the European Community has sought to meet the objections and has suggested a range of ways in which that might be done. I am determined to do everything that I can to encourage those negotiations and discussions to go on. I am sorry that there did not appear to be authority on the other side—understandably, against the background of the United States elections, and so on—to proceed as could otherwise have been done.

I shall continue to do my best to safeguard not only Britain's interests but, as President of the Agricultural Council for the time being, those of the whole of Europe. There is no other way to deal with world trade than to get a GATT settlement, which is as important to farmers in Britain, France and the United States as anywhere else.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

2. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to strengthen the incentives for environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Gummer: The first group of ESAs were strengthened and enlarged earlier this year. Proposals for enhancement of the remaining areas have been the subject of recent public consultation and revised schemes will come into effect early next year. I also expect to make an early announcement concerning further ESA designations.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister confirm to the House that he has lost the battle with the Treasury for further funding for environmentally sensitive areas? He lost it when he was in the United States recently, travelling incognito and signing himself in as Wyatt Earp at the Chicago Hilton. If matters continue in that manner, he will have to travel incognito around the Hilton hotels of this country, too.

Mr. Gummer: I shall make an announcement soon, and I promise that I shall not detain the House for as long as the hon. Gentleman did on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

Mr. Hendry: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the gratitude of farmers in the North Peak area for the meeting that he arranged for them with officials in his Department following the letter that I wrote to him setting out their concerns? Will he assure us that, when the revised proposals for the North Peak ESA are published, there will be another opportunity for consultation so that any further concerns that they have can be taken into account?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend's remarks are kind. However, any Minister or Secretary of State who responded to such a question without saying that people will have to wait and see would be very silly on any subject during a public expenditure survey round. However, that does not mean that my hon. Friend should feel that what has happened in the past will not have some direction in the future.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Minister will be aware that there has been a considerable welcome, among both the farming community and the environmental lobby, for the latest set of environmentally sensitive area designations in England and Wales, but is he aware that there is considerable concern that the timetable seems to be slipping back? The impression given to farmers is that the areas might be sacrificed in the current round of negotiations on public spending. Will the Minister assure us that that will not happen?

Mr. Gummer: I was the Minister who took the original Bill on ESAs through Committee, and I have been committed to that legislation ever since. As Minister, I have also presented further extensions to it, so the hon. Gentleman will know that I am keen on the concept. In those circumstances, he must understand that the subject is among the range of priorities within my remit that I have been discussing. If I were to say, "This is okay" or "No, it is not", other hon. Members would present me with other issues and ask similar questions. Therefore, I shall have to stick to saying that I will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My right hon. Friend will be aware that farmers in my constituency are pleased that the Cotswold hills appear in the next wave of published ESAs. I am pleased at my right hon. Friend's announcement today that he expects to be able to present guidelines on that ESA early next year. Will he assure the farmers in my constituency who enter the agreement voluntarily that they will not in future be subject to further environmental guidelines to which other farmers will not be subject?

Mr. Gummer: The concept of the ESA is that it is a voluntary agreement between farmers and the community. That understanding must be supported and continued; otherwise, farmers will not enter into the agreements with their current alacrity and enthusiasm or voluntarily do more than they are paid for. I am impressed with the reaction of the farming community and I shall do nothing to undermine it.

Animal Welfare

3. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to improve the welfare of animals transported from the United Kingdom to the rest of the EC.

8. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the transportation of live animals.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): We shall continue to demand the highest possible welfare standards for all animals during transport. We are imminently expecting further proposals from the Commission.

Mr. Flynn: Why has the Minister not demanded publication of the amendments to article 13 of the European Community transport directive? The amendments will improve the watering stops, and the feeding and resting arrangements for animals in transit, and will go a long way to ensuring that the terrible cruelty suffered by animals transported throughout the Community will be reduced. Britain is in the driving seat as it has the presidency, so why have the amendments not been published? Is this another example of the failing British presidency of the EC?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman should know that the directive to which he refers establishes a good framework of controls. It is incomplete as it stands and we await further proposals from the Commission, which we shall address. We are intent on demanding the same high standards abroad that we have in this country. The hon. Gentleman should know that tonight my right hon. Friend the Minister, in his capacity as President of the Agriculture Council, is attending the annual dinner of the Federation of Veterinarians in the European Community in Brussels. He will once again stress the Government's determination and commitment to achieving the very highest standards of animal welfare throughout the Community.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Has the Minister personally observed the conditions in which some live animals are transported in this country? I recently witnessed the death of a terrified sheep which jumped off the top of a lorry on the M1 motorway and was killed. Has the Minister seen the conditions in which live poultry are crammed into crates and taken around parts of the country? Before we lecture people in Europe about their treatment of animals, should we not get our own act together in this country?

Mr. Soames: We believe that, by and large, we have high standards of animal welfare in this country. From time to time, however, there are regrettable accidents and incidents. If the hon. Gentleman knows of any such incidents he should give me the details and evidence so that I can have them investigated with great vigour forthwith.

Mr. Marland: Is my hon. Friend aware that a large number of people in this country are immensely grateful to him and to the Department for the steps that they have taken to improve animal welfare and the conditions of animals in transit? Will he use his influence to ensure that those standards spread throughout Europe? Is there any possibility under the Maastricht treaty—and the regulations whereby all member states must operate under the same conditions—of enforcing better animal welfare conditions throughout Europe?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising a most important point. The enforcement of the rules is essential to their integrity and to the confidence of people in this country and elsewhere that these high standards of animal welfare will be enforced. My hon. Friend should be aware that in the Maastricht agreement there was a valuable declaration on animal welfare which was promoted by the British Government. We very much hope that those details will be taken up by overseas Governments.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his robust defence of our measures of minimum value for the export of horses. Will he assure the House that he will continue to fight the threat to this important animal welfare measure in the European Community?

Mr. Soames: I am more than grateful to my hon. Friend. The minimum values have stood this country in good stead. It is our firm intention to fight with great vigour to ensure that they remain.

Mr. Morley: Does the Minister agree that it is best to slaughter animals as near as possible to the point of production and not to take them long distances? Is he not concerned about the number of abattoirs that fail to meet EC standards? At present only 98 out of 686 abattoirs in the United Kingdom meet the new EC standards, and many rural jobs are being lost as abattoirs are forced to close down. That has implications for increased animal transportation.

Does the Minister agree that we need equality in Europe? While some member states are receiving grants to improve their small rural abattoirs, our small businesses are apparently not getting the support from the Government that they deserve.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman stayed well clear of the question; I will confine myself to dealing with the part of his remarks that dealt with animal welfare. He raised an important point about abattoirs and animal welfare. There is no reason why animals should not travel, provided that they are humanely and properly handled, but an animal that is not fit to travel should not be transported any distance at all. The question of abattoirs exercises us greatly at the moment and we are giving it a great deal of attention.

Knackers Yards

4. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of knackers yards.

Mr. Soames: The Government have made clear the importance that they attach to the role of the knacker industry, and in forthcoming discussions with the Community we shall be negotiating with vigour to secure its longer-term future.

Mr. Thompson: Does my hon. Friend accept that well-operated knackers yards prevent serious pollution and health problems? Does he share my concern that crippling charges likely to be imposed under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 could seriously endanger the operation of knackers yards? Will he support the knacker men?

Mr. Soames: The Government stand foursquare behind the knacker men—particularly in the light of the events of the past few days. My hon. Friend has drawn the attention of the House to an important matter which is essential to the proper and orderly running of the countryside. It is true that the knacker men are very worried about the level of fees that they will have to pay for air pollution controls under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Officials in my Department are closely liaising with those in the Department of the Environment, whose legislation it is. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall do everything that we can to minimise the possible burden of these regulations on the knacker industry.

Mr. Skinner: Last night the Government Whips were dragging Tory Members to the knackers yard and some of them have been squealing ever since. Instead of dragging those Tory Members out of one Lobby and into the other, should not the occupants of the whole Government Front Bench be sent to the knackers yard?

Mr. Soames: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman heard what I said earlier: provided these animals are fit to travel, there is no reason why they should not do so.

Mr. Wiggin: On a different aspect of the matter, in preparing his answer my hon. Friend may have studied the Select Committee report on the disposal of fallen stock and may be aware that not only is the present environmental attack on knackers yards causing that industry great difficulty, but the charges that knackers find it necessary to impose on customers have seriously damaged the industry. Will my hon. Friend look again at the Committee's recommendation that some support for the end product—perhaps paid for by the Department of the Environment—would recognise the important contribution that knackers yards make to the disposal of this disgusting material?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Naturally we studied the report of his Committee with great care. The knacker industry is not about to disappear and we aim to ensure that it will continue to play a key role in animal waste disposal. Hunt kennels, incinerators and burial are also currently used to dispose of carcases. As I have said, we are aware of the great importance of the knacker industry to the countryside. Although there is no question of our subsidising the industry, I assure my hon. Friend that we shall do all that we can to remove its burdens.

Surplus Food

5. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the distribution of EC surplus foods to pensioners; and what assessment he has made of whether sufficient quantities have been allocated to each outlet.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): Butter and beef worth about £17·9 million will be distributed by designated organisations to eligible people in the United Kingdom during 1992-93. Pensioners who fall into the eligible groups will qualify for the food.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Minister agree that that amount is only a small part of the £2·5 billion per year that we contribute to the Common Market? That butter and beef is paid for by taxpayers. The arbitrary halving of allocated amounts to the various outlets because of the doubling of the number has therefore caused great concern to the voluntary organisations which, with good heart and good will, undertake distribution to pensioners and other poor people. In future, will the Minister seek to obtain more supplies for each outlet, such as Dovesdale working men's club in my constituency? Will he ensure that poor people receive a proper amount, and will he take into account the views of the voluntary organisations carrying out the distribution rather than impose arbitrary limits? Or does he not care about either category?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. Either we give greater quantities to fewer organisations or we try to make sure that there is fair distribution across the country so that those who qualify manage to receive some of the product. It is a fixed budget, there are fixed amounts, and the pressure upon me has been to designate many organisations in order to ensure as fair a distribution as possible. I have done that, and I think that it is the right course.

Mr. Hawkins: My hon. and right hon. Friends will be aware that my constituency has the highest proportion of pensioners of any constituency. They will also be aware that in recent years the distribution of that food has been of considerable benefit to those pensioners. Is there any opportunity for further distributions of surplus food? Is there a chance that the surplus mushrooms that have been grown in the Republic of Ireland will be distributed to pensioners there, rather than involve the payment of unfair subsidies which are damaging one of my most important employers, the biggest mushroom farm in the north of England?

Mr. Curry: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his dexterity in making that question comply with the rules. We shall review the scheme to see whether it is reaching the right people and in the right quantities and products. One of the matters that I shall look at is whether we should look to a scheme that is tilted more towards beef than butter because there are fewer surpluses of butter and as we all know, there is a horrendous surplus of beef. We shall see to what extent we can correspond to the economic conditions and, above all, make sure that it is fair to those who receive it.

Mr. Ron Davies: May I press the Minister on the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)? It is outrageous that hundreds of thousands of tonnes of good quality food are consigned to surplus stores while millions of people—pensioners and others on income support—are unable to afford those products on the open market. Does the Minister acknowledge that many people in the voluntary sector would willingly give their time to distribute the food but cannot afford the petrol? Does the Minister understand that if he made small sums available to the voluntary sector a decent system could be introduced to ensure that people who are willing to give their services free could get the free food to the people who need it?

Mr. Curry: I readily pay tribute to those in the voluntary sector who organise the distribution of the food. It is by far the best system of distribution—much better than an attempt to distribute the food via supermarkets or other retail outlets.

The quantities are limited, however. If we are trying to get rid of surpluses and control production, this is one of the least efficient ways of doing so. While the food is there, I am determined that people in the United Kingdom should have their fair share; but I should much rather look to an on-going reform of the Community that ensures that we do not generate the problem in the first place.

Set-aside Scheme

6. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce details of the permanent set-aside scheme.

Mr. Curry: We expect decisions on non-rotational set-aside to be made in time for farmers to choose this option next year if they so wish.

Mr. Butler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. It is clear when we look around the countryside that rotational set-aside has disastrous environmental effects, whereas permanent set-aside will allow environmentally beneficial projects to be undertaken on the same land. I urge my hon. Friend to announce the details of his welcome reply as swiftly as possible.

On a lighter note, may I commend to my hon. Friend for European consideration the world-famous Milton Keynes practice of decorating fallow set-aside land with concrete cows? They have the benefit of being low maintenance; they add nothing to the greenhouse effect; they neither suffer from nor pass on bovine spongiform encephalopathy; they are particularly difficult to rustle; they can be supplied with or without udders and other attachments; and, most attractive of all, they are totally non-productive and might therefore form the basis of a new standard Euro cow. Given that they are a singularly different breed, perhaps "MacSharry" would be an appropriate name for them.

Mr. Curry: I hope that my hon. Friend does not mind a reply that is shorter than his question. I think that he may have solved the problem of the deficiency of the milk quota in Italy.

Mr. Tyler: Does the Minister agree with the estimate in *The Times* that his policy for set-aside will cost British taxpayers £130 million a year, without making any real difference to EC yields and without any beneficial environmental effect?

Mr. Curry: I disagree profoundly. First, Ministers can decide to vary the precentage of land put into rotational set-aside as a function of the decrease in yields that that generates. Secondly, in regard to the permanent set-aside —we have both the non-rotational and the longer-term schemes—we want the rules to permit us to incorporate two important environmental schemes: the farm woodland premium scheme, to encourage woodland, and the countryside premium scheme, to encourage habitat. If those two schemes can be married to the non-rotational scheme, we shall have an extremely effective environmental package.

Mr. Lord: I am sure that my hon. Friend will know of the general unhappiness felt by farmers about the need to set aside fertile and productive land. He will be aware also of the need to return dynamism and hope to farming. What steps is the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food taking to encourage the growing of non-food crops on set-aside land, and also the establishment of trees?

Mr. Curry: When we have the permanent and non-rotational set-aside schemes, we shall want to be able to put woodland on the sites concerned. We also wish to encourage farmers to plant crops that will yield biomass. Those two aspects relating to energy and trees will be very important. We are studying how we can target the longer-term set-aside—the 20-year permanent scheme—very specifically, to secure the best possible environmental benefits. Those could be related to amenity woodland.

Farmers

7. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he is taking to keep farmers on the land.

Mr. Curry: The common agricultural policy provides a range of measures to support farming.

Mr. Illsley: Is the Minister aware that many people consider his response to rural depopulation somewhat inadequate? Is he aware that between 1990 and 1992 British farming lost, on average, some 200 farmers and farm workers each week? Already articles are appearing in magazines such as *Farmers' Weekly*, comparing the state of agriculture to that of mining and forecasting huge job losses.

How long can the Government continue to protect farm incomes through set-aside? Are decisions likely to be made that will be as disastrous to agriculture as decisions about the pits were to mining?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is right in one respect: there has been an enormous structural change in agriculture over the past couple of decades—in the United Kingdom, a quarter of a million people have left agriculture, and in the Community 4 million people have left. That is as big a structural change as there has been in any other part of the economy.

We have to make sure that the surpluses and overproduction, which depress farmers' incomes, are removed through reform. At the moment, the grain price is relatively buoyant and the sheep price is higher than it has been for many years. Because of the changes in the agrimoney system and the eventual green pound devaluation, we should put some income into the agricultural sector. That is very much needed, and we welcome it.

Mr. Lidington: Is my hon. Friend aware of the difficulties faced by farmers in areas such as the Chiltern hills and the vale of Aylesbury, where efforts at diversification often fall foul of what are necessarily strict planning controls? Will he undertake to work with his colleagues at the Department of the Environment to make sure that we have both a beautiful countryside and one that rests upon the good stewardship of farmers making their living there and not turning the countryside into a museum?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend will know that I represent an area with a large national park and that what is not national park is an area of outstanding natural beauty. I understand exactly the problems that he describes and we will work very closely with planning authorities to overcome them.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

9. **Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the Exmoor environmentally sensitive area will come into being.

Mr. Gummer: We plan to make an announcement on the proposed Exmoor environmentally sensitive area in the near future.

Mr. Harvey: Does the Minister recognise the very real problems faced by Exmoor farmers who can no longer take part in countryside stewardship schemes and programmes because they have ended in anticipation of the ESA proposals? Because of the new requirements resulting from much of Exmoor being a site of special scientific interest, there is no money to meet those obligations. With bank managers hovering over many Exmoor farmers, what reassurance can the Minister give farmers to take back to bank managers that the money for ESAs which he announced earlier this year will not be taken away from other agriculture programmes?

Mr. Gummer: I shall certainly make an announcement as soon as possible. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the ESA proposals, which began in this country, have now been taken up by the whole Community. We have been able to contribute to that process. That is why I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman was one of those who did not wish us to go on being at the heart of the Community. I honour all his colleagues who stood up for their belief in Europe.

Mr. David Nicholson: With no reflection on the voting activities of the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) last night, I support his representations to my right hon. Friend. Is my right hon. Friend aware that Exmoor farmers in my constituency as well as in North Devon worked extremely hard to complete the form sent out by his Ministry in April, which, his officials may not be aware, is the lambing season on Exmoor? They were promised an early determination of this matter but are still left high and dry. As someone who obtained votes in April on this matter of the ESA, I am extremely anxious that my right hon. Friend should keep the pledges that the Government made to those farmers and implement the ESA proposals as soon as possible.

Mr. Gummer: I am never unhappy to have the support of my hon. Friend, as we had it last night.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister says that we shall have a response as soon as possible. Has he forgotten the solemn undertaking given to Exmoor, the Lake district and other national park farmers that they would receive ESA offers this year? Now that the Liberals, apart from the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey), have bailed out the Government, enabling them to cut public expenditure further and threaten the ESA programmes, has not a large hole been blown in the Government's entire approach to environmental protection?

Mr. Gummer: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on what I think is his first appearance at the Dispatch Box on the Opposition Front Bench. Of all Opposition Members, I should have thought that he would be the last to congratulate his party on putting party politics before principle and to attack the Liberal Democrats, who put principle before party politics.

"The Health of the Nation"

10. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent consultations his Department has had towards implementing "The Health of the Nation" proposals.

Mr. Soames: Implementation of the White Paper is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. However, my Department has been involved both at ministerial and official level with a number of interested parties, about various aspects of the White Paper.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I do not know quite how to put this to my hon. Friend delicately. I am sure that he would agree that Conservatives believe in enjoying life, and good eating is clearly part of enjoying life, but can he inform the House what efforts are being made jointly with his colleagues in the Department of Health to advise people how to eat healthily to avoid the development of coronary heart disease?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend has no need to be so coy about these matters. I regard myself as a thoroughly good advertisement for healthy eating.

The White Paper places emphasis on reducing smoking, improving diet and sensible drinking as key factors in the prevention of coronary heart disease, strokes and cancers. Dietary targets relate to a reduction in the population's average consumption of saturated fats and total fats. However, the White Paper points to the need for a whole-diet approach.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware that vegetarianism is one of the healthiest eating habits that we can adopt? If he wants to set an example to the nation on healthy eating, he should give up grouse and start eating lentil bake.

Mr. Soames: I am sure that it is, in its own way, an attractive proposition, but I have never regarded vegetarianism as a serious alternative.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. Friend aware that, when it comes to "The Health of the Nation", Ministers should set an example? Bearing that in mind, will he tell the House what steps he has taken as regards his diet and personal habits?

Mr. Soames: Like the Government as a whole, I am committed to a pragmatic and practical approach to dietary targets, as outlined in "The Health of the Nation".

Mr. Etherington: I am quite sure——

Madam Speaker: Order. Question 12.

Cattle Disease

12. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards random sampling for disease in cattle.

Mr. Soames: A substantial proportion of cattle are at present subjected to ante-mortem veterinary examination at slaughterhouses, and all will be from 1 January 1993. All carcases are already subject to meat inspection. In general, I believe that random sampling has only a limited role to play in the control of cattle disease.

Mr. Etherington: I apologise for my gaffe, Madam Speaker. It is the sort of thing that happens when one is running to and from a Committee.

The Minister must be well aware of the very great public fear of mad cow disease. He will be aware also that that fear will dissipate only when there is thorough research into the subject. Can he therefore tell us whether there is vertical transmission of mad cow disease and what live research is being undertaken into the subject?

Mr. Soames: There is absolutely no evidence whatever of vertical transmission, and nothing has occurred to cast any doubt on the opinion of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and its expert advisers that measures taken will eradicate the disease. We have a substantial and important research programme to which we are wholly committed and with which we shall press ahead.

Bees

13. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the situation of the varroa mite among bees.

Mr. Curry: To contain the spread of varroa, and in consultation with the beekeeping organisations, I declared an infected area south of a line between the Severn and the Thames. Movement outside that area is prohibited except under licence. Until now, the disease has been confirmed in 267 apiaries within the infected area. Varroa has recently been found in 17 apiaries in Suffolk and one in Lincolnshire. Following further consultation with the beekeepers, I have decided that the infected area will be extended from midnight tonight to include the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. I have written to the beekeeping organisations and instructed that copies of the letter should be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dalyell: As a beekeeper until the then Government Chief Whip, Lord Glenamara, brought it home to me that the requirements of swarming bees and Government Whips did not go together, may I point out that this is a very serious matter for beekeepers? Could the Government do something while the varroa mite is on the bee in its adult form rather than hidden in cells?

Mr. Curry: I agree. It is a very serious matter. I have taken no action except in consultation with the beekeeping industry, because the industry is determined that we should try to limit the spread of the infection. We are doing important research into this matter and, following the discovery of varroasis, we have reviewed the bee health research programme and increased expenditure on it to about £200,000. The Central Science Laboratory has been asked to give priority to the development of a rapid field diagnostic test and, in addition, the Institute of Agricultural Crop Research will be undertaking long-term research into causes of mortality in varroa-infected bees.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings today.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend find time during his busy day to decide how to use the diplomatic and negotiating skills which he deployed so effectively at Maastricht to prevent a trade war between the United States and the European Community? Will he pull out all the stops to achieve an agreement on the general agreement on tariffs and trade before President Bush leaves the White House, in the knowledge that agreement on GATT will do more than anything else to pull the world out of recession?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend on his last point—it is a very serious matter. It is for the European Commission, which has the responsibility to negotiate on behalf of member states, to make a deal, and we shall seek to reach a concerted position so that such a deal can be achieved. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will make a statement about that a little later.

Mr. John Smith: Why is it that, in the midst of all our present miseries—*[Interruption.]* Why is it that, in the midst of this situation, the Government think that it is a priority to abolish wages councils which offer a safety net for 2·5 million people, two thirds of whom are women?

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman takes a very narrow view. When he studies the whole of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, he may have a more enlightened view. As he may know, we have decided that wages councils will be abolished because they distort the operation of the labour market. Abolishing them will lead to more jobs rather than fewer. These days, wages councils are an anachronism. They no longer have a useful role. They were set up in 1909 and they are not relevant to 1992.

Mr. Smith: Does the right hon. Gentleman not understand the truth that was expressed by Sir Winston Churchill when wages councils were set up, which was that, if there is no wage protection, the good employer is undercut by the bad and the bad is undercut by the worst? Does he not understand that people in this country are sick and tired of his professing concern about unemployment when 1 million people have lost their jobs since he became Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: It is precisely because of the concern to sustain and maintain jobs that we propose to get rid of the councils that destroy jobs. The fact of the matter is that they create unnecessary bureaucracy and add to the burdens on business. If that is the Opposition's industrial strategy—more burdens, less business and fewer jobs—the right hon. and learned Gentleman had better make it clear.

Q2. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Townend: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members are in favour of a very tough public spending round this year, especially on the revenue account, even if that means a public sector pay freeze to protect capital projects? Is he aware also that, when we are having to take painful decisions, it is not acceptable for Mr. Delors to ask for an increase in own resources? Will my right hon. Friend tell Mr. Delors that if he wants more cash, he should look to the waste, fraud and corruption revealed by a recent report of the Court of Auditors?

The Prime Minister: On the first part of my hon. Friend's question, I cannot, of course, this afternoon anticipate my right hon. Friend's autumn statement which he will make to the House next Thursday. However, I agree with my hon. Friend that the Commission's proposals for a massive increase in Community spending are excessive in the present circumstances. No more than anyone else can the Community spend more than it can afford. I believe that, when we consider the future financing, we must be guided by the same principles of budget discipline and sound public finance that we all agreed to put in the Maastricht treaty.

Q3. **Ms. Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Jackson: Does the Prime Minister recall the pledge that he gave in his election manifesto that the value of child benefit would increase each year in line with prices? Despite the wriggling evident in his previous answer, will he repeat that pledge to the House today?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady must wait for the autumn statement next week, and I will tell her why. When asked to anticipate a financial statement in the election, the Leader of the Opposition said, "You'll have to wait till next week when I make it." That applies to us as well.

Mr. Knapman: Does my right hon. Friend believe that a single currency for Europe is a desirable objective?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated often enough in the House, not least yesterday, that I do not believe that that is a remotely likely objective to be reached in the time scale set and that one can only determine whether it is desirable in the circumstances of the day, when the decision needs to be made. That is not now.

Q4. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Janner: Does the Prime Minister agree that the closure of the 31 pits would make 30,000 miners compulsorily redundant and destroy the jobs of up to 70,000 people in related industries and that very few of them would have any chance of finding other work? In those circumstances, what does the Prime Minister say in response to the extraordinary revelation made by the chairman of British Coal yesterday to the Employment Select Committee that, when he and the President of the Board of Trade decided to close the pits, he had no discussion, conversation or consultation with the Secretary of State for Employment?

The Prime Minister: There has been a great deal of consultation in government for some time over the whole question of pit closures and there was a great deal of detailed consideration for some time. The hon. and learned Gentleman now knows precisely what the situation is from a lengthy and detailed statement made by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Lidington: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although this country's links with our friends in Europe continue to strengthen, our special relationship with the United States of America remains as vital now as it ever has been?

The Prime Minister: It has been a very close relationship. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) referred to it yesterday as an historic relationship. It has remained that for many years. I believe that that results from the shared interests that we have around the world and from a shared historical background. I have no doubt that that will continue.

Madam Speaker: Mr. Paddy Ashdown—*[Interruption.]* Order. The House must come to order. Mr. Ashdown.

Mr. Ashdown: Is it not the case that the decision taken last night by the House, by however narrow a margin, nevertheless means that Britain's future in Europe has been saved and, with it, tens of thousands of jobs around Britain?

The Prime Minister: May I say first to the right hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order and hear the response from the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: May I say first to the right hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be heard in the House, as every other right hon. and hon. Member should. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I say to the right hon. Gentleman that the price of principle is often abuse, but he was right last night in the vote that he cast. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Sykes: Does the Prime Minister agree with the business men of Scarborough and Whitby who say that the social chapter would devastate jobs?

The Prime Minister: That is a view with which I entirely agree. It is a view expressed not only by the business men of Scarborough and Whitby, clearly with great clarity, but by business men across this country. The social chapter was not in the interests of this country. We were right to reject it.

Q6. **Dr. Berry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Berry: Is the Prime Minister able to explain why he believes that an increase in public expenditure will severely damage the economy while hoping and praying that exactly the same activity by the private sector will get Britain out of recession?

The Prime Minister: I do not know on what basis the hon. Gentleman produces his question. The Government's position on public expenditure has always been that it must be prudent, it must be affordable and it must be in the interests of overall management of the economy. That was, is and remains the case.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to extend an invitation to President-elect Clinton to come to this country, immediately after 20 January, when he can?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted to take the opportunity of saying that I look forward to meeting President-elect Clinton before Christmas. I have already had the opportunity of sending my congratulations to him and stating them both privately and publicly, and I look forward to meeting him before Christmas. I hope that it will be possible for him to visit this country.

Q7. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Fatchett: After the Prime Minister's poor performance in yesterday's debate and after his policy failure on unemployment, the mines, British industry and devaluation, does he agree that his recent 16 per cent. approval rating in an opinion poll shows the generosity of the British people?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman was looking for one person in this country who has good reason not to trust opinion polls, he has just addressed a question to him. As to yesterday—right sentiment, wrong leader.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend share my view that the true test of compassion in public services is not necessarily the amount of money spent but the quality and efficiency with which it is spent? Does he, therefore, share my horror at the lack of compassion of Lambeth council, which has already spent £400,000 of local charge payers' money on phantom teachers?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I did see that particular report, which illustrated not only that Lambeth council is inefficient but that it is slightly less inefficient than Islington council, which spent rather more on the same matter.

Q.8. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Prime Minister repeat in the House the assurance that he gave to the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) that he would not introduce the Third Reading of the Maastricht Bill until after the second Danish referendum? Does that not show that there was no limit to the wriggling of the Prime Minister in his attempt to obtain votes in the Lobby last night?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman's last point had been right, there would have been no debate yesterday. It was precisely because I was concerned to get the Bill through that there was a debate yesterday and we will move to Committee stage, and move forward.

I am happy to make the point entirely clear to the hon. Gentleman. Yesterday, the House reaffirmed its assent to the Bill proceeding to Committee stage. In doing so, no thanks to the official Opposition, it reaffirmed our determination to play a leading role in Europe and strengthened our negotiating hand in Edinburgh. As for progress, there will be a limited discussion before Christmas. We will return to the Bill in greater detail in the new year. I wish to have plenty of time for full and proper discussion on all the details of a constitutional Bill which is of great concern in the House. It is important to carry the assent of the House on the Bill. That will take time.

The present intention of the Danish Government is to hold a referendum in May. Given the Committee timetable that we have in mind and the full discussion that we need, we will need to take the Third Reading after that date in May. That has been and is the position, and that is the point that was made clear yesterday.

Business of the House

4.31 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER and TUESDAY 10 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Education Bill.

WEDNESDAY 11 NOVEMBER—Proceedings on the Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) Bill *[Lords]*

Motion on the Registered Homes (Northern Ireland) Order.

THURSDAY 12 NOVEMBER—Debate on the Adoption Law Review on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 11 November at 10.30 am to consider European Community document No. 6224/92 relating to culture in the European Community.

[Wednesday 11 November
European Standing Committee B
Relevant European Community Document
6224/92 Culture in the European Community.
Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee HC 79-i (1992-93) and HC 79-viii (1992-93).]

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement.

Can the right hon. Gentleman add anything to the statement made by the Prime Minister yet again at Prime Minister's Question Time as to when exactly it is planned to bring the Committee stage of the Maastricht Bill back to the House? Can the Leader of the House say anything to cast any light on the contradiction between the assurance that the Prime Minister gave to the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) last night and the Prime Minister's statement today that the Third Reading would not need to be until the summer and what was said yesterday about the urgent need for yesterday's debate? Does it not show that the only urgency about yesterday's debate was the Prime Minister's urgent need to shore up his battered Government and that the only interest served was that of the Conservative party and not that of the nation?

When can we expect the social security uprating statement? Will the Leader of the House bear it in mind that if, as has been widely trailed, the statement contains an attack on the living standards of many of the most vulnerable people in society, the House will want a full day's debate on the issues raised in that statement and not merely half a day, as has been the practice recently.

Finally, will the Leader of the House find time soon for a debate on financial institutions, so that the House can consider the growing calls for statutory regulation of the City and the inadequate service provided by many high street banks and building societies in the light of the Consumers Association report today which states that their service sometimes amounts to "monumental incompetence"?

Mr. Newton: Taking those matters in reverse order, there is to be a debate tomorrow on the Bingham report when some aspects of financial institutions will be relevant. Unusually, as I have already said, there will be a debate early after the autumn statement in which it might be possible to advert to some of those matters, so I cannot promise a separate debate in response to the hon. Lady.

The social security uprating statement will certainly be made as soon as possible. I hope that that will prove to be the case next week. As to the question of a debate, perhaps we can consider that through the usual channels when the hon. Lady has had a chance to consider the statement. She will be well aware that legislative action, at least of a secondary kind, is normally required by social security uprating statements, which would naturally provide a focus for debate.

On the timing of yesterday's debate, I must advert to the fact that it took place in response to persistent requests from Her Majesty's Opposition. When it took place, it turned out that its main purpose had to be to overcome the Opposition desire to delay considering the Bill at all, despite their alleged commitment to Maastricht. There is no contradiction between the various reports that have been referred to, but I certainly cannot add to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's comments a few moments ago on the timing of the Bill's progress. I can fill them out in one respect: I said some weeks ago that I expected to begin to make some progress on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill after the autumn statement and the debate that I have promised on it.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Has my right hon. Friend read early-day motion 733 on the Accommodation and Works Committee's proposal to move Members and their secretaries from 7 Old Palace Yard to 7 Millbank?

[That this House rejects the decision of the Accommodation and Works Committee to recommend transferring honourable Members and honourable Members' secretaries from 7 Old Palace Yard to 7 Millbank; deplores the fact that this decision was taken without any consultation with honourable Members most affected and that the Committee having reached a decision in July failed to inform honourable Members of it until October; believes it would be inefficient and a waste of honourable Members' and secretaries' time for secretaries or honourable Members to have to walk back and forth from offices in Millbank to offices in the House—a journey in some cases of half an hour; notes that the House of Lords is nearer to Millbank than the House of Commons; does not believe an expenditure of some £3 million on refurbishing accommodation for non-office holders in the House of Lords, who do not have to deal with constituency mail is appropriate at this present time when public expenditure generally is being severely curtailed; and calls on the Government to delay transferring honourable Members and honourable Members' secretaries from Old Palace Yard until alternative accommodation is provided in the Phase II development.]

In view of the fact that that has now been signed by all Members concerned other than Ministers—indeed, some Ministers are also concerned about the matter—and that apparently no consultation took place and the Committee seems to feel that it is not accountable, can we debate the matter next week?

Mr. Newton: I very much take note of my right hon. Friend's comments and I am sure that they will be carefully taken into account by the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee for whom, as he says, this is a matter.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the normal rules on Opposition supply days will apply? As the House knows, the official Opposition have about 20 days at their disposal, and the minority parties have only three between them. Given the peculiar political circumstances that we are in, we would be interested in choosing subject matter for discussion in the House.

Mr. Newton: I was not absolutely sure whether the hon. Gentleman was asking me to review the conventions that govern such matters, which I would be unwise to undertake without discussions through the usual channels, or whether he simply sought the allocation of a supply day for the minority parties, which I shall certainly bear in mind. Obviously, I cannot make one available next week, and it is likely that we shall be looking for time to debate the autumn statement in the week after that. I do not, however, dismiss his concern and I shall keep it in mind.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Given that during the summer the Government accepted the vast bulk of the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, will the Leader of the House be able next week to lay the amended orders to enact those recommendations? If not, will he give an undertaking that they will be laid soon?

Mr. Newton: A week or two ago I said that I was seeking to identify a basis for discussion through the usual channels with the aim of being in a position to bring forward substantive motions at an early stage. I do not think that I can go beyond that at the moment. My right hon. Friend will realise that there have been one or two of what I shall delicately call other preoccupations recently, but I hope to make progress as soon as possible. Meanwhile, I hope that one or two things that I have done, including giving more advance indications of business than has been customary in the past, have at least been helpful to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the growing concern in all parts of the House for the miners and others who can benefit from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's report on compensation for occupational emphysema and bronchitis? Is he aware of the Department of Trade and Industry's memorandum which argues that the longer the Government delay, the less they will have to pay? That, of course, is due to the high death rate among people with occupational emphysema and bronchitis. Is that any way to talk about people, many of whom often have to struggle to breathe? May we have a ministerial statement next week about the Government's intentions?

Mr. Newton: I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman who has previous experience as a Minister with responsibility for disabled people, which I share, is well aware of the difficulties and complexities of many of these matters and reports. I cannot add to what I said last week, when the issue was raised in somewhat similar terms. I expect an announcement about publication to be made shortly by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. I know that both he and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People will be giving careful consideration to those matters.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): My right hon. Friend has announced that the trade union Bill is to be considered on Monday week. He will be aware of the various peculiar answers given by a Minister on Tuesday about wages councils.

I have had a number of written questions answered and have as yet failed to have a meeting with the Secretary of State on the issue, despite having been asking for several months.

Will it be possible before Monday week to obtain some estimate from Government of whether that measure will have a significant effect on the pay of some people at present protected by wages councils and on employment, which some would doubt?

Mr. Newton: I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. My hon. Friend will no doubt have noted what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on the matter in an exchange during Question Time. My hon. Friend will have an opportunity to ask his questions and make his views known during the Second Reading debate, which was announced in my business statement.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Will the Leader of the House make arrangements for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a further statement on the position of the 10 pits, when he could take the opportunity to answer a report by a professional mining engineer which I submitted to him a week last Monday and which demonstrated that the Taf Merthyr pit would be closed within three or four days? Will the right hon. Gentleman bring the Secretary of State to the House to make a statement on that vital issue?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend will have looked carefully at the remarks that the hon. Gentleman made last week. My right hon. Friend answered questions in the House yesterday and has seen the Select Committee. I cannot promise a further appearance by the President of the Board of Trade in that context, but I shall once again make sure that he is aware of what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Although my right hon. Friend did not say so, will he confirm that we are to have the autumn statement next week? Secondly, will he consult or help the usual channels on both sides to arrange for the setting up of the Procedure Committee? A number of matters awaiting consideration have been referred to me and it is about time that we got on with that.

Mr. Newton: I note the latter part of my hon. Friend's suggestion. I suppose that I should have played the familiar Front Bench trick of announcing good news for the second time in the hope of obtaining additional good will. As I announced some time ago, the autumn statement is expected to be made on Thursday 12 November.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): As the Government are now keen to accede to the Opposition's request for a debate, will the right hon. Gentleman explain why no opportunity has yet been provided for us to discuss the crisis facing the fishing industry? I raised the matter with him last week and I met representatives of the fishing communities last weekend. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the sense of bitterness, resentment and anger that is building up is such that we must, as a matter of urgency, debate the common fisheries policy and its implications for our communities?

Mr. Newton: I made some comments about the matter to the hon. Lady last week, as she rightly says. I will again draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to the hon. Lady's remarks. I cannot promise a debate now, but she will have heard what I said to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) about the question of supply days for minority parties. I cannot add to that, but I meant what I said and I will try to be helpful as soon as I reasonably can.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): In view of the increasingly desperate plight of the Muslims in Bosnia, particularly with the onset of winter, and to highlight the courageous efforts made by the Cheshire Regiment in providing food and supplies to those who desperately need them, may we have a debate next week to discuss what else the British Government, as President of the Community, can do to end what seems to be a systematic attempt at the extermination of the Muslims in Yugoslavia by the Croats and the Serbs?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a debate next week, but I can promise to bear my hon. Friend's interest in mind. He may find it possible to ask a question after the statement that the Home Secretary is about to make.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): When will the House have an opportunity to debate the extraordinary and damaging decision of the chairman of English Heritage to dispose of and flog off a large proportion of English Heritage properties?

Mr. Newton: I have received a number of requests for a debate on that matter, which I shall continue to bear in mind; I will add the hon. Gentleman's name to the list.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will it be possible for the House to receive a statement next week on the European fighter aircraft? Is my right hon. Friend aware that thousands of people in my constituency work for British Aerospace and that many of them came to the House last week to lobby? Morale among them is extremely low. Indeed, every time they open their newspapers they feel deep concern about the future of their jobs, especially when they read first that the Germans are in on the project, then that they are out, then in again, and then that the Spanish and Italians are thinking about whether to be in or out. Those workers backed us during the Gulf war by working many hours of overtime. We owe them some certainty about the future of their jobs.

Mr. Newton: I cannot, under present circumstances, promise a statement, but my hon. Friend knows—and, I am sure, accepts—that the Secretary of State for Defence is very concerned about those matters and is discussing with our partners whether the options presented to us offer a basis on which the four nations might continue to collaborate.

Ms. Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for us to debate early-day motion 668, which deals with the uncertainty of Rosyth royal dockyard?

[That this House notes with concern reports that the Government in considering closing one of the two remaining naval dockyards at Rosyth and Devonport; notes that the closure of either dockyard would mean the loss of several thousand jobs in the defence industry and supporting businesses; notes that both dockyards have been successful in diversifying into other commercial activities whilst improving efficiency in their core defence business; and therefore calls on the Government to consider all possible means, including, if necessary, a single combined management, by which a way can be found to keep both dockyards open and preserve at least some of the jobs dependent on them.]

Will he also ask the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement about the future of the dockyard?

Mr. Newton: That matter was raised with me last week. Various proposals concerning the dockyards are very much under consideration. No decisions have yet been made about the future arrangements for dockyard management, and I am afraid that I cannot add anything further on the subject today.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Before the debate next week on the Education Bill, will my right hon. Friend make it clear to the Secretary of State for Education that we hope that he will take powers, either in that Bill or later, to prevent the obstructive and intimidatory approach being taken by many local authorities against the governors and parents of schools which wish to become grant-maintained?

Mr. Newton: I affirm that the Government regard it as quite unacceptable for local education authorities to intimidate, or seek to intimidate, parents or anybody else into voting against grant-maintained status. I am sure that the Secretary of State for Education will make every effort to prevent any such occurrence.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Can we have a Government response next week to early-day motion 736, condemning the Duke of Atholl for trying to deprive ordinary people of their rights of access to the Scottish countryside?

[That this House condemns the decision of the Duke of Atholl to challenge the status of the Minigaig Pass as a right of way; notes that the route is one of Scotland's ancient mountain drove roads which has been used by the people of Scotland for centuries and is still regularly used by hill walkers and mountain climbers with no evidence of resultant damage to the countryside or wild-life; is concerned that a loss of right of way status for the Minigaig Pass could endanger similar rights of way throughout Scotland; deplores the anachronism whereby the Duke of Atholl is the only person in the United Kingdom with a private army; fully supports all walkers who refuse to be intimidated and exercise their rights of access to the Minigaig Pass; and calls upon the Government to take all necessary steps to ensure that the access rights of walkers are not reduced in any way by the Duke of Atholl or any other militant

members of the landed gentry who claim too much of Scotland's land which should be part of the national heritage.]

Will the Leader of the House show his respect for the House that he leads and the people whom we represent by joining me in a walk through Minigaig pass to assert the rights of the common people against the rapacious, militant landowners who frequent the House of Lords?

Mr. Newton: Pleasing—I think—as the prospect of a country walk with the hon. Gentleman is, I am not sure whether I can promise an early visit to Scotland for the purpose.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on early-day motion 746, which draws attention to the fact that Clarke Foods, formerly Lyons Maid, in my constituency has recently closed—putting 108 people out of work, some of whom have worked there for more than 40 years, and one man for 48 years?

[That this House notes with great concern that the Clarke Food (UK) Limited works in Greenford, which were formerly Lyons Maid, have been put into administrative receivership and that 108 employees have been made redundant; notes with further concern that Clarke Foods have reneged on assurances given over redundancy payments at the time when they acquired the plant; expresses strong support for former Lyons Maid workers who transferred to Clarke Foods, some of whom have worked on the site for over 40 years and who have been told that there will be no redundancy payments for them; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to investigate the fairness and legality of the situation in which the said employees and ex-employees are now placed.]

Those employees' jobs have gone without pensions because of what appears to be maladministration by Clarke Foods. Can we have an early debate on that matter so that I can seek help for my constituents who need it?

Mr. Newton: I well understand my hon. Friend's concern, which is typical of his concern for his constituents. I understand that the redundancy payments service has received 95 claims for statutory redundancy payments and a number of other claims in connection with those problems, and that those claims are being processed as quickly as possible. I hope to reinforce that by drawing my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Is the Leader of the House aware that the Welsh Grand Committee, which used to meet five or six times a year, has not met for almost nine months? In view of the numerous problems facing the people of Wales in terms of the economy, pit closures, unemployment, the future of the education service and many others, will he tell the House whether the Committee has at last been finally abandoned as a useless talking shop? If so, what alternative bodies will he give Wales to discuss our vital issues?

Mr. Newton: I am not quite sure whether the hon. Gentleman is denouncing the body or demanding a meeting of it. Whichever it is, I shall try to ensure that there is some contact with him through the usual channels.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): When my right hon. Friend has completed his walk through the ducal pastures of Scotland, will he try to walk the plebeian route across the bridges of the River Thames in London and then come back and let us know when we can have a debate on transport in London? We need to see how three London boroughs can close three bridges at the same time and whether the Government need to take powers to ensure that traffic and transport in London is better co-ordinated.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport may wish to look at some of those observations without my even drawing them to his attention, but I shall try to ensure that he sees them. On the further request for me to go walkabout in various parts of the country, I shall try to put those in ranking order as between Scotland and Battersea.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): With reference to the elusive memorandum concerning the Danish decision, is the Leader of the House aware that it did not contain the important statement of Herr Klaus Kinkel, Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic, writing in *Die Welt* on 19 October? The article said that that decision was arbitrarily a halt to

"a healthy, historic growth process".

Would it not be a good thing for the Government to dissociate themselves from such a point of view in that memorandum or any other? Will he ensure that memoranda which should be literally placed on the Table or in the Vote Office are advertised and not just semi-surreptitiously put in the Library?

Mr. Newton: I think that I can safely assure the hon. Gentleman that there was no surreptitious intent. If he has specific practical suggestions as to how the handling of such matters can be improved, all my right hon. Friends and I would be ready to consider them. On the proposal that such memoranda should include a commentary on every observation anywhere in Europe about which we might have reservations, such memoranda would be very long indeed.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Would my right hon. Friend consider the possibility of a debate next week on the British tourist industry, which is one of the most important industries in our country? It contributes as much as aerospace or the motor manufacturing industries, providing 6 per cent. of employment in this country, but from researches in the Library—it was fairly crowded—I understand that the subject was last discussed four years ago.

Mr. Newton: That is another request that I shall very much bear in mind, but I shall have to fall back on the standard reply: I do not anticipate finding time next week.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Will the Leader of the House make a statement to the House next week? I ask that because of the answer given to me yesterday, reported in *Hansard* at column 271, when I asked about the future of Tursdale workshop in my constituency. I was told by the Minister that he was concerned about the issue but that the closure of the workshop and redundancies there were not the subjects of the review. I am led to believe that, even while the Minister was speaking yesterday, British Coal announced 60 redundancies in that workshop. I should be grateful if the Minister would make a statement to the House on that.

Mr. Newton: I will draw the issue to the attention of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will my right hon. Friend consider letting us have a debate on the postal service, as we could then refer to the fact that first-class post has the highest ever figures for reliability and there is to be a freeze on postal rates? Is that not an example of the quality of services under the Government?

Mr. Newton: I am glad to have a more friendly message to communicate to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Members' interests?

Mr. Newton: We shall obviously have to have a standard question and standard reply exchange—the hon. Gentleman will say, "A" and I will say, "B". I am considering the matter, but I am not yet in a position to give the hon. Gentleman definite information.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When will the Leader of the House make a statement about the plight of disabled people who come to the House of Commons to lobby? This week more than 100 people came from north Derbyshire to Westminster hall, where it was cold and draughty. Some 30 of them were in wheelchairs and could not use the toilet facilities. In addition, they could not use the Grand Committee Room as they were incapable of climbing the 30 stairs. The right hon. Gentleman has made promises before, and it is high time that when people come to lobby at Westminster those who are disabled should be given preference. Many promises have been made during the 22 years that I have been here—it is time somebody did something about this. I am asking the Leader of the House to do something, not just for the 100 people who came, but for the thousands who have come in the past and who should have the same rights as able-bodied people when they come to lobby Members of Parliament.

Mr. Newton: In view of the hon. Gentleman's phrasing, may I say that I do not recall making promises of the sort that he mentioned since acquiring my present responsibilities. However, I need hardly say that I shall take the matter seriously—not least because, as I said to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), I have been Minister with responsibility for disabled people and I am aware of the problems and concerns. The hon. Gentleman will know that, under the new structure set up in recent years to administer the House, I should properly refer the matter to the Accommodation and Works Committee, but that is not to say that I wash my hands of it. I shall certainly see if there is any way in which I can encourage or facilitate improvements of the sort that the hon. Gentleman wants.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate on the growing problem of low pay? Is he aware that in Halifax today some of the very few jobs on offer pay the following low rates: a care assistant in a private home £2·50 an hour; a cleaner in a store, £2·45 an hour; a trainee hairdresser, £35 a week? Would not the Government be better employed looking at the problem of low pay rather than abolishing some of the few organisations which protect low-paid workers, such as the wages councils? Does the Leader of the House really want us to become the sweatshop of Europe?

Mr. Newton: It would be wrong for me to enter into a prolonged exchange on economics with the hon. Lady, but I should state that forcing up wage levels can easily lead to fewer jobs. No one debating these issues could or should dismiss that. I well understand that there are many potentially complicated arguments about the matter, and it is clear that the hon. Lady will have an opportunity, should she catch the Chair's eye, to make that sort of point on Second Reading of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, which I announced at the beginning of these exchanges.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): When will we have an opportunity to discuss opencast mining? We are awaiting a statement on the withdrawal or revision of minerals planning guidance note No. 3, and we are anxious that it should be withdrawn. We would like to know whether this matter will be considered in the context of other announcements on coal. This is a matter of considerable anxiety in many constituencies, as four early-day motions testify. People are worried that many people in those constituencies will lose their jobs because of the closure of the deep mines and will face the rape of their countryside because of the continuation of opencast mining. May we discuss that?

Mr. Newton: I cannot predict the timing of any further debates on the issues included in the review of the closures being undertaken by the President of the Board of Trade. The hon. Gentleman will know of the undertakings that have been given. It would certainly be surprising if he did not have a chance to raise some of his points in the course of the review or subsequent debates on it.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Can the Leader of the House find time time for a debate on the future of the aerospace industry, in the course of which we can discuss the future of the European fighter aircraft project and the Superb executive jet's long-term future? Does he know that my constituents formed part of a lobby last week when people came in their thousands from all over Britain to show that they were deeply worried about the industry? May we have a debate on the future of this large and important manufacturing industry?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's request, which ties in with a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans). I am afraid that I cannot promise a debate next week.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May we have a debate soon on inequality in British society? I draw the attention of the right hon. Gentleman to early-day motion 730.

[That this House is shocked by the revelation that Richard Branson paid no tax on his £229 million capital gain in selling the Virgin Music Group to Thorn EMI; notes that he used tax havens in Jersey and Guernsey to avoid a United Kingdom tax bill of £92 million; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to effectively close this tax loophole which is losing the United Kingdom over £4 billion a year.]

It draws the attention of the House to the fact that Richard Branson paid no tax on his £229 million worth of capital gains from selling Virgin Music Group to Thorn EMI. What sort of obscene Government allow a multi-millionaire like Branson to avoid a tax bill of £92 million while the same Government are proposing to abolish wages councils which protect people who earn as little as £2·50 an hour?

Mr. Newton: If the linkage that the hon. Gentleman believes he has established stands up, at least in his own mind, he will have the opportunity to make the point in the debate in 10 days' time.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. If hon. Members ask questions which meet the criteria for business questions, I will try to call all hon. Members who are standing. I ask them to be brief and to the point.

Mr. Calum MacDonald (Western Isles): Has the right hon. Gentleman seen early-day motion 727?

[That this House believes that the report by Lord Justice Bingham shows the Bank of England to have been negligent in its supervisory duty to protect British depositors with BCCI; notes that this is not a matter of hindsight for, as Bingham shows, as early as 1979 the Bank 'was not only entitled but obliged to refuse a licence' to BCCI, (paragraph 2.30) but granted one anyway; notes that in 1984 the then Governor approved a plan to incorporate BCCI in the United Kingdom in order to regulate it more effectively but that the bank failed to carry this policy through when it encountered resistance from BCCI, and that the Bank 'was rather easily deterred' (2.46); notes that from 1985 the Bank shied away from taking the lead supervisory role over BCCI and thus accepeted 'a highly unsatisfactory supervisory situation as should have been obvious at the time' (2.57); notes that by 1986, adequate grounds existed to revoke or to impose conditions upon BCCI's licence and that in their failure to exercise their powers, 'the supervisors tended to lose sight of their primary duty to protect the bank's United Kingdom depositors' (2.67); notes that on this occasion and subsequently, 'the Bank failed to measure up to the task' (2.72); notes that on several occasions in the 1980's the Bank failed to make the enquiries that a 'rigorous supervisor' ought to have done (2.162); believes that the ultimate responsibility for this damning catalogue of errors resides with the Governor; and concludes that for him to continue to cling to his position leaves him with neither credibility nor honour.]

It condemns the Bank of England's negligence over the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and calls for the resignation of the Governor. Can the Leader of the House assure us that tomorrow's debate will not be the last opportunity to discuss this vital issue, and that if the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee produces a new report we shall have time to debate the issue again?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give any undertakings beyond the fact that, as is well known, there are mechanisms whereby Select Committee reports can be debated if that is thought sensible. We would want to judge that when we see the report. I think that I was pretty good to arrange a debate on Bingham as quickly after the report as I did.

Mrs. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Further to the reply that the right hon. Gentleman gave a few moments ago, will he give us his personal assurance that he will put disability access on the agenda of the next Accommodation and Works Committee meeting?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can—I am not even a member of the Committee, let alone its Chairman—but I can safely assure the hon. Lady that her request will be noted by the Chairman, to whose attention I will make sure that it is drawn.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the Leader of the House persuade the President of the Board of Trade to indemnify private factories which have to pay £1 more per tonne for imported coal than they paid for Grimethorpe coal before that colliery was closed?

Mr. Newton: Once again I have to say that I will communicate the matter to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Further to the call by the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) for an early debate on the lines suggested in early-day motion 733, which has been signed by hon. Members who have their offices or those of their secretaries in 7 Old Palace yard, may I tell the Minister—as one who dices with death at least a dozen times daily crossing Millbank—that an examination of the poll tax records of Westminster council for 1606 reveals that a Mr. Catesby and a Mr. G. Fawkes lived at 7 Old Palace yard. I understand that the G stood for Guy. The right hon. Gentleman should stop the Select Committee on Accommodation and Works spending £3 million refitting those premises and instead put in a tunnel under the road. If he does that, we promise not to use it for the purpose for which such a tunnel was used by Mr. Fawkes.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for the assurance at the end of the hon. Gentleman's question. I genuinely note his request, as I genuinely noted the request of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins).

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): After last night's Divisions, the Leader of the House will be painfully aware of the importance of every single vote. Is he aware that at the recent general election almost 2 million people were missing from the electoral register and that the information about that is hidden in the Commons Library? May we have a debate about the electoral register and on the action to be taken to get everyone's name on it so that there is a full franchise for the election which may be held in the near future because of the situation in the House?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman should not pin his hopes on the last part of his question. I am in the happy position of having the Home Secretary, who is the Minister responsible for electoral registration matters, sitting close by. I therefore do not need to draw the point to my right hon. and learned Friend's attention because he will have heard it.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): In preparing for the business on Monday 16 November, will the Leader of the House ask his colleagues to reflect on the importance placed on collective bargaining by General Motors, which yesterday opened its magnificent new ECOTEC engine plant? Will he ensure that no attacks on such bargaining processes are included in legislation? While he is speaking to his colleagues, will he also reflect on why no member of the Government was present at such an important event?

Mr. Newton: I am certainly not in a position to answer the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question, but I know

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from experience, albeit not in that Department, that there are more requests for Ministers—and perhaps for you, Madam Speaker—to attend functions than they can possibly fulfil. The earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's question raises the danger of staging a forerunner of the debate which is to be held in 10 days, so I shall simply refer the hon. Gentleman to that debate.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): Will the Leader of the House, who is a compassionate man, make time next week for a debate on cold weather payments? I have asked for such a debate before, and I ask this compassionate Minister once again to arrange a debate before the onslaught of winter.

Mr. Newton: I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman that there will be such a debate next week. However, his hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) asked about the social security uprating statement which I said that I expected before long. During the making of that statement, or in a debate which might follow in due course, the hon. Gentleman will have a good opportunity to raise that matter.

Yugoslav Nationals (Visas)

4.9 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Madam Speaker, I will make a statement about Government policy towards nationals of the former Yugoslavia arriving in the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom and its European partners have consistently held the view that the objectives of international aid to the former Yugoslavia should be to provide the means and create the confidence for as many people as possible to stay as close to their homes as possible, so that their eventual return remains a clear prospect. Without that, a fair and lasting solution to the political problems will be made very much more difficult.

The United Kingdom and its partners, however, have also recognised that for some people that policy will be neither practical nor humane. That is true, for example, of people who have been deeply traumatised by their experience, including men released from detention camps, many of whom have lost contact with their families; people who have been wounded; children who have lost their parents; and families who have lost their fathers.

The Government's view is that we should continue to help those most vulnerable groups. I believe that the British people wish to make their humanitarian contribution to ease the sufferings of the innocent victims of the civil war, but, at present, we are receiving in this country an increasing number of self-selected people from the former Yugoslavia, including arrivals from safer parts of the country well away from the war zones. For example, in an analysis of a large sample of those from the former Yugoslavia who have applied for asylum, one third were found to have come from Serbia, where many of them are seeking to escape the effects of economic sanctions.

Since the beginning of this year, the number of former Yugoslav citizens who have applied for asylum in the United Kingdom has increased month by month. Some 2,000 applied in October alone. More than 4,000 former Yugoslav citizens have continued to arrive each month as visitors. Some have subsequently made clear their intention to stay on a more permanent basis by applying for local authority housing. In addition, some 15,000 people from other parts of the world have applied for asylum in the United Kingdom since the beginning of the year.

It is extremely important that the humanitarian efforts that this country wants to make are targeted effectively on those innocent victims of the war who are suffering most. We will only achieve that if we exercise more control, and, therefore, organise specific arrangements for the reception of those whom we most want to help. At present, there is a danger of our receiving uncontrolled numbers of citizens of the former Yugoslavia who are well able to afford the air fare, and random groups organised by well-meaning organisations.

The United Kingdom is one of the few countries in Europe that have no visa requirement for any of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia. In recent weeks, several countries—for example, Germany, Sweden and Denmark—have announced the imposition of visa regimes on parts of the former Yugoslavia. It is now necessary for the United Kingdom to do likewise, so that we can control the process of admission and concentrate our efforts on the needy. From midnight tomorrow, therefore—with the exception of those holding passports issued by the Governments of Croatia and Slovenia—all nationals of the former Yugoslavia will need to obtain visas before travelling to the United Kingdom, for whatever purpose. At the same time, however, the Government will make it clear to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross that we are ready to receive from Bosnia, and from other parts of the former Yugoslavia, people with special humanitarian needs who the international organisations judge should be evacuated, including those released from detention camps.

Numbers and timing will be discussed with the UNHCR and the ICRC. In the first instance, we shall be informing the UNHCR that, from the coming weekend, we are ready to receive 150 former detainees—and in due course, any dependants whom they may have—probably making about 600 in all. The Government will be making suitable arrangements for their reception and initial accommodation, and are urgently considering how they can best be looked after in the medium term.

It is the wish of all European Governments, and of many refugees themselves, that those who have fled from the former Yugoslavia should eventually be able to return to their homes in safety. We do not intend, therefore, that those whom we bring to the United Kingdom should make their permanent homes here; but while they are with us, we shall want to make them as welcome and as comfortable as possible. In the longer term, we shall continue to monitor the political situation with the international agencies, and when the time comes we shall be ready to assist the international organisations with the practicalities of returns.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): We welcome the decision, obviously, to respond to the direct requests to us by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata, and her deputy, Mr. Stafford, to join the long list of countries that have taken detainees from the Bosnian camps into their own countries. But, while the Home Secretary may have given hope to that small group of people with one hand, by his announcement on visa requirements today he is, with the other hand, taking hope away from many more.

Of course, some of those from the former Yugoslavia may be economic migrants or even normal visitors, but will he confirm that thousands of them are applying for genuine asylum? The real question is this: what is the practical effect of insisting upon a visa in such areas as Bosnia in the present circumstances? What effect will it have on those people?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman therefore confirm that the impact of this statement in practice is that, as refugees, as I understand it, cannot obtain a visa until they have left the country which they are fleeing, as they cannot leave the country without a visa, and as airlines, under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987, face fines of up to £2,000 per person if they carry refugees without a visa, all such refugees currently coming here will effectively be barred?

Worse still, as regards those refugees who are in Bosnia and are trying, as their only means of escape, to get into Croatia, the UNHCR informed me—perhaps the Home Secretary can say whether this is right—that they are often unable to get a visa in Bosnia because of the situation there and are not allowed into Croatia because the authorities there will not allow them in if they require a visa for the country of their eventual destination.

In other words, is not the truth that the announcement today, by imposing this requirement for a visa, is not simply an administrative test because, in the chaos and slaughter in the former Yugoslavia, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is, in practice, whatever the theoretical position, erecting an absolute barrier to entry for many of these people who at present regard Britain as their sole means of survival? That is the impact of his statement.

As for the right hon. and learned Gentleman's suggestion about other countries, such as Germany, Sweden and Denmark, perhaps he will confirm that those countries have already taken many more refugees than has the United Kingdom. Furthermore, as I understand it, those countries do not enforce their provisions on carriers' liability as strictly as does the United Kingdom. Therefore, their requirement on visas is not as big a practical obstacle as ours.

Was it not these circumstances that led the Home Secretary to say just a few weeks ago in response to widespread alarm among those helping refugees about the impact that any such visa requirement might have:

> "Unlike many other European countries, including Germany, the United Kingdom has no visa requirement for nationals of the former Yugoslavia and we have no plans to impose them."?

Perhaps he would confirm that this was reiterated by his junior Minister a few weeks later.

In the view of many, the real reason for this announcement is that the Government are making the plight of refugees coming to this country infinitely worse by failing to plan properly for their arrival here. Back in September, the Refugees Arrivals Project, which deals with many refugees from Yugoslavia, asked for emergency funding to help with this problem. Not merely was that request turned down, but its funding is now frozen. Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman could confirm that. As a result, there are large numbers of families sleeping out on airport concourses, in dubious hotel accommodation or simply turned over to London local authorities. Many of these London authorities, Conservative and Labour, are happy to play their part in dealing with this problem, but they want to know where the burden of cost and funding will fall.

I must remind the Home Secretary of the scale and nature of the crisis with which we are dealing here. Sir Donald Acheson of the World Health Organisation——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he should be asking questions on the Home Secretary's statement, not making a speech on the matter.

Mr. Blair: I accept that, Madam Speaker. I merely wanted to ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman whether he accepts that Sir Donald Acheson and many others are warning that literally hundreds of thousands of people may die unless we find a proper concerted solution to the problem. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman takes this decision today without due regard for its consequences, for many thousands of people it will be dangerously and momentously wrong.

Mr. Clarke: With respect, the hon. Gentleman has not properly analysed the effect of my announcement, the whole point of which is to allow us to plan what we can do to ease the humanitarian tragedy taking place in parts of

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Bosnia, to prepare for those who are coming here, and to supplement all our efforts to get humanitarian relief to those on the ground in Yugoslavia, to whom I am sure Sir Donald was referring in the comments that the hon. Gentleman cited.

Since I last made a statement about visas, circumstances have changed because of the large numbers of people leaving Yugoslavia. We are one of the last countries to introduce a visa requirement, and we are doing it for the same reason as all the other countries are having to do it —to control entry, to make sure that we concentrate on the genuine cases—the people most in need of refuge abroad—and to plan properly for their arrival.

In comparing the number of people coming here with the figures for other countries, one is often not comparing like with like. Instead, one is comparing those who have already applied for asylum here with everybody who has moved to countries such as Germany.

So far this year, more than 40,000 people have come here from Yugoslavia, and 4,424 have so far applied for asylum. I suspect that most of the 40,000 will not go back to their country until matters have improved there. Last time we analysed the figures, we found that only about a quarter were coming from Bosnia, which is the main war zone, a quarter from Croatia, about a third from Serbia and a few from Slovenia and Macedonia.

Mr. Blair: It does not matter where they are coming from.

Mr. Clarke: It does. People are coming here for a variety of reasons, no doubt all of them understandable. Some are suffering from the effects of the economic sanctions that we are imposing on Serbia. Some are trying to avoid being drafted into the fighting. No doubt some are coming simply because they find it easier to get a livelihood and a more secure existence outside their country.

We are asking the United Nations High Commissioner for Regugees and the International Red Cross to help us to identify the sort of people whom we have seen on our television screens, who are being driven from their homes into camps or shelled as they move across the country, and to plan for the controlled reception by this country of a number of those people.

The result is that we are ending the uncontrolled flow of people who happen to be able to afford the air fare and who—as the hon. Gentleman says—sometimes find themselves living at or near airports, and we are substituting the far more sensible arrangements that I have described, which I think match the feeling in the country that we must make an organised effort.

On finance, the British Refugee Council will handle the transition for the first group to come from the UNHCR, and we will be paying it, as our agent, for the transitional cost. We must ensure that proper arrangements are made in the medium term for those who come here, and we are urgently considering the most suitable mechanism, particularly for the provision of some help to those local authorities that have been most hard pressed as a result of some sudden unexpected influxes in recent weeks.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, because the steps that he proposes are both unfortunately necessary and manifestly sensible, they will be have widespread support among the people of this country? Can he confirm that, of the 40,000 Yugoslavs whom we have welcomed to our shores in the past year, none have been returned to countries other than the western country that they chose as their first place of asylum?

Mr. Clarke: We have returned very few people. We turned away 46 asylum seekers who arrived not from Yugoslavia but from a safe country, to which they could obviously safely return, and about 400 other visitors who failed to give a satisfactory explanation for their visit on arrival at the ports—in the same way as we send other people away under our immigration control arrangements. My hon. and learned Friend is quite right: some 40,000 people have been admitted and there is absolutely no question of any of them being returned to a war zone in Yugoslavia. I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his support for the measures that we are taking to organise our future response to the flow.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Home Secretary recognise that his statement will be regarded with dismay by the British people whose instincts and judgment are more humane than those of his Department? Does he recognise that the only organisation that he appears to be putting his mind to is how to get these people back out of the country? This is institutionalised inhumanity. The reality is that those who are seeking to come to this country from the moving war-torn zones will find it neither practical nor possible. Neither the consular facilities nor the necessary documentation to acquire these visas will be available, and the sole result will be to increase the problems and pressures on other, neighbouring countries, particularly Germany which is already receiving some seven times as many refugees as this country.

Mr. Clarke: With great respect, that is all simply not the case. At present we have a large number of people coming here, as I have just described, not all of whom by any means have even been in a war zone so far. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross approved the general policy of concentrating most of the help to keep people near their homes where they want to stay, and Britain is one of the leading contributors to the humanitarian effort on the ground in Yugoslavia. The UNHCR and the voluntary bodies here do not approve of the well-intentioned practice of going out there and bringing coach loads, for example, of children back here and trying to place them in this country, not always with any idea of the background of the children and no proper arrangements for them here.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is asking countries like our own to take their share of the people identified by the organisations on the ground as being most in need of refuge overseas, and we have responded to that. The first batch of people will come here under that arrangement, as I have announced to the House today—probably 600 people in all eventually—and we shall be discussing with the UNHCR and the ICRC what further people we should receive.

The UNHCR and the ICRC are on the ground. They know the people who most desperately need the support of the British public, and we are organising ourselves to make sure that we have planned entry and proper arrangements for their well-being when they get here.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that most people will agree that it is necessary to have an orderly regime imposed by visas to allow for a proper entry of people into the United Kingdom? Will he also agree that it is necessary to look at where they will live, because the London boroughs, in particular, cannot accommodate the increasing number of refugees? Will he further confirm that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has expressed disquiet about the removal of children of tender years to this country, and that there is an important procedure to be followed through the Department of Health with regard to the adoption of children? Will he agree that that must be pursued as well?

Mr. Clarke: On the first point, my hon. Friend is quite right to remind me that there are some councils, including his own, that are very hard pressed by the number of refugees who have arrived, particularly in recent months. For that reason, when the British Refugee Council seeks to move the incomers into local communities it will obviously look for local authorities that can be helpful, but I suspect that it will be moving them to those parts of the country that are not so desperately hard pressed already as Westminster, which is one of the places to which people just make their way when they get off the aircraft.

The second point that my hon. Friend makes is extremely important. The people organising these movements of children are, I am sure, acting from the highest motives, but it is the view of people in social services departments, voluntary agencies and adoption agencies that it is not desirable for well-meaning people to bring in children the way they are doing at the moment, either just handing them over to social services or seeking to place them with families without going through the very careful procedures that we quite rightly have in this country.

Ms. Ann Coffey (Stockport): What practical help can be offered to local authorities? In Stockport we have 54 Bosnian Muslim refugees in temporary accommodation. I have been to talk to these families, and I can assure the Secretary of State that they are the very families who have had horrifying experiences and have been traumatised by them. It is likely that many of those families cannot return because there is nowhere for them to return to safely. In three, five or six months, there will be serious problems in respect of resettlement, rehousing and integrating those families into the wider community. What practical help does the Secretary of State envisage offering Stockport and other authorities? I hope that we will not have to wait until we reach crisis point and hon. Members such as I have to send letters begging for help. I urge the Home Secretary to tell us now what practical help he envisages offering.

Mr. Clarke: We expect that the people who will be handed into our charge by the UNHCR will also largely be Bosnian Muslims who have been through the same experiences as the people who are now living in the constituency of the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey).

The long-standing position in this country is that people who are resident here acquire certain statutory rights which they claim from the authorities in the areas where they take up residence. Up to a certain point, that has been a long-standing feature of our arrangements and no doubt it is taken into account in the ordinary financing of local government. However, I accept that some local authorities have experienced a sudden and unexpected influx and they are having urgent discussions with my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning about what should be done.

The Government recognise that recent uncontrolled arrivals have imposed substantial unanticipated burdens on public services in some localities. We see a strong case for some assistance to some of those local authorities. However, I am not sure whether 54 additional people in Stockport necessarily places Stockport in that category. My right hon. Friends and I are considering urgently the most suitable mechanism for providing assistance to those local authorities that are particularly and exceptionally hard pressed.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that there will be no dismay in Uttlesford district about his announcement today? Will he acknowledge that Uttlesford recently had to cope with an influx of 171 refugees who could not be classified as necessarily the most oppressed and faced the prospect, before my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement today, of unlimited further arrivals of people in that category? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the only rational and humane way of discharging our international obligations—which I hope that we will discharge—to oppressed people is to do that on a national basis which tries to help the worst afflicted?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am well aware of the problem in Uttlesford. The incident in Uttlesford had a great deal to do with the urgent discussions inside the Government which led to today's announcement. The constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) suddenly found that about 170 Albanians arrived at Stansted airport from Kosovo—a dangerous part of the world, but not somewhere where a great deal of fighting is taking place at the moment. Those people must be cared for and they have claimed their statutory entitlement from a comparatively small district council. I quite understand that the council rightly fears that similar planeloads of people could arrive at Stansted quite steadily—at least, they could have done—unless we impose the visa requirement. The problem now facing Uttlesford is a subject which my right hon. and hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, are considering urgently.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Secretary of State will be aware that there are more than 2 million refugees within the territories of the former state of Yugoslavia. Clearly, there will be enormous pressure and it is therefore right to adopt as sensible and selective a policy as we can devise. However, is the right hon. and learned Gentleman satisfied that it makes sense to impose the visa requirement on Bosnia, the major war zone, and not on Croatia or Slovenia—although I accept that he is imposing it on Serbia—where there is no fighting at the moment? Surely it does not make sense to establish a visa regime against the one area where the most desperate fighting is continuing.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that one's initial reaction to that is to say that it seems to be the wrong way round. However, if we consider the countries on which we impose a visa requirement and the practice of other western European countries, it is clear that visas are imposed on the places where the difficulty is occurring. It is from there that one must control the flow.

At the moment, Slovenia, I believe, is almost as peaceful as Austria. We do not have a great influx of people from Slovenia. There is no need to burden the authorities there with a visa requirement. That is not a problem, but Bosnia and the former states of the former Yugoslavia are. The problem is people travelling on passports from the former Yugoslavia. Therefore, one imposes a visa which in the first place is restrictive so that then one can have the planned and controlled entry of those whom we most want to help, of the kind that we can arrange with the United Nations.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that his statement will be warmly welcomed by the vast majority of people? May I seek clarification in regard to housing, to which my right hon. and learned Friend has alluded, as it is critical? Is he aware that local authorities have had it explained to them that if refugees come to their areas, they are to be treated under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 as unintentionally homeless? Regardless of the numbers, that will cause problems to certain local authorities. Also, if housing is to be made available under the homeless persons Act, it might stop other people who have been on a housing waiting list for a long time. One does not want an increased race relations problem on such emotive grounds. If more help or more consideration can be given to a way of helping to solve a potential problem, which would cause great resentment, it will be greatly appreciated by many local authorities and many private individuals.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend makes a very valuable point. We are trying to encourage the humanitarian instincts of the population. We want to avoid those things that might arouse resentment in areas that become too hard pressed. My hon. Friend accurately describes the present position in which those who seek asylum are entitled to be given priority as unintentionally homeless. There are authorities in which it is almost impossible to house a long-standing resident because all the housing has been taken by refugees. That underlying problem will be addressed in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill, which had its Second Reading earlier this week. *[Interruption.]* It does not leave refugees with no roof over their heads. It does not put them on the streets. It allows them to have temporary accommodation and not, as long as they are in temporary accommodation, acquire that first priority over the queue when it comes to homelessness applications and local authority housing.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The Home Secretary drew a distinction between giving assistance to persons who are genuinely suffering from the war and others such as economic migrants. In the light of that, does he agree that it seems very difficult to support the distinctions that he is drawing between various parts of the former Yugoslavia? Although he gave a reply about Slovenia to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), in his earlier statements he said that a quarter of the refugees are coming from Croatia. Why no visa requirement there? May we be assured that more help will be given to people from Bosnia, particularly as Her Majesty's Government, in view of the Foreign Office's crazy idea of ethnic cantonisation, which was put forward by Lord Carrington some time ago, have some responsibility for encouraging the development of the war there?

Mr. Clarke: I will not go into Balkan politics, but I think that it is a rather far-fetched theory that we have encouraged the war there. Indeed, we have been in the forefront of those making strenuous efforts to try to restore peace to that rather stricken part of the Balkans. We will not be imposing a visa requirement on those who carry Slovenian passports or Croatian passports, because we do not have a particular immigration difficulty with them. People with those passports often come from peaceful parts of the world as visitors and go back again. Bosnia will have the visa requirement, but I expect that, because the fighting is worse in Bosnia, the United Nations will be asking us to take people overwhelmingly from that part of Yugoslavia.

Indeed, I am sure that the people whom we are expecting to receive in the next few days will all come from Bosnia because they have been driven from their homes. They are in a camp there and they have to be moved from the camp so that more people can go in. The effect of what I have described will be that all those people who are coming here, for whom we are now organising arrangements, will be identified as the worst victims of the war.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I remind my right hon. and learned Friend that, two weeks ago, Ealing had to refuse 150 Bosnians because it simply could not house them, but it still faces the problem of the legality of that action. That matter will be addressed in the Bill. Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the council, which acted in the very best of faith, that there will be no problem in terms of the legality of that action? Will he also consider allowing section 11 money to be extended to cover the necessary education of children of refugees from countries such as Bosnia and other countries, as well as those from new Commonwealth countries?

Mr. Clarke: I can assure my hon. Friend that I am aware of the particular problems in Ealing; I have already referred to the city of Westminster. Indeed, the Minister for Housing and Planning is an Ealing Member of Parliament, so he is particularly well placed to know about the position.

The position is that those who come here and take up residence have certain statutory entitlements to social security and services. Under the homelessness legislation, they are also entitled to be treated as homeless in certain circumstances. We are modifying the homelessness provisions. The refugees cannot legally be refused statutory entitlements; nor do I think that we would want them to be so refused.

We are examining the problems of councils that have a flow of refugees that is out of the ordinary compared with the flow of homeless families who might normally turn up in any borough. There are not many such councils, but some face particular difficulties. The Government accept that there is a strong case for providing financial assistance to such authorities. We are urgently considering the best way of providing that assistance.

My hon. Friend makes a valid point about section 11. To change section 11 would require legislation. I have long considered it a weakness that section 11 is confined to ethnic minorities from the Commonwealth. That is perfectly reasonable, but section 11 excludes Vietnamese, Bosnians and other groups until we eventually find the parliamentary time to amend that part of the Act.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The great housing burden in respect of refugees has fallen on both Conservative and Labour boroughs in London. Although the Home Secretary has heard stories of 150 or so refugees going to other places, some London boroughs are trying to look after anything up to 10,000 refugees from various parts of the world. We want to give a proper welcome to those refugees, but we cannot do so because of the enormous pressure on housing resources. What urgent measures are being considered? Is the Home Secretary prepared to meet delegations from the London Boroughs Association and the Association of London Authorities so that he can fully understand how widespread is the problem of housing refugees in the capital city?

Mr. Clarke: I made it clear that I am aware of the pressures. They are not confined to London, but I readily accept that the worst pressures are probably felt by some of the London boroughs. I have already responded, but I cannot undertake to receive delegations because that aspect of the problem is not part of my departmental responsibility. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning are seized of the problem. Discussions are taking place, and delegations on housing problems should be addressed to them.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): My right hon. and learned Friend may remember that I raised the matter in the Second Reading of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill and highlighted the pressure that it puts on certain local authorities in Kent. I welcome the rapid response and the co-ordinated assistance for refugees from Bosnia. Does that not dovetail with the humanitarian aid that the Government have already sent to the former Yugoslav republics?

Mr. Clarke: I remember that my hon. Friend made the point strongly in the debate earlier this week. The assistance dovetails with what we are doing in Yugoslavia. We have sent £70 million in aid to the relief effort in Yugoslavia. Our aircraft are making flights into Sarajevo, sometimes at considerable risk. Many lorries have been sent to Yugoslavia. We have troops on the ground protecting the humanitarian convoys. We have given £2·5 million of medical supplies to the World Health Organisation. We have contributed £3 million to the UNHCR for the provision of winter accommodation in Bosnia.

The British have responded as positively as any other member of the international community to the problems in Yugoslavia. The bulk of the help should be given on the ground in and around Bosnia and in Yugoslavia. We are also prepared to make a proper and organised humanitarian response in Britain to the problem of people who must get out of the territory to receive help.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Does the Home Secretary not realise that as a result of his statement today many people will believe that the Government discriminate against Muslims? The Muslim population in Bosnia is suffering most. To introduce visa requirements for those people alone seems nonsense. Does he recognise that, instead of spending a great deal of time trying to push through the Maastricht treaty, the Government should do more to bring together the European countries to do more than simply feed people so that they can die with full stomachs rather than die poor and hungry?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Lady has her arguments upside down. We do not know the religion of the people who are coming here, because we do not ask them and we do not discriminate. Only a quarter come from Bosnia. The people who will be prevented from coming here under the arrangements that I have announced are people from Serbia who cannot demonstrate any reason for making a visit. I anticipate that the people whom we shall receive from the Red Cross and the UNHCR will overwhelmingly come from Bosnia—instead of a quarter, I expect that it will be almost 100 per cent. We certainly expect the first batch to be overwhelmingly Muslim, because more Muslims than people from any other group are being displaced. It is precisely the reverse of what the hon. Lady suggests. I have listed our humanitarian efforts, which exceed those of most other developed countries.

The British convened the London conference to take forward the peace effort. David Owen, appointed by the Government, and Cyrus Vance seek to take forward the peace effort in Yugoslavia. With the greatest respect to the hon. Lady, it is positively carping and misleading to claim that the British are not responding on all possible fronts to the desperate crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): I welcome the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend. He will be aware that Britain was criticised by other members of the Community for not playing a full part in receiving refugees from Yugoslavia. Will he outline how the measures that he has announced today compare with what other European countries are doing? What effort is being made to co-ordinate a European response to ensure that all countries in the Community play a fair part?

Mr. Clarke: Some of the criticism from western Europe was based on a misunderstanding of the figures and a belief that our regime was different from that which we had. I know that there was some resentment in Germany, to which hundreds of thousands of people from the former Yugoslavia have fled, largely because there were already many Yugoslavs in Germany. I have no idea how many of the Yugoslavs in Germany have fled directly from the war zones and how many former Yugoslav citizens simply think that Germany is a slightly better place to live until things become quieter back at home.

The Germans thought that we had taken only the number that we had published as asylum applicants, but the great bulk of refugees arrived in the first place as visitors. The figure is already more than 40,000 this year and it is increasing steadily. We believe that the best way of sharing the burden that has been urged on us is to work

[Mr. Clarke]

with the UNHCR and the ICRC, which support our policy of giving most of the help on the ground. They have identified for us the people who must be moved out. We are one of the first countries to offer to take a share. The Americans have offered to take 300. Other European countries have made no response so far to the request of the United Nations to take some of the people from the camps.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Home Secretary said earlier that the Government did not intend to return to the war zones any of those who were already in the United Kingdom. Will he give an assurance that the Government do not intend to return any of them to transit camps in other European countries such as Austria and Germany? How quickly will he decide the exact status of those who have been helped to come here by voluntary organisations? Many of them are here on a temporary basis. Unless the Home Office grants them official status they will be excluded from many of the statutory entitlements.

Mr. Clarke: Again, I give the assurance that we shall not return anyone to a war zone. We only return people to safe places. We shall continue to return holders of passports from the former Yugoslavia to third countries from which they have come, but not if they merely passed through them as part of the journey. There is no reason why we should not return people to countries where they have been living for some time and where they are safe. We never accept people here as political refugees if they claim to fear persecution in one country, but have been living perfectly safely in another country before they arrive here. That is a sensible rule which we have to adhere to.

There is a backlog in settling the status of asylum seekers. We do so as rapidly as possible. The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill was yet another attempt to speed up and improve the clogged-up and over-complicated decision-making process. We can give exceptional relief to people whom we admit from the United Nations when they arrive, and their statutory entitlements will be in little doubt. The British Refugee Council is expert at advising them on those entitlements.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): This will indeed be a bad day for our country's reputation. Is the Home Secretary aware that, given the prevailing circumstances in the former state of Yugoslavia, common humanity demands a generous approach by the British Government, and not the mean-spirited approach that we have heard about today? If the same policy had been adopted at other times, many people who live in this country would never have been able to come here in the first place when they were fleeing from terror and persecution.

Why should the Home Secretary not take effective steps with his Cabinet colleagues to co-ordinate local government action to deal with the problem in the right way, as well as trying to ensure that European Community countries take a common approach, so that, instead of closing the door, we do everything that we can to help people who, in the main, are fleeing because they are terrified of what will happen to them? Many are children who want a safe haven, at least temporarily.

Mr. Clarke: I know that we are going through a period of heightened political controversy in this country, but I cannot for the life of me see the point of some Opposition Members trying to pretend that this is a mean-minded response to which they are opposed. Labour and Conservative-controlled authorities will welcome the statement for some of the reasons that we have already heard, not least those mentioned by the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey). We are going in for a planned and organised response, taking our share of the refugees that the United Nations is asking countries around the world to receive. We shall make a more effective contribution to relieving the suffering caused by the civil war than we have done hitherto.

When the hon. Gentleman considers the matter quietly and calmly—perhaps not in public—I suspect that he will realise that it is a perfectly sensibly way to proceed.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is the Home Secretary able to state whether discussions have taken place between officials from his Department and the Scottish Office concerning the offers made by certain voluntary associations and charities in Scotland to place children from the war zones with families in the west of Scotland? I remind the Home Secretary that social work departments in Scotland have lists of approved foster parents, many of whom are experienced in dealing with traumatised children. Such children, who are devastated by the terrible losses that they have suffered, might be better off being placed with such foster parents than being adopted by exceedingly well-meaning, but ill-experienced, people.

Mr. Clarke: We have been keeping in touch with the Scottish Office throughout. I shall ensure that we continue to do so, because Scottish local authorities and voluntary organisations will undoubtedly be involved. I agree with the drift of the hon. Gentleman's comments about the reception of children. It is essential that it is handled by people who have experience and who know what they are doing, and who have the necessary data on where they might properly be placed. One instant and good effect of the visa regime will be to stop well-meaning people turning up with large numbers of children, not knowing how to provide properly for them in this country.

GATT (Uruguay Round)

4.53 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the position in the GATT Uruguay round of trade negotiations.

The House will recall that the Uruguay round of trade negotiations—the eighth GATT round—was launched in 1986. Its coverage was ambitious—fifteen different areas and 108 parties—making it the biggest trade negotiation in history. As well as traditional GATT areas, such as tariff and non-tariff barriers, it covered the new areas of services, intellectual property and investment, and the development of new GATT rules for agricultural and textiles trade. It also aimed to improve the rules and functioning of the GATT generally.

Those aims were ambitious, but they have now been very largely achieved. The draft text produced by Mr. Dunkel, the GATT Director General, at the end of last year proposed a basis for agreement on all these issues. More than 80 per cent. of the proposals were agreed by all the parties. However, there remained a number of unresolved problems, principally over agriculture, which led the European Community to say that the text was not acceptable as it stood. Negotiations also still have to be completed on the commitments by individual parties to cut tariffs and barriers to trade in services.

I must make it clear to the House that the European Commission is responsible for negotiating in the GATT on behalf of the European Community. It negotiates under authority from the Council of Ministers, who will have to approve any final agreement. For their part, the Government have consistently supported a Uruguay round agreement. That has been particularly true during our presidency, when we have made concerted efforts to help achieve a satisfactory conclusion.

Since the Dunkel text appeared, efforts have concentrated on bilateral negotiations between the European Commission and the United States. They were aimed at resolving their remaining bilateral differences, mainly on agriculture, and so open the way to the completion of a full multilateral agreement in Geneva.

The latest round of the talks took place earlier this week in Chicago between the European Community's Agriculture Commissioner, Mr. MacSharry, and the United States Agriculture Secretary, Mr. Madigan. As well as continuing attempts to settle the remaining difficulties over the GATT agriculture agreement, they were also trying to resolve a separate but related trade dispute over the Community's support regime for oilseeds. The Community and the United States have been negotiating changes to that regime, following the findings of the GATT panel that it breached the EC's GATT obligations.

Some progress was made on both issues, but final agreement had not been reached before the talks were suspended on Tuesday evening. The gap between the two sides has nevertheless been narrowed substantially, and the remaining differences are very small indeed. The Government are working to bring both sides back to the negotiating table as soon as possible.

A few moments ago I was informed that the United States had just announced retaliatory action in the oilseeds dispute against $300 million of Community exports. I understand that that covers various types of wine, rapeseed oil and wheat gluten. That is a highly regrettable development and the Community will need to consider its response carefully. I stress that the first list will only be expected to come into effect after 30 days. The question of EC counter-retaliation, which some in the Commission have mentioned, will only arise if there is no settlement in the meantime, and would in any case be subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers. It is in the interests of both sides to avoid starting a spiral of retaliation, which can only harm exporters and damage the prospects for GATT agreement.

Little time remains if we are to meet the end-year target set for conclusion of the GATT round by the G7 summit and the Birmingham European Council. That is also important if the United States Administration are to take advantage of their arrangements for so-called "fast track" approval under which any agreement must be notified to Congress by March. We may never have a better chance to conclude such a wide-ranging agreement. If this chance is missed, the prospects for the negotiations and for the world trading system are serious, and those most directly concerned will carry a heavy responsibility.

While the remaining issues are difficult, the two sides have also never been closer together. A settlement both of the GATT issues and the oilseed dispute is achievable. The benefits of agreement would be substantial. Apart from the extra $200 billion annual world output which, on an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimate, would result from the round, there is the immediate boost to business confidence which agreement would give. We can and must grasp that prize.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): All parties in the House will agree with the closing remarks of the President of the Board of Trade on the gravity of the challenge to the world economy from the breakdown of the talks. In particular, I endorse his recognition that we are unlikely to obtain any agreement if we cannot conclude the talks by March when the fast-track mandate from the United States Congress expires.

The President may also wish to recognise the impatience of the rest of the world that an agreement which benefits more than 100 countries, including some of the poorest, should now be halted as a result of a bilateral dispute between the two most powerful trading blocs.

The President cannot pass responsibility for failure to the EC as though Britain were not part of it. Britain is currently President of the EC. Has the right hon. Gentleman forgotten that, on 30 June, the Prime Minister assured the House that he was looking for a successful outcome of GATT during his presidency?

In order that we can judge the concerted efforts for success to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, can he tell us whether the Government accept the finding of the two GATT panels, that the EC is at fault in its oilseed regime? If the Government accept the outcome of those two panels, what have they been doing during their months in the EC presidency to resolve that matter? Equally, does the President recognise that there is fault on both sides of the dispute?

Have the British Government reminded the United States Administration that they have secured progress on cutting EC subsidies and obtaining protection of intellectual property which must have exceeded their

[Mr. Robin Cook]

expectations six years ago when the talks began? Does he agree that the United States stands to gain most from the current agreement on offer, and that it would be unwise to throw it away for the sectional interest of oilseed farmers?

What protest have the British Government made bilaterally to their friends in the present United States Administration to remind them that there are great dangers to the United States as well as to Europe in starting a trade war? In the event that those representations are not successful, I put to the President two questions on which industry will want reassurance.

First, what attitude will be taken by the British Government at the meeting of the Council of Ministers, which I understand is to be held on Monday, to consider retaliation against today's announcement by the United States? As it appears that British products have largely been excluded from the first round of sanctions announced today, will the British Government resist imposition by the EC of tariffs on United States products which will put up the price equally for British consumers? Will Britain argue against the futility of tit-for-tat retaliation?

Secondly, will the President clarify the Government's current position on the multi-fibre arrangement in the light of the latest deadlock on GATT? He will be aware that progress on MFA depends on progress on GATT. Can he confirm that the existing MFA will be prolonged so long as GATT remains in abeyance?

It almost beggars belief that, at a time of world recession, a major stimulus to world trade should be at risk over a difference in negotiating position of just over 1 million tonnes of oilseed production. The gains to industry and commerce could be immense. The Government and the House must not permit those gains to be lost in a dispute over a row of soya beans.

Mr. Heseltine: I find myself in almost total agreement with the hon. Gentleman. I think that the House will share his indignation that, after six years in which the process has been under way, we have not been able to reach agreement on what is, by any standards, one of the most significant things that could give a boost not just to the economies of the advanced world but to the economies of the less privileged parts of the world.

The British Government's position has been consistently in favour of reaching a satisfactory outcome to the GATT round. The Prime Minister has been continually in touch with those people who can influence its momentum and direction in order to urge them to make progress.

The hon. Gentleman drew our attention to a number of specific issues. It was envisaged that the multi-fibre arrangement would be replaced as the new arrangements came into place, and we shall now have to consider how that meshes in with the present situation.

But the British Government's overriding interest is to continue to exercise whatever influence they properly can as an independent nation and as President of the EC to get the talks started again. It will be of no surprise to the House that there is continual contact on the matter in order to try to ensure that the suspended talks reopen. I give the House my emphatic assurance that the Government will do everything they can in order to bring that about.

As the House well knows, the European Commission negotiates on behalf of the Community, and at the recent Birmingham Council the European Commission was clearly mandated to move towards a satisfactory resolution of the negotiations with the United States.

The hon. Gentleman asked what steps the Government have taken to "protest", to use his language, to the President of the American Administration. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there has been constant communication with the American Administration in order to ensure that the dialogue is maintained.

It is, as I say, much to be regretted that we have now moved to this dangerous stage. The question of retaliation will have to be considered in the light of discussions within the Commission, but in the end it is a matter for the Council. Much the most important thing that could be achieved is not to move to retaliation but to the restoration and, hopefully, the successful outcome of the talks.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Does my right hon. Friend recall that it was this Government who played the leading role in bringing agriculture into the Uruguay round, and that we brought the EC kicking and screaming into that agreement? Does he understand that a successful settlement of the discussions will cause considerable difficulties to agriculture in Europe? He knows my interest in that. Does he agree that agreement is essential for world trade in general and for the economy of Britain in particular? In the negotiation that the Commission is currently conducting, is there a qualified majority of members of the Council who would support a settlement to which, currently, the Commission is refusing to agree because of a minority of nations which are being particularly intransigent?

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend has profound experience in the role that agriculture has played in the general conduct of the Uruguay round. I recognise the specific problems caused for the agricultural industry, but many of those have flowed from the reform of the CAP which has been an important step in moving to a point at which we can, hopefully, resolve the outstanding issues of the Uruguay round. I know that the House will understand if I say that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is responsible for the detailed negotiations under our presidency, has been resolute in the energy and dedication that he has applied to that task.

I cannot comment on the existence of a qualified majority because no such position has been tested. These matters are, in the first case anyway, open to resolution of the Council by qualified majority, but we have not reached the stage where that has been tested.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the President of the Board of Trade accept that the House and country will be looking to him, as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and to the Government, to prevent a potentially fatal escalation of the confrontation and to secure agreement? However, will he accept that the position of the Government and the EC would have been substantially weakened had the vote last night gone the other way? Is it not crucial that the EC is able to maintain and secure a united position to prevent the escalation of a trade war?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman illustrates clearly the interrelationship of so much of our commercial and foreign policy within the Community. For Britain to have a proportionately important influence, it is important that we should be seen to be at the centre and committed to the process that we were discussing yesterday. It is very much our view that the worst deterioration that could take place would be from a tit-for-tat consequence to the American lists that have been published today. We shall do everything we can, as President of the Community, to bring the matter back to the conference table and, hopefully, resolution.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): My right hon. Friend will be aware of my interest in the GATT round over a considerable period, particularly relating to textiles. As he will be aware, the apparel and textile industry has sales of about £15 billion a year and still employs nearly 500,000 people. We wish to see that continue. He will also be aware that the MFA was extended to the end of this year in the hope that there would be a settlement in the GATT round. Can he assure British industry generally that the MFA will be extended on its present terms beyond the end of this year for as long as is necessary?

Mr. Heseltine: I certainly know of my hon. Friend's interest in textiles, and in other industries—*[Laughter.]* —although we find it easier to agree with her views on textiles. I can go a long way to reassure her on this occasion, if not on others, that the Commission is negotiating the extension of the multi-fibre arrangement until the GATT round is concluded.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is an indictment of the European Community that it has allowed agriculture to dominate when agriculture represents only 10 per cent. by value of world trade? May we be assured that a strong position will be taken in the negotiations by Her Majesty's Government, who will demand that manufacturing industry, particularly textiles—in Bradford, for example, 12,000 people are employed directly in that industry—will not have its interests put to one side in the interest of agriculture?

In particular, will we press for the period of the MFA to be retained for at least 10 years to protect the industry and the jobs that rely on it? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that 450,000 jobs in textiles and clothing in Britain depend on there being proper, progressive trade negotiations, that the stealing of copyright designs must be prevented and that there must be more access to markets over trade barriers that are far too high in many countries? I have referred to some important aims that must be achieved if industry is to have confidence.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman makes some points with which I agree. The disquieting aspect of the negotiations is that the interests of an important but, in proportionate terms, relatively small industrial sector in world terms is at the centre of the difficulties that frustrate us. That is true in the European Community and in the United States. The agricultural interests are politically of great significance on both sides of the Atlantic. That has been the stumbling block which has prevented us from making progress.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that, from the point of view of the self-interest of the parties to the GATT negotiations, a whole range of industries has much to benefit. Indeed, the overwhelming self-interest of the countries concerned is to proceed with GATT. But there is no escaping the fact that there are areas of political difficulty in trying to deal with the problems of agricultural surpluses or subsidies.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): As America is about to begin the lengthy process of changing its Administration, will the British Government be arguing at the European Council that no retaliatory action should take place until America's new Administration is in place? As it is a long time until 20 January, will the Commission soon be starting informal talks with President-elect Clinton and his Administration to see what their policy is likely to be?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will appreciate that it is for the Commission to discuss how it pursues the negotiations on behalf of the Community. Without doubt, the matters to which my hon. Friend refers will be discussed. I have no doubt that at the informal meeting of Ministers, which is due to take place tomorrow under my presidency, those matters will be raised. But there is no immediate power for a particular country to take over responsibility for negotiations that are properly those of the Commission.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that those of us who represent manufacturing constituencies—albeit their industries, especially in the aerospace sector, have been devastated by Government policy—are greatly concerned at the possibility of an escalating trade war? Is he aware that it is not good enough for him to hide behind discussions that have taken place in the European Community? What pressure has he put on the French Government to end the problems that have been created by the intransigence of the French farming community?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know from reading the newspapers that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is President of the Agriculture Council, was present in Chicago while discussions between Commissioner MacSharry and Mr. Madigan were taking place. He was not negotiating—it was not his task to do that—but he was there to make clear the strong sense of commitment that this country has, as President of the Community, by being as close to the negotiating machine as possible. So there is no doubt that, in every conceivable way open to us, we have sought to make progress in the negotations. But in the end, we are dealing with sovereign states and the self-interest of those states, and no powers are available to us to compel people to do what they do not want to do.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his negotiating position has widespread support and that it is vital to avoid a cycle of retribution and retaliation which would damage us as a major trading nation and do considerable damage to third world producers? Does he think that there is any prospect in the negotations ahead of detaching oilseed from the GATT agenda? Might that be a possible way forward?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point, which I hope will be heeded. There is no reason technically why the two issues should not be separated, but those who have some idea of the ways in which the negotations are proceeding see no reason why we cannot conclude a satisfactory GATT round. The margins of

[Mr. Heseltine]

division are very narrow indeed. To be frank, it would seem incredible if such narrow differentials precluded a satisfactory outome to the round.

My hon. Friend raises a point with which the whole House will agree. We spend a huge amount of time—we have today—discussing aid to the third world. No aid programme within our gift could in any way equal the benefit to the third world that would come from a satisfactory outcome of the GATT round.

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): The President of the Board of Trade will be aware of the deeply difficult trading conditions facing the textile industry. Is he aware, for example, that the industry, particularly in Bradford, is delaying investment decisions because of the lack of a conclusion to the MFA situation and GATT? Will pressure be put on the United States in particular in Geneva to remove artificial and protective tariff barriers that are themselves in contravention of GATT?

Mr. Heseltine: The negotiations in Geneva will be multilateral. Great progress has been made, but not the whole way, and it will be for the Commission, which will represent us in Geneva, to secure a deal, which must then be presented to the Council of Ministers for approval.

The point made by the hon. Gentleman adds to the concern that hon. Members have expressed. This is not just a question of tariff walls being erected: it is the uncertainty that flows from that. Understandably, the textile industry is bound to ask about the future and, if it is unable to get certain questions answered, will delay investment. All that is part of the cycle of deteriorating confidence that the failure to achieve success creates.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Is it not a disgrace that the European, and particularly the French, agricultural lobby—probably the most subsidised and protected industry in Europe—should be allowed to hold the GATT round and the whole global trading system to ransom? The amount of intervention and protection that the industry has enjoyed since the war is surely the best argument against political interference in industry, intervention in business and protectionism in agriculture, textiles, coal, steel or any other industry.

Mr. Heseltine: I hear what my hon. Friend says, but it does not quite reflect how the negotiations in Chicago unfolded. Commissioner MacSharry went as far as he could reasonably have been expected to go to secure a closing of the gap between the two sides. I wish to put that firmly on the record. However, those political self-interests exist to which my hon. Friend has drawn our attention, and I hope that no country will put the sectoral interests of a small part of its economy against the overwhelming interests of the world trading economy.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the President of the Board of Trade confirm that, as the Chair or President of the relevant Council of Ministers, he is the nearest thing in the European Community, and certainly in the House, to a politician taking responsibility in this matter? Is not the surplus of oilseed, to which he referred as a casus belli, controversial both in the European Community and in this country? Was it not exported around the world, including to the United States, with the assistance of public money? If so, has not the use of public money—unwisely in that case—prejudiced the reactivation of world trade?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman asks me to confirm what everyone knows—that the level of subsidies in oilseed is one of the causes of concern that has led to the threat of retaliatory action. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not get drawn into the precise details of what is essentially a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the further breakdown and delay in those talks will be greeted with dismay in the agricultural community? Will he assure us that he will do everything in his power to urge on the parties—both the United States and the European Community—the necessity of cracking that last part of the agreement? Then, and only then, will we be able to take the matter forward.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I give the unreserved assurance that he seeks. The whole House will accept that only the most naive economists argue that we should try to support the prosperity of our agriculture by impoverishing the rest of the economy. Nothing is more likely to help to create the markets for agricultural products than a buoyant restoration of the confidence of the world economy.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the President of the Board of Trade accept that it will be an unmitigated disaster if we cannot get out of the difficulties with the GATT round, not least in areas like Wales, where a number of American companies have invested? The uncertainty created must have a detrimental effect on possible future investment. In seeking a compromise, will he give an undertaking that there will be no compromise on the environmental dimension, which has had some consideration in the background to the negotiations?

Mr. Heseltine: I am not aware of an area where environmental divisions separate the negotiators. Naturally, I accept that, if the GATT round were to fail and we were to proceed into a trade war, that is as dangerous a situation as we could envisage, given the present state of the world economy. It would be bad in any circumstances, but it would be catastrophic in the present circumstances.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the impressive exporting success of the British textile and apparel industries in recent years? Does he accept that a successful GATT agreement must encompass greatly strengthened rules and disciplines, and better access to other markets for our products? Does he agree that the British textile and clothing industry wants not protection but a fair marketplace where it can compete with other countries?

Mr. Heseltine: I am glad to hear that my hon. Friend feels that, because he represents a textile area and has a considerable knowledge of the subject. I readily acknowledge that industry's success in export markets, as in the domestic market. I certainly agree that, if we are to have international machinery for trade negotiations of that sort, it must carry with it the assumption that people will stick by the rules. That is one reason why it is so important that the oilseed dispute be resolved.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The President of the Board of Trade will recognise that that is another of the Prime Minister's predictions that has failed miserably. Many of us have lost thousands of jobs in our constituencies. What contingency plan will the Government put into operation to help some of the companies which, if a trade war takes place, could face the inevitable—unemployment, bankruptcies and closures? What plans do the Government have in the meantime?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman can have no concept of the scale of the disaster that a trade war and a failure of GATT would have. No conceivable Government action can substitute for the scale of the marketplace which would be denied them by this development that we are discussing today. There is no conceivable level of tax that could be raised, or whatever it was, to produce the subsidies to support the companies for the orders that they would lose. It is utterly naive not to realise the awful dilemma that the trading economy of this country would face if we see this development proceed as badly as we fear.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Will my right hon. Friend join me in deploring the United States Government's action in raising tariffs, which is clearly a crude negotiating tactic to try to force a settlement of the Uruguay round quickly and on their terms? It would be wrong if the EC retaliated in kind, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will ensure that the Council of Ministers does not do so. Does he agree that the effects of a tariff war would be to turn the world recession into a world slump, which would be a disaster for our industries and for all industries throughout the world?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend comes close to the analysis that I have been trying to give the House. However, in trying to make progress in the matter, one must recognise that the Americans have been pursuing the oilseed dispute through the GATT machinery and their case has been found to be substantiated through the existing machinery. There is therefore no gain for me in trying to raise the temperature in that fragile situation. A possibility raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) was that we could separate the two issues and make progress with the GATT arrangements, which are now close to potential resolution. We could then seek ways of resolving the oilseed dispute, which remains under existing GATT arrangements.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The Maastricht treaty alters almost every section of the treaty of Rome, often in considerable detail. However, not one item, word or dot of the agricultural elements in that treaty is altered. Would it not have been helpful in the negotiations if moves had taken place to tackle, through the Maastricht treaty, the agricultural problems?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman must have missed out on the fact that there has been a major reform of the common agricultural policy, which was negotiated with considerable success and in which the British Government played a major role. The object of the exercise was to change the regime, and that has been concluded.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the shock and horror in British industry, particularly at the consequence of an international trade war, bearing in mind how relatively large a proportion of our gross national product we export around the world compared to our Community partners. Will he therefore make it clear to those of our partners in the Community whose unreasonable intransigence stands in the way of reaching a successful conclusion to the GATT round that we shall oppose any reciprocal tit-for-tat trade war arrangements proposed within the Community unless they are prepared to be reasonable in finding a solution?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to remind the House that, per capita, we have the largest exports of any nation of our sort in the world: so there is no doubt about the damage to our economy that such a threat poses. My hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not get drawn into where that retaliatory process might end. Certainly the Government will do everything they can to ensure that it does not begin.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): There is a tremendous disparity between the amount of time that the House has spent discussing the Uruguay round—which, if successful, could lead to a considerable increase in world trade and the reflation that our economy needs—and the amount of time that we have spent discussing the treaty on European union which, if implemented, would result only in further deflation.

Is not part of the problem the incredibly complex and cumbersome machinery within the European Community that has prevented effective decision making and allowed narrow political self-interest—not just in France, but in the Commission—to obstruct progress? Is it possible for the Council of Ministers not just to give mandates to the Commission, but to instruct the Commission on what it should do?

Mr. Heseltine: That is exactly what the Council of Ministers did at Birmingham: it instructed the Commission to conclude a negotiated settlement of the outstanding agricultural issues with the Americans of the Uruguay round so that the Commission could proceed to Geneva for the wider dialogue. That is precisely what the Council of Ministers, under our presidency, did. The discussions in Chicago were conducted by Commissioner MacSharry on behalf of the Commission, and it is fair to say that he moved the position of the European Community in order to meet the American position. Perhaps the Americans should consider whether they could have reciprocated more than they did.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I think that the House will thank my right hon. Friend for emphasising third world countries, as reaching an agreement is even more important to them than it is to the industrial world. My right hon. Friend will know my interest in the issue as I was responsible for the general agreement when we were both Ministers together at the Department of Trade and Industry in the 1970s.

While an absolute solution across the board is desirable, if it obviously becomes impossible to achieve that in time to meet the fast track with the American Congress, will my right hon. Friend examine more closely the possibility of contracting out the oilseed from the general agreement? I believe that that is legally possible, and it would mean that the whole agreement could go forward, with the exclusion of the agreement between Europe and America. In that way the Commonwealth and

[Sir Peter Emery]

the third world could benefit from the general agreement, and the resolution of the separate agreement could be left to a later date.

Mr. Heseltine: I look back on our time together at the DTI in the 1970s as among the happiest years of my life, and I am glad that my hon. Friend shares those memories.

There are two issues: the dispute over oilseed under the existing arrangements in the GATT; and, coincidentally, negotiations proceeding to a new GATT. It would be possible to separate the two, which might enable us to make progress towards the new agreement, but there is no doubt that, in the real world, the same people are negotiating and the same subjects being discussed. Therefore, the escalation of the existing oilseed dispute into a trade war would significantly colour the atmosphere in which we tried to make progress on GATT.

Theoretically, we could separate the two issues and make progress on the GATT front. That would be desirable, but the human and political dimensions make it harder to achieve progress in that way than if we could simply process both arrangements in one package.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Is the President of the Board of Trade aware that a senior Minister from the French Government was cited on Radio 4's "World at One" as "celebrating" the breakdown of the GATT talks? Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that it is difficult for the British people to place much faith in the European Commission and the Council of Ministers when those organisations appear to be paralysed by a numerically small but politically powerful lobbying farming group? During the remaining period of his presidency, will the right hon. Gentleman turn his rhetoric and artillery on that lobbying group as he did on the British miners?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman must realise that, where there is a strong national interest—there is in France —the country involved would be a party to the GATT negotiations in its own right were it not represented by the Community. Therefore, difficulty would undoubtedly arise as national Governments negotiated, and we would find ourselves in a not dissimilar position as we do now with the Commission negotiating on behalf of the 12 countries.

It is arguable that the Commission is empowered to conclude an agreement in the GATT machinery, and the French Government would have to decide what to do about that. That is the legal position, but, obviously, in the give and take of the real world, the interests of France must be considered by the Commission in the same way as it would consider the interests of all Community members. The Commission is empowered to negotiate and reach an agreement, which is what it was instructed to do.

It is of considerable importance that the credibility of the Commission as a negotiating bloc should not be diminished by what is happening. I have made it clear that Commissioner MacSharry discharged his responsibilities in that manner, and I hope that French Ministers will not undermine the position. We have made it as clear as we believe is relevant that Mr. Delors should act as President of the Commission, not as a French citizen.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, on a conservative estimate, a successful resolution of the GATT talks would allow improvements in the gross national product of £30 billion a year for Europe alone? Does he also agree that France is the second largest food exporter in the world and, as the largest beneficiary from the common agricultural policy, has a specific responsibility to ensure that it demonstrates its Community credentials—not just theoretically by treaty ratification, but practically, by putting pressure on its massively over-subsidised and over-numerous farmers?

Mr. Heseltine: I agree with the thrust of my hon. Friend's remarks. If I remember the figures correctly, the agricultural interests of France are 5 per cent. of its economy, so the overwhelming proportion of French people stand to gain from a GATT resolution. The politics in France are no doubt difficult, but the politics of the GATT machinery present challenges and difficulties for all of us. That is a sacrifice worth making in each country in various ways, because the overall gain in national and world self-interest is so obvious. It is calculated that about $200 billion of additional annual world output stands to flow if we reach an agreement on the GATT round.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Am I right in observing that the hon. Gentleman was not in the Chamber when the statement was made?

Mr. Caborn: That is not true at all. I have been in the Chamber ever since the statement was made—indeed, I entered the Chamber specifically to hear it.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is not on my list as having been in the House when the Secretary of State made his statement, but he must ask his question if what he says is the case.

Mr. Caborn: It is the case that some people consider the questions asked. Having heard all my colleagues ask their questions, I wish to explore a different aspect of the statement. That is why I entered the debate late.

Having heard every word that the President said, may I ask him to advise the House on whether he will take the initiative inside the Council of Europe to split the negotiations between oilseed and GATT? Is that possible and practical? Can he take that initiative to give new directions to the Commission's negotiating team? We are in a strong position to do that.

Mr. Heseltine: As President of the European Community, the Prime Minister, together with his colleagues, will take a continuing interest. I cannot say that it will be a new interest, because we have kept closely in touch with all events, but ultimately it is the Commission's responsibility. Therefore, we are in a good position to be able to constantly remind——

Mr. Caborn: It is the politicians who instruct the negotiators.

Mr. Heseltine: No, conducting negotiations is not a political responsibility, but the Commission's. However, there is a constant interchange between the politicians and the Commission's bureaucrats, as there is between politicians and negotiators across the Atlantic. There is a constant dialogue on all matters, and most of those involved are talking to each other on an extended basis. The House should have no doubt that we as a Government will do everything that we properly can to bring about a successful conclusion, which will necessitate the restoration of the dialogue.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The House will welcome the assurance from the Secretary of State that the involvement and interest of the British Government will continue. We find it delightful—nay, delicious—that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said on behalf of the Liberal party that he thought that Mr. Madigan, when negotiating on behalf of the United States, was concerned about the vote in the House last night—the more so since the vote took place 24 hours after he had pulled out of the negotiations.

I should like to give the Secretary of State certain messages to take away from the House. He was asked whether the deadline might be extended to take into account President-elect Clinton's not taking office until March. I caution him against that advice; we ought to stay within the deadline set by the G7, which is the end of the year.

The third world has an immense interest in a successful conclusion to the GATT round, if it is to gain access to our markets and be able to pay back its debts. We are thankful for small mercies. The Secretary of State has announced only about $300 million-worth of retaliatory tariffs on wine, linseed oil and wheat gluten—not the $1,000 million-worth originally suggested. The House is not interested in tit-for-tat tactics.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) mentioned the meeting of Foreign Ministers on Monday, and the right hon. Gentleman has referred to a meeting tomorrow on this subject. We urge the Government and the Secretary of State to use the influence of the presidency to ensure that no tit-for-tat tactics are begun.

Secondly, we ask that the oilseed problem be taken out of the negotiations and made subject to arbitration, so that the industrial side of the GATT negotiations can reach a successful conclusion, in the interests of the world and of ridding the world of recession.

My final plea is that we hear more from the President on this subject in the weeks to come.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's remarks. The Americans were offered arbitration by the Commission on the oilseed dispute, and refused it. It would certainly be a way forward but it cannot be imposed —only offered. I understand the strong feeling expressed by hon. Members on both sides that the last thing we want is a tit-for-tat trade war. I confirm that it is also the last thing the Government want, and that we will do everything possible to prevent it.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we should try to stick to the deadline at the end of the year. Opening these things up only brings in a new range of complications and everything begins to unravel. The incentive to keep within the deadline is that it would keep us within the American fast-track procedure—which it would also be unwise to open up again.

I think that I was the first to mention today that those who will suffer most are the least privileged and least well-off people and economies of the world. We all stand to gain a great deal, and I assure the House that I will keep it in touch if there is anything that we can add to what I have said today. We will continue to deploy every energy to making a success of the Uruguay round.

BILL PRESENTED

TRADE UNION REFORM AND EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

Mrs. Secretary Shephard, supported by the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. John Selwyn Gummer, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. William Waldegrave, Mr. Secretary Lang, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mr. Michael Forsyth and Mr. Patrick McLoughlin, presented a Bill to make further reforms of the law relating to trade unions and industrial relations; to make amendments of the law relating to employment rights and to abolish the right to statutory minimum remuneration; to amend the law relating to the constitution and jurisdiction of industrial tribunals and the constitution of the Employment Appeal Tribunal; to amend section 56A of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975; to provide for the Secretary of State to have functions of securing the provision of careers services; to make further provision about employment and training functions of Scottish Enterprise and of Highlands and Islands Enterprise; and for connected purposes: And the same was read a First time, and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow; and to be printed. [Bill 78.]

Orders of the Day

Civil Service (Management Functions) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

5.44 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is one of the engaging aspects of this House that we can move from the highest political drama on a worldwide perspective to focus somewhat more narrowly. This is my first opportunity of welcoming to the Front Bench the hon. Members for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) and for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey)—to posts which we will endeavour to ensure remain Opposition posts.

This is a technical Bill of restricted scope. It is limited in three important ways. First, it deals only with the management functions of the Treasury and the Minister for the Civil Service which have been subject in the past to transfer of functions orders—essentially the powers to settle the terms and conditions of civil servants. Secondly, it deals only with those functions in so far as they relate to members of the home civil service or the Northern Ireland civil service. Thirdly, it seeks authority to redistribute those powers only to people who are in the service of the Crown.

The Bill is a technical one. Its purpose is to resolve a legal barrier to the better management of the civil service. At the moment, the Government are constrained from devolving to Departments and agencies many detailed matters concerning the management of their staff. As a result, the present legal framework requires a highly centralised degree of control of the management of the civil service which is inimical to the good management of the many different and varied businesses of Departments and agencies.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Does the Chancellor acknowledge that when such powers have been devolved to what are called quangos, such as the Development Board for Rural Wales, there have been unmitigated disasters of administration resulting in large losses of public funds and cases of near corruption? There was a serious court case in Cardiff only the day before yesterday involving just such a problem. What will he do to ensure that these quangos are maintained with some degree of accountability and control by Whitehall?

Mr. Waldegrave: At the moment such powers cannot be devolved—that is the whole point. I will come to the extent to which, under so-called discretions, some devolution is allowed at present. I reassure the hon. Gentleman—he is perfectly right to raise the matter—that nothing in the Bill removes the accountability to this House of such agencies, or the ultimate responsibility of Ministers or Departments of State for them. I shall argue that it is in the interests of good management that some management accountability should be devolved, but accountability to this House and to the Public Accounts Committee must and should remain. If anything has gone wrong, it is the job of this House, the PAC and the press—and everyone else—to ensure that accountability remains.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): When authority has been transferred to agencies in the past, Ministers have been reluctant to answer letters and we have had difficulty asking questions in the House. Can we have an absolute assurance that Ministers will be answerable, both to questions in the House and to correspondence from Members of Parliament? Decisions such as that taken at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in Swansea, which is causing a great deal of anxiety, must not be allowed as direct ministerial responsibility to the House for them would not exist.

Mr. Waldegrave: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks. Better arrangements for the reporting of letters from the chief executives of agencies to this House will be put in place, and rightly so.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Long overdue.

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree. Market testing, which is the issue at DVLA——

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): No, it is not.

Mr. Waldegrave: What is at stake is an examination of the framework of the agency—a three-year re-examination of the framework agreement. That can look across the board at whether full privatisation is in order or whether market testing is, or whether the work should continue to be done there—but that is not relevant to the Bill. Those are policy issues for which Ministers are rightly accountable. They cannot be devolved, and they would not be under this or any other Bill.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I know that the Minister genuinely believes what he is saying, but if he talks of accountability, can he explain what happened recently? A chief executive of an agency was sitting beside a Minister talking to three Members of this House about the future of the DVLA. That chief executive had a proposal to dispose of 3,000 jobs at the agency. Not only did he not disclose it to the Members who were present, but the Minister sitting beside him was unaware of it, as was the Secretary of State for Wales, who is responsible for jobs in Wales. Where is the accountability in that?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is perfectly legitimate to raise these issues in the context of a potential privatisation, if that is at stake—or of market testing, if that is—but they are nothing to do with this Bill. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that whatever exchanges took place on that occasion—I was not present—Ministers remain accountable for these policies, and so they must. Ministers will rightly be called to account in the House in the way in which I am being called to account for the behaviour of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. There were many opportunities to question him.

If I made a prolonged speech defending privatisation or market testing, I would be ruled out of order, but I will go as close as possible to the bounds of order in justifying those policies. The Bill does not deal with the devolution of executive functions but with the potential to devolve from Ministers to chief executives of agencies—properly and for the first time—power to negotiate terms and conditions of service. That is sensible.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I should like to pursue the issue of the DVLA. The document clearly states that the alternative to privatisation is contractorisation. One of the advantages held out for contractorisation as an alternative to outright privatisation is that there is no need for legislation. However, it removes many functions from ministerial control and leaves only discretionary functions, with officials acting on behalf of the Secretary of State. Can the Minister be more precise about the status of the document and state exactly the responsibility of the Minister in relation to an agency which had been hijacked in such a disreputable way?

Mr. Waldegrave *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I urge the Minister not to stray too far along that route. Hon. Members should stick to the terms of the Bill.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is indeed a point of order.

Ms. Mowlam: It certainly is. It would be useful to clarify the terms of reference and the implications of the Bill before the debate proceeds further. The Minister says that the Bill is technical, has limited scope and relates only to the delegation of powers on pay and conditions. But that is crucial because when those powers are delegated down, public expenditure will be ratcheted down. My hon. Friends have given precise examples. The manager of a contracting-out unit will be able to decide on pay and conditions for his work force and the matter will not come to the House. It is crucial to discuss those issues because if we do not, the Minister will be getting away with murder.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady was beginning to argue on a point of substance and not presenting an issue for the Chair. If hon. Members allow the Minister to make progress on explaining the Bill, they will be in a better position to judge and question him.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Further to that point of order. There are two interpretations of the Bill. The Minister says that it is technical and narrow but others, as came out in the debate in the other place, and trade unions see it as part of a continuum. They see in the Bill momentum towards privatisation. On Second Reading we should be empowered to look beyond the precise words of the Bill, especially in the light of what has happened in my constituency and to people in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) who work in the DVLA. The Bill can be construed as a step on the road to privatisation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That may be so, but let us hear what the Minister has to say. When he has finished, hon. Members will have a good chance to speak because there are not many names on the list. Let us start on the Bill and see what is in store for us.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The rules preclude me from directly quoting the Opposition spokesman in the House of Lords but I draw to the attention of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) that that spokesman covered the whole circuit and was finally quite satisfied that none of these issues was raised. If I were allowed, I could quote the words of Lady Turner of Camden, the Opposition spokesman, who said she quite understood that none of the issues was raised by the Bill.

The hon. Member for Redcar properly spoke about a much more limited devolution. I shall come back to that. The hon. Lady asked about the effect of devolving the setting of terms and conditions and whether they would get better or worse. That matter is entirely germane to the Bill, but it has nothing to do with privatisation because nothing in the Bill affects privatisation, market testing or contractorisation. The Opposition spokesman in the Lords accepted that.

Ms. Mowlam: If the Bill delegates power to negotiate pay and conditions down to a level such as that at the DVLA, contractorisation, lower wages or changed terms and conditions are possible. Therefore, it is well within the scope of the Bill to discuss the DVLA and other such institutions.

Mr. Waldegrave: There was contractorisation and market testing for many years before the Bill was presented and before the DVLA was an executive agency. They cannot be germane to the powers sought in the Bill.

Mr. Wilson: I am making an intervention, but perhaps it should be a point of order because I do not think that it is in order for the Minister—doubtless unintentionally—completely to misrepresent the Opposition spokesman in the Lords, who accepted that the Bill was not a vehicle for privatisation but said that the Opposition objected to the manner in which it was apparently intended to hive off civil service functions to the market. The Minister is welcome to read what my noble Friend said.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are making heavy weather of this. The spokesman in the Lords said that she objected to our policy of privatisation and market testing, but the passage makes it quite clear that she accepted that the Bill does not——

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: If I were allowed under the rules to read the passage, I should be delighted to do so. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. I know that we are recovering from yesterday——

Mr. Hoyle: Disgraceful.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not want any more sedentary remarks.

Mr. Waldegrave: Perhaps I may be allowed to proceed with an explanation of the Bill. The Opposition spokesman in the Lords accepted that the Bill had nothing to do with privatisation. She objected to the policy of privatisation, which is not in the Bill. The noble Lady said:

> "We accept that the Bill itself is not a vehicle for privatisation but we still object to the manner in which apparently it is intended to hive-off Civil Service functions . . ."—*[Official Report, House of Lords,* 29 October 1992; Vol. 539, c. 1299.]

I shall attempt to demonstrate that the Bill is much less exciting than the Opposition hope. At the moment, the Government are constrained from devolving to Departments and agencies many detailed matters concerning the management of their staff. As a result, the present legal framework requires a highly centralised

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degree of control of the management of the civil service which is inimical to good management. The Bill is intended to rectify that, while maintaining intact the principle of ministerial accountability to Parliament. It does not contain new powers—or any powers whatever—to facilitate the privatisation or contracting out of Government activities. Privatisation and contracting out, where appropriate, remain important planks of Government policy. When we need new powers to achieve our aims in that area we shall present proposals accordingly. This Bill, however, relates only to the management of the civil service and is not a vehicle for that.

Secondly, the Bill does not in itself change the terms and conditions of any civil servant in any way. I think that that issue was mentioned by the hon. Member for Redcar and I will return to it. Thirdly, the Bill affects neither the normal rights of staff in the civil service nor the usual process of consultation with the civil service trade unions at an appropriate level. I shall have more to say about that, and about the detailed operation of the Bill's powers. Having briefly outlined what the Bill is, and what it is not, it may be helpful to put it in a wider context.

I have not consulted my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, but if Opposition Members felt that the House should engage in a wider debate on the collection of issues involved in the management of the public service, I should be perfectly willing to put that to my right hon. Friend. We could then discuss issues connected with privatisation, market testing and other policies relating to our approach to the management of the public sector. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Redcar would find that an attractive offer, but in any event I should be happy to speak to my right hon. Friend.

Ms. Mowlam: Of course we welcome the chance to debate market testing and competitive tendering in Government time. The Secretary of State eventually had to give a promise to that effect in private negotiations to try to get the Bill through the House of Lords. Would it not have been better, however, if he had had the decency to debate issues of market testing and competitive tendering in the House of Commons before embarking on their implementation?

Mr. Waldegrave: Market testing has been going on for many years; indeed, I think that examples can be found dating back to the last Government. As I have said, I think that a wider debate is a good idea, and I shall put it to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I am now slightly confused about what the Bill will do. Whether the provisions are drawn narrowly or broadly, the Secretary of State is plainly seeking powers—hence the Bill. I thought that he was seeking the power to delegate in regard to terms and conditions of employment, and I thought that he went on to say that that would not change anyone's terms and conditions of employment. If that is so, what is the point of seeking such powers?

Mr. Waldegrave: It could lead to changes, but such changes would have to be negotiated in the normal way, as I shall explain.

Mr. Field: In his Mansion house speech, the Chancellor of the Exchequer made an important point when he said that, from now on, it would be Government policy to examine every change that the Administration might wish to initiate and to consider the employment consequences. Will the right hon. Gentleman guarantee that, if such consequences result from the Bill, his promise will be triggered at some stage?

I can see why that will not happen now, because the powers now being sought only "could" result in such consequences. Our worry is that, if the Bill confers the power to lay down terms and conditions of contract, at some stage not only pay but the number of workers may be cut. We want a guarantee that at that stage—in view of the important statement made by the Chancellor—the Government will consider the employment consequences of their every action.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will ask my officials to check, but I do not believe that the Bill has any direct implications of that kind. We do not seek to devolve the powers that have always been enjoyed by the Minister for the Civil Service —the Prime Minister—or by the Treasury, which control civil service numbers. As the hon. Gentleman will recall, they used to exercise manpower control; that obtained under both Labour and Conservative Governments. I do not think that any provision in the Bill will lead directly to a change in numbers. Of course, in management terms the need may arise for such a change, but nothing in the Bill will alter the powers available to Ministers or managers in that regard.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Is the Secretary of State denying that one of the powers to be delegated by the Bill is the power of wage bargaining? Presumably, that must of necessity lead to different wage rates in the public service in different parts of the country and in different undertakings. Such a development can only represent another step along the road to privatisation—more of the preparation of turkeys for Christmas which represents the Government's current policy.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not see how any particular outcome relating to numbers can be assigned to a Bill which devolves pay negotiation powers. I suppose that it could be argued that higher wages mean fewer employees, but that strikes me as a paradoxical argument for the hon. Gentleman to put.

Let me make a little more progress, particularly as I wish to respond directly to the questions asked by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). Like all Governments since the war, we have inherited a civil service containing many extremely able people—I doubt if I need to convince the House of that—and has high ideals in regard to public service. Equally, however, that civil service has struggled for many years with outdated management structures. The structure of the civil service is highly hierarchical. It was designed to apply to a small civil service whose purpose would be to advise Ministers on policy. It is a Victorian structure. That, I think, is common ground between the parties. I believe that the Opposition accept the principle of the "next steps" agency, although they opposed it originally. I think that they now agree that it is sensible to try to organise the delivery of services with more devolved accountability, and more clearly specified units of managment. It is not sensible to operate a great centralised hierarchical structure. The powers conferred by the Bill are necessary to make the required change a reality—or, rather, to simplify the process that will lead to it.

So far, we have created 75 agencies under the so-called "next steps" initiative, and nearly as many executive units which are run along the same lines. All are directly accountable for achieving clear and published targets to improve the quality of service and efficiency. It is all part of a refocusing on the absolute necessity for the civil service to deliver a better value service to the public, as its customers and paymasters: I make no apology for that. There is nothing special about such proposals. I would guess that all large organisations, public and private, constantly need to re-evaluate their performance. In particular, they need to check constantly that they are continuing to achieve their aims as effectively as they can —and, under the banner of the citizens charter, we have been trying to make that possible.

To the civil service, that new emphasis on the quality of output—on measuring what we do, and establishing whether it constitutes an improvement—represents something of a challenge. The aims of the citizens charter campaign, however, also recognise that better services can be achieved only if management structures and systems are increasingly driven from the customers, patients and clients upwards, rather than operating a hierarchical top-downwards, Whitehall-downwards system. That is what I have been trying to explain.

Local staff and local managers should be given discretion, within the minimum of centrally imposed regulations, to deliver the services that their own customers need. The concept of Government as a single business with a single client—the public—is dead; it does not work. The real task is to meet the needs of the many individual customers of the Government's many different kinds of business. If we are to do that, we must increasingly enable the managers of those businesses to run their organisations in ways that represent the most appropriate and effective approach to their particular circumstances.

In the civil service, as in any other organisation, if we are to unlock the enormous potential and commitment of managers and staff, we must increasingly trust them to know what is best, and give them the freedom—together with the accountability—to achieve their objectives. It is against that background that the need for the Bill has emerged.

The management of the civil service is carried out under the royal prerogative. The power to determine the terms and conditions of civil servants—their working hours, pay, allowances, and so on—is delegated by the Crown, by civil service Order in Council, to the Treasury and the Minister for the Civil Service, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Since 1968, those powers have been transferred to and fro between the two central Departments, frequently by means of transfer of functions orders.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Why is the civil service regulated by Order in Council under the royal prerogative? Why cannot the Civil Service Act establish its status and, in particular, its duty to the Crown?

Mr. Waldegrave: The answer is lost in the mists of time. Since the 19th century, that has always been the case. It is, perhaps, another relic of the great 19th-century reforms; but it serves us fairly well, and it can be modified from time to time as new needs develop. I note the hon. Gentleman's desire for a great blockbuster Bill in this area. If there were a need for it, no doubt my officials would advise me of it. They are always keen to have such Bills.

The power to determine terms and pay is, as I have said, delegated to the Treasury and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Since 1968, these powers have been transferred to and fro. In the present organisation, however, the Treasury is given the responsibility for determining pay, grading, expenses, allowances, holidays, hours of work and other related personnel matters. The Minister for the Civil Service regulates the conduct of civil servants and those other conditions of service which are not allotted to the Treasury. These responsibilities relate entirely to what can broadly be called the personnel management of civil servants. They do not, for example, extend to the statutory powers of Ministers or civil servants, to policy-making, and so on.

As things stand, surprisingly perhaps, the Treasury and the Prime Minister cannot lawfully delegate those functions to the Departments and agencies; they cannot be delegated to another Minister—the relevant Secretary of State, for example—let alone to agencies which are responsible for the day-to-day management of the staff that they employ. Whether it is sensible or not—I do not think that it can be—decisions affecting the working conditions of all 560,000 or so civil servants must conform to rules laid down by the two central Departments, and those rules, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, must then be obeyed.

What the central Departments can do and have been doing is to grant to individual Departments and executive agencies discretions under which they can manage defined aspects of personnel policy, but that is a pretty poor substitute for real delegation and is hedged about by all kinds of obscure legal restrictions. Because of those legal constraints, the Treasury and the Minister have at present to grant those discretions within the framework of principles and rules, and references back to the centre for approval, however unnecessary they may be. Although, therefore, the central Departments can give operational Departments and agencies a degree of freedom over the terms and conditions of service of their staff, they cannot make them genuinely responsible and accountable for them. Accountabilities become blurred, alibis get written and unnecessary procedural obstacles can all too easily be placed, or be seen to be placed, in the way of Departments and agencies managing their affairs as effectively as they can.

Ms. Mowlam: The Minister began by arguing that accountability would not be changed by the Bill, that accountability would still be strong. The argument that he has just given as the whole point of achieving delegation rather than discretion is that it would delegate responsibility and accountability. He cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Waldegrave: I believe that that is precisely what one can have in this respect. A sensible Parliament will not attempt to manage in detail the things for which it is responsible. Ministers retain overall responsibility. If those to whom we delegate manage badly, we are responsible. It was very foolish of Nye Bevan to say, in that famous phrase, that if a bedpan is dropped in the health service the Minister should hear about it. That is no way to run an

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organisation. The attempt to continue to run organisations in that way has ended. Surely the Opposition, by accepting the agency programme, have understood that. I am disappointed if the hon. Lady wants to go back to that. If the delegation does not work or management is badly carried out, however, we are still responsible for having appointed the person concerned and for the policies within which he works, and we must take the responsibility. It would be crazy to try to run any great organisation in that old way. It would produce the kind of sclerotic organisations which provide bad service for our people. But that does not mean that the House cannot call a Minister to account for any failure to use that delegation sensibly.

Mr. Frank Field: I believe that the Chancellor of the Duchy was in the House on Monday at social security Question Time, when we raised the question of some of our constituents who were claiming the new disability living allowance. The relevant Minister came to the Dispatch Box and said that this was something which had been delegated to the Benefits Agency, and which the agency should improve. Technically, therefore, the Minister answered questions—but only to tell us that it was someone else's function to run the service properly. Clearly that is better than saying that he would not even answer questions, the Table Office refusing those questions, but it is a different ball game from when the Minister himself had to answer to the House for initiating a new benefit and there being an enormous cock-up over it.

Mr. Waldegrave: The new system is far more honest and open. In the old days, Ministers pretended that they knew the details of the administration of great Departments. Under every Government, that was always a myth. Now, a Minister in whose Department, or in an agency of whose Department, what the hon. Gentleman referred to as a cock-up is made is still ultimately responsible for that. It is perfectly legitimate to explain which bits of the chain have failed, if failure there has been, but accountability still rests firmly with the House, and nobody can escape that.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Does that mean that Ministers accept responsibility for the recent failings of the National Rivers Authority and the Development Board for Rural Wales?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not being immediately familiar with the cases to which he refers. There is a difference between non-departmental public bodies, which was the old style of devolution, and agencies. The former are not agencies and do not necessarily have nearly such clear accountability. An agency has a framework agreement with the Department which sets out the policy, and the lines of accountability are very clear. It was one of the weaknesses of the previous model, which goes back many years to the Attlee Government, that those old-style quangos very often did not have any clear line of accountability to anybody. I do not know whether that deals with the particular cases referred to by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Davis: I was not referring to the failings under the Attlee Government—I was referring to much more recent failings which were the subject of two reports to the Public Accounts Committee. If the Minister does not know the answer, and I can understand that, will he at least give an assurance that he will look at those reports and then write to me and other members of the Committee saying whether it is the Government's considered view that Ministers accept responsibility and are accountable for these appalling wastes of public money?

Mr. Waldegrave: I will certainly look at the cases that the hon. Gentleman has raised and write to him. The very fact that the matters were before the Public Accounts Committee must mean that they were proper ones for accountability to the House.

Ms. Mowlam: On the point of accountability, the Secretary of State has just said that accountability would be back to the PAC. It is important to clarify this; otherwise, he may be slightly misleading the House as to the difference between discretions and the delegation of powers in this Bill. Under this Bill, as I understand it—I hope that I shall be corrected if I am wrong—it is not back to the relevant Minister; it is back from the delegated person—whether it be in a "next-steps" agency or a long way down the Department—back to the Treasury and the Minister for the Civil Service; and the only people to whom they are accountable are the members of the PAC. The PAC does a very effective, efficient job, but it does it post facto. Is that the only course of accountability—back through that chain of management structure—that will be available?

Mr. Waldegrave: We are again going far wider than this poor little Bill. The structure of accountability of accounting officers—normally permanent secretaries, but in some cases now the heads of executive agencies—for their financial duties runs in the way it always has run, to the Public Accounts Committee. Nothing in this Bill comes anywhere near touching any of those issues. This shows what an interesting debate we shall have when we have the wider debate which I fear that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would rule out of order today.

Mr. Davis: I emphasise to the Minister that I was not referring to the responsibility of accounting officers to the PAC; I was referring to the accountability of Ministers. That is the question that I want him to address in correspondence.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall be delighted to do so. There is nothing in this Bill immediately relevant to that issue.

The power of delegation cannot be achieved simply by altering the Order in Council, because from time to time all these responsibilities have been transferred between the Treasury and the Minister by transfer of functions orders. Therefore, they are all the responsibility of a named Minister and one cannot, I am told, achieve what we want to achieve by altering the Order in Council.

The Government's legal advice is that the power to delegate must be taken by primary legislation and not by the prerogative—hence this Bill.

I turn now to the Bill itself. Clause 1(1) allows delegation to take place but limits the power to delegate in three ways. The functions to be delegated must be management functions—none of the wider policy issues that we have been discussing; they must have been the subject of transfer of functions orders, as they have all been; and they must relate to the management of the home civil service.

The scope of the Bill is also limited in a most important way by subsection (2). Delegations can be made only to another servant of the Crown. "Servant of the Crown" is a functional definition covering people who are in the employment of the Crown. That means that the Bill cannot be used to transfer civil service personnel management functions outside the public service. The Bill can have no effect, therefore, in enabling the contracting-out or privatisation of Government organisations. Its provisions are circumscribed by clause 1(2) so that the central Departments will be able to delegate their management powers only to Ministers, civil servants, statutory office holders, members of the diplomatic service, the armed forces, and so on. That broad, but restricted, definition has been adopted to give the Government the maximum flexibility over delegations to people who are currently, or who may be, employed in relevant positions, such as chief executives of "next steps" agencies.

Mr. Donald Anderson: On a point of clarification, how can the fact that it is possible to delegate those powers to members of the diplomatic service be reconciled with the argument that the Bill affects only the home civil service?

Mr. Waldegrave: The functions are those of the home civil service, but if a distinguished ambassador chose to apply for a particular job or, as an ambassador, was offered a job running a particular part of the home civil service, it would seem foolish to exclude him. There was some discussion of that point in the House of Lords. Lord Russell thought that, if powers could be delegated to members of the armed forces, there was a great danger that we might move to a military dictatorship. Others thought it wrong that retired colonels should be excluded from the chance to obtain such jobs. Both suggestions are fantastic. The provisions of the Bill merely mean that people employed in the Crown service could occupy positions to which certain home civil service functions were delegated. They do not cover any of the diplomatic service's functions.

The remainder of clause 1 deals with the conditions under which delegations may be made. Subsection (2) allows the central Departments to attach conditions to a delegation if they wish. Subsection (3) allows them to require that the delegation must be carried out by the person to whom it is delegated, while subsection (4), conversely, allows sub-delegation. Those subsections therefore enable the central Departments to delegate to a Minister and require him or her to exercise the power in person, contrary to the usual position; or, for example, to delegate to an agency chief executive but to permit him to have those powers exercised on his behalf by another Crown servant. The legal background to all this is set out in more detail in the notes on clauses which have been made available in the Vote Office.

Clause 1 is the meat of the Bill, and the remaining clauses build upon it. Without wearying the House with details which might best be left for consideration in Committee, I should explain that clause 2 mimics the effect of clause 1 for the minority of civil servants whose terms and conditions are determined not under the Order in Council but under powers granted in the statutes which govern the organisations in which they work—for example, Customs and Excise, the Office of Fair Trading, the regulators of the privatised utilities, and smaller bodies. In such cases it is usual for the statutes to require the Treasury to give its consent to the determination of the terms and conditions of those staff by the head of their organisation or their Secretary of State.

Clause 2 allows the relevant central Department to create the equivalent of a delegation by waiving its powers to approve terms and conditions of service. The same safeguards come into place in this situation as in clause 1. Subsections (2) and (3) of clause 2 allow for the statutory power of approval to be waived, subject to whatever conditions seem necessary, and allow the person who waives consent to require the holder of the power to exercise it personally if they see fit. Lastly, subsection (4) covers those cases where the sanction of two Ministers is required to the determination of terms and conditions—typically, the Treasury and the sponsoring Secretary of State—makes any delegation subject to their joint approval.

Finally, clause 3 deals with Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland civil service is making progress with its own citizens charter and "next steps" initiatives with the same efficiency and quality of service objectives as their mainland counterparts.

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Finance and Personnel exercises the same responsibilities for the Northern Ireland civil service as the Treasury and the Minister do here. The Bill allows for the introduction of the Order in Council, subject to the negative resolution procedure, provided that it has the same effect on the management of the civil service in Northern Ireland as the Bill does in Great Britain.

Lest there be any doubt, I should perhaps make it clear that the Bill does not force the Treasury or the Minister to delegate anything to anyone. There is no requirement in the Bill to decentralise or delegate: the power is an enabling one. Nor could the central Departments force a delegation on an unwilling Minister or official, which would otherwise be unlikely but possible. In practice, delegations will proceed only where the parties concerned agree that delegation is appropriate. The power allows the central Departments to set any conditions on a delegation that they think fit, and to vary, extend or withdraw them depending on how things work in practice.

Equally, as regards the rights of civil servants as employees, I can assure the House that the Bill gives no powers either to the central Departments or to the recipient of any delegation to change the terms and conditions of any civil servant without conforming to the normal procedures and processes of consultation with unions and staff. Where arrangements for consultation with the unions are specified—in the national pay agreements, for example—those arrangements will continue to apply. Where, outside those agreements, the central Departments propose to delegate functions, the national unions will be given the opportunity to comment on such proposals. Where the recipients of a delegation wish to exercise the powers delegated to them to change the terms and conditions of service, again staff and their representatives will be consulted appropriately. So although the parties to any consultation may change as a result of delegations, there will be no change in the principles involved.

Mr. Garrett: The right hon. Gentleman is skating over the Bill without touching on the fundamental point about it. There was a long discussion in the House of Lords as to whether the Bill was a privatisation measure—which, of course, it is not. The big change embodied in the Bill is the end of the national civil service. That is the point of the Bill: agency employees—at present, civil servants—will be subject to the terms and conditions, employment regulations, recruitment and training policies and rights peculiar to the agency concerned. Instead of having a national civil service, we shall have a conglomerate of agencies, all with different terms and conditions.

Many of us think that the national civil service, which was set up in 1854 following the Northcote-Trevelyan report, has been one of the glories of the nation. The Minister cannot scoot through Second Reading without explaining to the House that the end of that national civil service is precisely what he proposes.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) has at last accepted that the real question is whether we want devolution in the civil service. That is what the Bill is partly about, and the hon. Gentleman is perfectly right to raise that question, although I shall argue forcefully that the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms, designed to allow for a tiny central policy-making civil service of a few thousand people, are quite inappropriate to the management and organisation of hundreds of thousands of people delivering services to the public. Following the acceptance across the party divide of the "next steps" agency programme, I had thought that that was now more or less common ground.

I visited Companies house the other day and asked how much movement there was between that organisation and the rest of the civil service. Apparently, there is virtually none, and there has never been much—except, very occasionally, at a very senior level. The idea that our great service agencies have been a unified structure in the sense that people have moved from one to another is a myth. That is the heart of the argument.

The hon. Member for Norwich, South is perfectly right: I believe it necessary to trouble the House with the Bill because we want to introduce—and believe it right for the people of this country that we should introduce—more variegated styles of employment in our great public service. Many agencies already come to us saying, "We have negotiated something with our people that they want, but it does not coincide with the national terms and conditions." The agencies cannot implement what they have negotiated without surmounting an immensely complicated system of hurdles set up when the Treasury was, in effect, the personnel department of a small central civil service. I argue that those arrangements are wholly inappropriate to the needs of 1992.

Perhaps I could go a little further and say what I think will happen when the Bill is enacted, because the hon. Member for Redcar and I should debate this. The central Departments will use the powers that the Bill grants them to examine areas of personnel management and establish those which may best be decided by Departments and executive agencies as a whole, or by a particular Department or agency which has a justified claim to determine some aspect of its management without reference to the centre. Personnel management matters in the civil service will be progressively devolved to the most appropriate level within the civil service. I am sure that that must be right.

There will always be a clear line of accountability for delegations made in this way. I come back to the point which was rightly raised earlier by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis). Ministers will be accountable to the House in the normal way for the exercise of powers that they receive from the Treasury or the Minister for the Civil Service. When the central Departments delegate to officials such as agency chief executives, Ministers in the central Departments can and should be challenged on the delegation and the use to which it has been put, as they can be now on matters where they have granted Departments and agencies management discretions.

I should also perhaps reassure hon. Members—this answers the point made by the hon. Member for Norwich, South—that the Bill will not hamper the maintenance of the common standards which we all wish to see protected in the civil service. I think that we would all agree that this country has been fortunate, since the reforms to which the hon. Member referred, in having the support of a civil service which is politically impartial, honest in its dealings with the public and, in the enormous majority of cases over 100 years or more, incorruptible. Those core standards will remain the basis of employment in the civil service, and they will be maintained in the form of central rules. The bath water may be disposed of, but that particular vital baby will not be.

Ms. Mowlam: Will the Secretary of State explain how he expects those core rules to be kept? If he accepts that particular agencies can negotiate deals at local level and if, as he says, he wants to continue with contracting out and privatisation, when that has happened does he expect the private buyer to have the core rules written into its company rules? That is contrary to company law. How on earth will he make it stick?

Mr. Waldegrave: We are talking here about delegations to Crown servants, and the rules stick then because they remain policy. There are other matters which are not actually in the contracts or in the negotiated agreements but which are policy matters, such as equal opportunities employment or the rather good record of the civil service on the employment of disabled people. They are not negotiated agreements, but policies that Ministers will continue to maintain as they do now, whether in agencies or not. It is essential that they do so, and I am sure that the Labour party would not have come to see the agency programme as a sensible one if we had not been willing to make it absolutely clear at the time that such matters would be retained as central policies.

Mr. Terry Davis: I should like to put two questions to the Minister before he finishes. Will he tell the House whether it is Government policy to delegate the decision on how many people should be employed in a particular agency or operation—a most important aspect of personnel management—and whether it would be a question not only of the total number of people employed but of the number by grade, a variation which can be an extremely important managerial decision? Secondly, if the Bill has no connection whatever with market testing, in what way will the Government give the House a chance to debate market testing?

Mr. Waldegrave: On the latter point, perhaps the hon. Member for Hodge Hill was not in the Chamber when I said, as part of the general discussion that we had earlier on matters going wider than the Bill, that I thought it right to put to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House the case for having a debate in Government time on those wider issues, which are controversial and which are a matter of party division in a way in which I hope to demonstrate that it is not necessary for this Bill to be. That is a fair suggestion by the hon. Member.

On the hon. Member's first point, nothing in the Bill changes the situation in relation to numbers. For many years, long before agencies, decisions about how many people were needed to carry out particular functions in particular parts of the civil service were taken, in effect, by managers themselves, although the legal power rested then with Ministers, as it does now because those actual number controls, in so far as they are still exercised centrally, are not delegated in this Bill.

Mr. Garrett: This is wrong because it was never up to managers to decide how many staff were required in a particular division or unit of a Department; it was a highly centralised arrangement—a matter of establishment officers and their staff inspection branches.

Mr. Waldegrave: I absolutely agree, but it was establishment officers in particular Departments. I was a civil servant many years ago in the Cabinet Office, and it was the Cabinet Office establishment officer—I remember that his name was Mr. Day—who was responsible for taking me on. Or it may have been the late Lord Trent or the late Lord Rothschild. But it was still not a matter to be brought to the attention of the Prime Minister of the day —it was delegated to the people running the little unit in which I worked, and the legal powers remain the same.

To summarise, the Bill represents another small but important step in dismantling the barriers which civil servants currently face and which prevent them from being organised in a way which allows them to give of their best. I put on record, although I hope I do not need to do, that I have greatly admired our civil service from both within and without. There is immense enthusiasm and commitment there and I am convinced that we must never cease to look for ways to allow their better expression and more efficient use. It is on that basis—a less fundamental, perhaps less interesting, but still important basis—that I commend the Bill to the House.

6.35 pm

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): The Secretary of State began to give away the full import of this small and limited Bill in his closing words when he said that he wants the Bill to go on the statute book because it will allow civil servants to be organised in such a way that they can do their best. Of course we want civil servants to do their best, but since, as he has made clear on numerous other occasions, the Secretary of State believes that the civil service will do its best through the mechanisms of privatisation, market testing and contracting out, it shows the force of the argument that the Opposition tried to put forward at the beginning of the debate, that the Bill is a facilitator, an enabler which will make that possible. It shows that we can debate those broader issues.

However much we welcome the Secretary of State's willingness to offer a debate on competitive tendering, market testing and contracting out, his offer comes a little late in the day. Although we welcome it and we will see his strength in Cabinet in achieving that debate in Government time as soon as possible, it is a little disingenuous, having gone through years of market testing already and when part of the concern about the Bill arises because these issues have not been aired in Parliament. If the Secretary of State were serious about giving the House the chance to debate the matter, he would have done it some months ago and not introduced it almost as a sop now to keep us quiet.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not blame the hon. Lady for not recalling this, because she was not in her present post, but there was a whole day's debate on this very subject on the Queen's Speech not long ago.

Ms. Mowlam: The chance to debate it for a day on the Queen's Speech is obviously welcome. The difficulty is that, as the Secretary of State himself has made clear with this small Bill, when we look at the complexity of the issue, many hon. Members want the chance to discuss the full impact of market testing. The Secretary of State has made it clear elsewhere that he believes that the private sector can do things better than the public sector. If we are talking about 560,000 civil service jobs going into the private sector, the House deserves more than a day of debate on the Queen's Speech.

The Secretary of State also said that he did not want us to get too excited about the Bill because it was so little, so wee, so minor. In view of the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) that implicit in the Bill is the end of the national civil service with Whitley terms and conditions that have served industrial relations in the civil service so well for so long, we will get excited about the Bill, not just tonight but in Committee and at Third Reading because of the full implications of the system that the measure will help facilitate.

The Secretary of State began by looking for common ground and said that he was sure that there was common ground here. I am sure that there is, and the Opposition agree with some of his comments. There is always room for better management and the Government are no exception in that regard. The Opposition would like to see improved services delivered more efficiently to customers because we believe that the customers have a right to quality services. The reforms to which the Secretary of State referred will inevitably mean change. Hon. Members are aware that people do not find it easy to accept change and, in that respect, the civil service is no exception.

As the Minister said, the Labour party welcomed earlier reforms. The "next steps" executive agencies were welcomed by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and by the Leader of the Opposition earlier this year. However, as my colleagues have pointed out today, there is still understandably great concern about the accountability of those agencies.

The difficulties were clear with the disability living allowance. In respect of difficulties, the Benefits Agency is one of the worst. The difficulties stemmed from accountability to Parliament. The decision to print in *Hansard* letters from chief executives of next steps agencies was not taken as a result of open government. The Minister described that decision as a generous gift from the Government. The truth is that if my hon. Friend the

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Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) had not campaigned month after month for those letters to be printed, they would not have been printed. It is up to Opposition Members to improve accountability. That accountability has not been improved as a result of the efforts of the Minister or his Cabinet colleagues.

The Minister said that the Bill had limited scope. He parroted Lord Howe who, in another place, said that it was a minor measure, of limited scope and that it was a short, technical Bill. If the Bill were simply about decentralisation of limited pay and service conditions within the civil service; if it were just about pay, terms and conditions; if it were—as the Minister tried to portray it tonight—just about flexibility, improved management and decentralising decision making closer to where decisions are taken, we should in principle have no trouble with an efficiency management Bill that did not affect the nature of the national civil service.

However, the Minister and I are well aware that that is a facade and a smokescreen. As my colleagues have argued tonight, the Bill is about the end of the national Whitley conditions for negotiations. That will change the nature of the civil service.

Members of another place and the press have realised that. The 560,000 members of the civil service are also aware of that, because their jobs will be on the line as a result of the Bill. Whether the Government call this hiving off, contracting out, market testing or privatisation, we must place on the record the fact that the nature of the civil service will change.

The Minister tried to limit this small, technical Bill to the isolated issue of pay and conditions, unrelated to the other things happening in the civil service. The Minister has been body-swerving. The fact is that the Bill will be a ratcheting down mechanism on public spending, regardless of the quality of service provision. When managers have to meet financial targets and goals, they will have to act in terms of budgets set. We must bear in mind the fact that the main financial part of those budgets is pay. That is the bottom line. The result may be a lack of sick pay and holiday entitlements. It may affect pay and redundancies.

The Government tried to offer the miners a redundancy package, saying that if the miners did not take advantage of it within a certain period, it would not be available. In the same way, under market testing the Government will set the financial targets and the cuts will have to be made in-house in a desperate effort to save jobs. That is why the Bill is insidious.

The Minister referred to Northern Ireland. Many of the people to whom I spoke in Northern Ireland over the past two or three days are deeply concerned about the impact of the Bill on Northern Ireland and about the provisions tacked on to the Bill in clause 3. As it stands, apart from Committee and Third Reading, there will be no opportunity to debate the implications for Northern Ireland specifically.

The Minister tried to say that the Bill would have no impact on the fair employment provisions in Northern Ireland, particularly in terms of equal opportunities and the problems in Northern Ireland. It is important to recognise that people in Northern Ireland are very worried about the delegation of pay and conditions.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Lady is right to raise that important point and I hope to still some of those concerns not just in relation to employment policy in Northern Ireland, but in a range of other employment policies. This kind of Bill can stir up anxieties, but the concerns to which the hon. Lady refers are completely unfounded. There is no need for people in Northern Ireland or anywhere else to worry about the wider employment policies, which may or may not be adequate, but which are not affected by the Bill.

Ms. Mowlam: If a Department or "next steps" agency is free to negotiate its own pay, service conditions, holiday allowances, entitlements and hours, and if that is the flexibility that the Minister is talking about, why is it not on the face of the Bill that equal opportunities and fair employment in Northern Ireland are sacred? In respect of the courts, it will be the Bill and not our debate that matters.

When similar questions were raised in the other place, instead of providing specific answers, Lord Howe referred to what may be considered areas of delegation and then recounted a list similar to that provided by the Minister tonight. The list gives a flavour of what might occur. It is illustrative, not exhaustive—hypothetical rather than definitive. If the Minister acknowledges correctly that there is much worry about the Bill, why does he not allay that concern by making it clear in Committee what is and what is not delegated?

The Minister referred to transfer of functions orders and what has been delegated in the past. Will he clarify the issue on the face of the Bill to allay what he considers to be totally unfounded worries and fears?

Mr. Waldegrave: We cannot clarify matters that are not based on statutes, but are policies. It is impossible to clarify in statutes separate policies such as equal opportunities in employment. That is not a matter for statutes, accepted in the framework of the law of the land. It is a matter for employment policy of the civil service. It has nothing to do with this Bill or any other.

Ms. Mowlam: I take the Minister's point and in the day-long debate on CCT and market testing, which the Minister has promised to use his great powers and influence in Cabinet to obtain, I look forward to hearing a commitment to equal opportunities and protection of those rights, if that is the proper forum for such commitments, so that those fears about what is happening in the civil service can be allayed.

The Minister said on several occasions tonight that the Bill is technical and has little influence. To put the Bill in context, I want to refer to a paper that was circulated to all Departments last year. That paper was entitled

"Selling Government Services into a Wider Market."

Paragraph 2 said:

> "The Government's policy is to restrict the size of the public sector and in general the presumption is that services should wherever possible be provided by private sector rather than public sector."—

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Conservative Members may say, "Hear, hear". However, if that is the case, the Government cannot have it both ways. If they want it primarily in the private sector, they cannot argue that there is a level playing field for the civil service to bid against external contractors. The Minister made exactly the same point when he spoke to the Institute of Directors in July and talked about the revolution that he is leading in Whitehall, introducing the entrepreneurial spirit into the corridors of power. He added:

> "Whenever it was in the interests of the taxpayer and user the Government would prefer to privatise."

If it is his intention that with market testing there will be a level playing field and fair competition in-house and outside, I am sure that we will leave that matter for another debate. However, it raises questions about the full intent of the introduction of the Bill.

The Minister explained very well the—excuse me, that sounded like a compliment. The Minister explained the structure of the Bill in terms of the delegation of responsibilities that would alter in the Cabinet and central civil service departments and what would happen when those changes were enacted. If the measure is so technical, simple and modest, why did he feel unable to consult civil service unions before he introduced it? He met them all on 3 June to discuss a number of matters.

The Bill was introduced into the House of Lords on 4 June and it was not until 8 June that the Minister considered it worth while to write to the civil service unions. That does not create a very good climate. The Minister assures us that there will be discussions at local level between civil servants and that the consultation procedure is good. However, why did he not consider it reasonable to have open discussions with civil service trade unions? If they are scared and fearful about what the legislation means, surely it would have been common sense or common decency for the Government to discuss the Bill with them before it was presented in the House of Lords.

Discussions would have made a difference to the response that the Minister received. On Second Reading, the House of Lords objected very strongly. The Minister had to meet colleagues in the other place to get the Bill through. That caused great concern to many people in the other place.

The Minister argued that the Government have already delegated functions. That is true. Under TFOs, delegations have taken place, but, actually, it is only discretions that have taken place, not delegations. The Minister's only argument for change is that it would be slightly simpler because the present structure is impractical. He seems to want to have his cake and eat it. He says that the system needs to be changed because it is impractical and needs to be simplified, but, to reassure people, he goes around saying that he is not going to use it when passed. The Minister looks confused. In a letter to the Council of Civil Service Unions of 26 June, in answer to a set of questions, he said:

> "We are not committed to introducing any particular delegations as a result of this Bill . . . There is no shopping list and no work has been commissioned to provide one."

The Minister cannot have it both ways. If there is a desperate need to revolutionise the corridors of power and allow the entrepreneurial spirit to come in, and if simple delegation would help to achieve that, it would be much better for the Minister to be straight and say, "Yes. We want to introduce a lot of delegations. We are going to get things moving fast." The speed with which the Government are moving on market testing and so on suggests that that is their absolute concern; to deny that they will adds to the fear and confusion.

The Minister referred to the problem of accountability. He tried to assure the House that accountability would work as well as it does now with the "next steps" agencies. As hon. Members have pointed out, there is great doubt about the value, speed and perspicacity of the present system of accountability. As I understand the technical detail of the Bill, the Carltona principle, which has always been the basic principle of accountability, will also be changed by the difference between discretion and delegations. "A civil servant is the Minister so acting," is the Carltona principle as we understood it in the past.

As clauses 1 and 2 state, accountability will not be directly to the Minister; it will be from a "next steps" agency or an individual in a Department, back up through the Treasury to the Public Accounts Committee. That is not positive, straight accountability to the House; it is a further watering down of accountability to the House. The PAC performs a very useful function, but it is always post facto. It always looks for value for money after the money has been spent. Many of the changes that the Minister is talking about introducing—not on the face of the Bill but in terms of market testing and competitive tendering which the Bill helps to facilitate—will radically change the nature of the civil service. That means that we need to look at accountability much more than we have had the chance to do so far. The Minister has often argued that

> "not only power but accountability has been centralised upwards to Ministers and Parliament."

The Bill will enable more accountability to be decentralised. We have all those management decisions on pay and conditions being decentralised, and we now have accountability being decentralised. It is difficult to understand, but accountability to whom? If there is a fiddle in the Inland Revenue or a leak in a Ministry of Defence department that has been decentralised by the Bill, who will be accountable? The PAC will be accountable years later. That is not accountability as we have known it—directly to the Minister—in the past. That will change the nature of the civil service as a national body and decimate what we know the civil service to be.

We will certainly carefully scrutinise the Bill in Committee because it will have an impact on the future of the civil service. The Minister talked about great respect for the civil service, how valuable it is and how it has worldwide respectability. That is absolutely true. Many countries in eastern Europe have turned to our civil service for advice when setting up their own civil services. If the Bill is passed with the decentralisation of pay and conditions, linked with market testing and contracting out, we will have a very different civil service. Some of that is already happening.

We are well aware that high standards and quality of service are already beginning to decline, not as a result of the Bill but because of what the Bill would facilitate in different parts of the civil service in order to accommodate tenders for market testing. One way to accommodate tenders is to lower pay and conditions and do away with holidays and sick pay; others such as statistical requirements of the Civil Service Commission have already been lowered in the past year. The breadth and depth of the information that it is keeping has changed. Similarly, at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, statistical requirements have been lowered again, at the very time when European requirements in respect of statistical information on food safety are being raised. As a response to the decentralisation of decision making, we already have those alterations. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) mentioned the

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Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and the 3,100 jobs that are challenged there. That is exactly the difficulty when one decentralises pay and conditions.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Is the purpose of the civil service to provide a good service to the public or is it to employ large numbers of people doing rather inefficient things? *[Interruption.]*

Ms. Mowlam: One of my colleagues has said that the hon. Gentleman has probably outlined the purpose of the Cabinet rather than of the civil service. Clearly, the civil service exists to perform a public service. Like others, civil servants are taxpayers and consumers of services. They also have a right to decent pay and conditions and to be valued, because morale is an important part of doing a good job. With respect to the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), it is not a matter of if people are valued and have decent pay and conditions we will have a decent civil service. Historically, we in Britain have valued that.

Quality of service could be affected by the decentralisation of pay and conditions in another way. At present the civil service has a great deal of expertise, whether it is in taxation, European Community law or public law in general, which it is difficult to match outside the civil service. The civil service has a great fund of valuable information and well-trained people.

The impact of changes such as those in the Bill will not be that the private sector will take over different parts of the civil service; it will be that the civil service will go to the private sector. It will work in exactly the opposite way. The skill and expertise will be lost and the public will suffer as a result.

I should like to mention briefly two other possible results of decentralisation and the delegation of powers on pay and conditions. I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree that impartiality has always been important in the civil service. Impartiality has been the bedrock of civil service pay and conditions, but it will not be embodied in any private company rule book. Private companies have a duty first and foremost to their shareholders. When the Government decentralise pay and conditions—the Secretary of State looks confused—as a precursor to privatisation, the first duty will be to the shareholders.

It is intended that both the consumer affairs and legal services divisions of the Office of Fair Trading will be market tested. The OFT could well face bids from the very companies that it is supposed to regulate. That is the sort of confusion which will result from decentralisation and making market testing easier.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not wish to slow down the hon. Lady's speech, but I was not looking confused. It is just that we are on another subject again. The Bill is about the delegation of personnel matters to Crown servants, not private companies.

Ms. Mowlam: I take the point. We had that discussion at the beginning of the debate. The Secretary of State cannot divorce the delegation of powers on pay and conditions to different parts of the civil service from preparing the ground for further market testing. The Bill will enable the Government to do that. The changes will have an impact on the impartiality, confidentiality and, ultimately, value for money of our national civil service.

The hon. Member for Colchester, North asked about the costs and who the civil service was there to serve. Some of the contracting out and tendering that has taken place in the civil service has resulted in a worsening of conditions and services. That is the lesson that the Secretary of State has failed to learn.

On this measure, as on so many other policies, the Government are driven solely by ideology dogma rather than common sense and best practice. The Opposition want efficient services and flexibility of management. The Secretary of State may want flexibility of management and decentralisation of decisions, which we welcome, but it is not necessary to do away with the national Whitley negotiating conditions. Those conditions have led to good practice and good industrial relations in the civil service.

The Secretary of State is not decentralising for flexibility and improved management; he is facilitating and enabling competitive tendering and privatisation. The way in which he pretends that this is a simple Bill gives hypocrisy a bad name.

We will take the matter up in Committee and we will lobby hard during the coming months. Unless the Secretary of State changes his attitude, the Opposition will vote against the Bill on Third Reading. When I came into the debate today I received a memorandum from the Home Office which said that there had been a general circulation of memoranda asking for future works on privatisation to be presented by the end of November. That is what is going on behind the scenes. We will use the Bill to enable us to have the debate in the House now and later.

7.4 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We seek a fresh statement from the Leader of the House on the utter chaos that now surrounds the announcement of the timetable on the Maastricht Bill. When the Prime Minister made his statement in Prime Minister's Question Time today he confirmed the report that he was prepared for the Third Reading to be delayed until after the second Danish referendum in May, at the earliest. During business questions the Leader of the House made it clear that the Committee stage is unlikely to resume for three weeks, although last night the Government rejected our amendment to delay the Committee until after the Edinburgh summit in five weeks, on the grounds that thousands of jobs would be lost and an issue of principle was at stake.

Tonight we have heard that Downing street is briefing the press, although not the House, that the Bill may not complete its passage through both Houses until September or October 1993. We have also heard that the Liberal Democrats, and not this House, had advance warning of, and accepted, such a timetable, despite what the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said last night and today about issues of principle and job losses, which required his party to support the Government last night.

It is now clear that a series of shoddy deals has been done. The House has been kept in ignorance and misinformed. We need a fresh statement on the Government's real intent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): The Chair is not aware of that information. I am also not aware of whether the Leader of the House intends to make any further statements. I have no doubt that the Government will have taken note.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of the serious nature of the information, and as the Government scraped home yesterday by three miserable votes—they were bailed out by the Liberal Democrats—would it not be a good idea, especially as the Government are denying Parliament information when they were supposedly so concerned about Parliament yesterday, for you to consider suspending Parliament while we find out about the skulduggery in which the discredited Government are indulging? The Government are at sixes and sevens on this discredited Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not really a matter for the Chair. I have no plans to suspend the House. I have already informed the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) that the Front Bench will have taken note.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The information came about only as a result of the question that I asked the Prime Minister this afternoon. If I had not asked the question, we would not have been privy to the information or the double-dealing that has taken place between the Government and the discredited army led by the Home Guard captain.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a similar point of order. I can add nothing further to what I have already said.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is clear that yesterday's vote is shrouded in double-dealing and dirty tricks. I am sure that many Conservative Members who went through the nightmare of arm-twisting, intimidation and threats by the Conservative Whips will now have cause to ponder the con tricks to which they have been subjected.

My main point is that, clearly, the Liberal Democrats have been party to the elaborate con trick that has been played on Conservative Members. I am sure that some facility could be made to the lone Liberal Democrat Member in the House to explain the exact role that the Liberal Democrats have played in the matter.

Mr. Alan Williams *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the right hon. Gentleman intends to raise the same point of order, I have already dealt with it and I shall deal with it no further.

Mr. Williams: On a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If it is a different point I shall take it.

Mr. Williams: As you will appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if what we have heard is true, it constitutes a grave contempt of the House and of the Chair. I realise that we cannot embroil you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this stage in wrangling between the parties, and that it is not for you to comment on the contempt that the Cabinet has shown to Conservative Back Benchers, but it would be appropriate if we asked, through you, whether between now and 9 o'clock the Leader of the House can come here to explain what is being furtively explained at the moment behind closed doors to journalists.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That was a similar point of order, even though I had informed the right hon. Member that I had dealt with it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If hon. Members are rising on the same point of order, I shall not accept it, as I have dealt with the matter.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Dr. Godman: Yes. Could I remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Madam Speaker and her predecessor expressed the utmost concern about statements of that import being made at press conferences and not from the Dispatch Box. It is a scandalous state of affairs, especially where Back Benchers are concerned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have taken note. I call Mr. Robert Ainsworth.

7.11 pm

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): I hesitate to correct you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is Peter.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) told us that Opposition Members intend to vote against the Bill on Third Reading, for reasons which have nothing to do with the Bill. That seems to be becoming a habit with Opposition Members. Last night, they voted against a motion for reasons which had nothing to do with the substantive motion. If Opposition Members spent more time focusing on the substance of what was under discussion and less time making party political points, they might do themselves and the House a service.

The Bill is a small and largely technical piece of legislation, although the Opposition seem to have vested it with a sinister significance which is wholly out of place. Having said that, the Bill is important, because at its heart lies the Government's commitment to creating a public service which truly, effectively and with the maximum attention to cost-efficiency meets the demands of the people—its customers.

We can justifiably be proud of our civil service, which in many respects is the envy of the world. As the hon. Member for Redcar suggested, it has formed the model adopted by much of the developed and developing world for the way in which they conduct their affairs.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has paid a tribute to the integrity and impartiality of the civil service. Those qualities are clearly recognised on both sides of the House, and are not in dispute.

I am sorry that some hon. Members seem to mistake this inoffensive Bill for an attack on the civil service, or an attempt to undermine its excellent work. The reverse is true. The Bill seeks to enable the civil service to develop management structures which will assist its undertakings.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said, the key to the proposals is delegation, which means devolving authority from centrally controlled personnel offices to departments and agencies.

[Mr. Peter Ainsworth]

I do not suppose that it is widely known outside Whitehall that the power to determine terms and conditions for civil servants, who operate across the vast spectrum of our national life in many different parts of the country, rests solely with the Treasury and with the Under-Secretary of State for the Civil Service. Decisions which affect the working lives and conditions of more than 0·5 million civil servants rests with two central Government Departments.

The measures contained in the Bill are designed to give Departments and agencies control over those matters, and that seems to be welcome. The Bill will enable—most importantly, it will not compel—the Treasury and the Minister with responsibility for the civil service to devolve authority for personnel matters to Departments, where that is appropriate.

Hon. Members who have spent time in commercial life know that people operate at their best when the lines of communication are clear and close to home. That fosters self-confidence and personal motivation. Increasingly, with the development of "next steps" agencies, senior managers in Government Departments are taking on responsibilities which were previously the preserve of the mandarins and that is right.

Nothing breeds responsibility like responsibility and nothing fosters enthusiasm and diligence more than trust. The Bill underpins the trust that we are increasingly conferring upon senior managers in the civil service. There is no responsibility without trust, and it works both ways. It is no good making people accountable if they do not have the freedom to back up their own judgment.

On a wider level, the Bill will encourage greater flexibility in the provision of public services, which is both needed and welcome. I say that it is welcome in the knowledge that the House may shortly have to consider some measures which are most certainly needed but which may not be entirely welcome. It is therefore a pleasure to be able to speak in favour of the Bill, although no one should doubt the willingness of Conservative Members to support difficult measures when they are necessary.

I am sorry that Opposition Members seem to think that the Bill is more difficult to accept than it really is. One should never underestimate the ability of some people to make scare stories out of good news.

When it was first announced that the Bill would come before the House, newspaper headlines screamed about the "privatisation of the civil service". Not for the first time, Opposition Members seem to be unable to distinguish truth from the fiction of their own creation.

The hon. Member for Redcar described the Bill as insidious and a threat to jobs. We must make it clear that the Bill in no way changes the terms and conditions of any civil servant. It does not affect the normal rights of staff or the usual consultation procedures, and it in no way affects the legitimate rights of trade unions.

I fear that the Opposition's attitude to the Bill has betrayed the fact that, once again, their commitment to reform and to improving the civil service is half-hearted at best. They pay lip service to it, but time after time they show that they are not really interested. Instead, they show a commitment to the public sector unions—I suppose that that is not surprising in view of their close relationship—which too often give precedence to their own sectional interests over the interests of the people they are there to serve.

Ms. Mowlam: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that Sir Robin Butler, in his Redcliffe-Maude memorial lecture, talked about the new generation of civil service trade union leaders being forward-looking and

> "less dogmatic about retaining traditional and uniform patterns of management where change can be clearly shown to be in the interests of their members and the public they serve"?

That is the view not just of Labour Members but of Sir Robin Butler, ex-head of the civil service.

Mr. Ainsworth: Had the hon. Lady listened to an earlier part of my speech she would have heard me pay tribute to our civil servants and the work that they do. However, there is no denying that there remain areas of activity where sectional trade union interests still come before the interests of the public. Many of the Government's reforms in recent years have gone a long way towards improving that situation.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman has made an important statement in firm and bold terms. I am sure that he is well loaded with examples. Perhaps he can just give us one.

Mr. Ainsworth: I am talking about a general attitude, which is well known to Conservative Members and will be widely recognised in the country. I speak as someone who has served for some years on a local council in central London. I am only too familiar with the attitude of the public sector unions and the precedence that, not always but all too often, they place on their own interests at the expense of members of the public. Hon. Members recognise that well, and the country knows about it.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my hon. Friend agree that there have been considerable differences in the attitudes taken by different trade unions, and that some have been a great deal more positive than others about the changes in the public service during the past few years? Therefore, any generalisation of the kind just made by the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) does not fit the facts.

Mr. Ainsworth: I agree with my hon. Friend. It would be wrong if my remarks were interpreted in a generalised way, because I am talking about incidents and tendencies of which we are well aware.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I am genuinely curious. The hon. Gentleman now protests that it would be wrong to take his attitude as a general one but, when challenged to give a specific example, he said that he was referring to a general approach.

Mr. Ainsworth: That was on a different point. If the hon. Gentleman does not yet understand the point that I have been trying to make, I do not think that he ever will.

Sadly, the attitude of which I have been speaking goes hand in hand with a tendency towards centralisation. Therefore, it is not surprising, though perhaps somewhat depressing, that Opposition Members appear to deride the idea of delegation that lies at the heart of the Bill.

Mr. Garrett: The hon. Gentleman may know something about the government of inner London, but he knows nothing about the civil service. Is he aware that the agency concept, the idea that Departments should be broken up into budget and responsibility centres, originated on the Labour Benches?

Mr. Ainsworth: In that case, I am surprised at Labour Members' attitude tonight.

I am pleased to say that the confusion displayed by Opposition Members did not extend to their colleagues in another place. As has been pointed out, the noble Baroness Turner supported the principle at the heart of the Bill and made it clear that she did not regard it as a blueprint for privatisation. I am sorry to find that Opposition Members in this House seem to disagree.

The Bill is not about privatisation. Here, I quickly suppress any comment about Treasury forecasters, and merely say that the idea that the Bill will result in a wholesale abandonment of bowler hats and furled umbrellas for designer suits and white socks is utter nonsense.

As my right hon. Friend said, the Bill in no way alters the fundamental accountability of Ministers and civil servants to Parliament. The Bill clearly enables Departments to set whatever conditions they may think appropriate to the delegation that they extend to those responsible for carrying out public duties. I hope that those conditions are not set too tightly, so that the business of encouraging devolved responsibility, with the attendant benefits to which I have referred, may progress apace, although proper monitoring, which is ensured by the Bill, will continue to be vital.

Contrary to what the hon. Member for Redcar said, real benefits from the Government's reforms of public services are becoming clear. Since 1979, more than £2 billion has been saved by cutting waste and improving efficiency.

Earlier today, I was fortunate enough to attend an impressive presentation by the National Audit Office. I am only sorry that more hon. Members could not find the time to listen to what it had to say. It is doing an excellent job in bringing cost-effectiveness to our public services and institutions.

Mr. Garrett: There is something else that the hon. Gentleman does not know. The Government fought bitterly against the establishment of the National Audit Office. I was a sponsor of the National Audit Act 1983 and I know the extent to which the Government tried to stop it. A cross-party alliance of Back Benchers got that Act through.

Mr. Ainsworth: I am talking not about history but about what is happening today. I was most impressed by what the National Audit Office had to say today about its work. It gave specific examples of the real-costs benefits which are accruing from its work. I applaud its efforts and wish it well.

There is a new spirit of accountability abroad in our public departments. Opposition Members continue to deride the development of that spirit, not least through the citizens charter.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Would the hon. Gentleman care to relate that new spirit of accountability to the experience which he may have had, and which most of us have had, with the Benefits Agency?

Mr. Ainsworth: I should be delighted to spend a great deal of time discussing the new spirit of accountability in Wandsworth council, on which I served for six years, where it is applied to enormously beneficial effect. The Benefits Agency has been dealt with by hon. Members at great length.

It is becoming increasingly clear that Opposition Members have no serious commitment to improving the quality of public services in Britain. That has been fairly obvious for some time. Their attitude tonight simply confirms their negative approach. Unfortunately, they have mistaken the Bill's true purpose and, in common with recent practices, are seeking to make party political points out of a perfectly innocuous piece of legislation. It is, however, legislation which forms an integral part of our commitment to ensure that the British people get the best from our public services, which is what they deserve.

7.30 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Hon. Members will not be surprised to hear that I shall not be following the hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) down the path, whatever it was, that he trod. My hon. Friends' interruptions showed that he does not have any real knowledge of civil servants or the civil service.

I regret that the Secretary of State so hastily left the Chamber after delivering an inadequate speech, remembering that many of the problems associated with the Bill lie at his door. Much uncertainty has been spread by his refusal to consult the civil service trade unions. My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) pointed out that they met him one day and he did not even inform them that the Bill would be introduced in the other place the following day. It is hardly surprising that suspicion should abound when that type of treatment is meted out.

Hon. Members have referred to some remarks made in the other place by Baroness Turner. We should be clear about exactly what she said and did not say, and I shall quote from her speech. After referring to the poor handling——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member cannot do that. He can only paraphase a speech made in another place.

Mr. Hoyle: The point of my noble Friend's speech was that it was the ultimate intention of the Government to bring about the privatisation of the civil service, even though this might not be the Bill by which that would be achieved. That flies in the face of everything that the Secretary of State has said. No wonder civil servants are alarmed.

Let us not forget that the Whitley committees will be destroyed. They have represented a wonderful system of negotiation for over 70 years. They have provided a forum not only for good industrial relations in the civil service but for achieving understanding and consultation. At present, employment conditions in the civil service are the responsibility of the Treasury and the Cabinet Office.

I suppose we should not be surprised at the Bill being presented because, since the Conservatives came to power in 1979, the civil service has been messed about with in one way or another. On taking office, Mrs. Thatcher set Lord Rayner to work. We were told that the exercise was designed to increase efficiency, and we are now told that

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this measure represents another step down that road. Without seeing much sign of greater efficiency, many jobs have been lost.

It is claimed that the Bill is necessary because of the citizens charter. We are told that this is a small technical measure, but those with experience of such matters know that we must dig deeper and consider the enabling legislation that will result from it. Despite what the Secretary of State said, the Bill allows responsibility to be delegated away from the Treasury and Cabinet Office, which, as I say, have previously been responsible for civil servants' conditions.

Ministers will no longer need to obtain the agreement of the civil service unions even over the terms and conditions that are being delegated—a point that my hon. Friends and I are anxious to stress. Any individual agencies that are established under the measure can vary the terms and conditions of the service for which a delegated authority exists. That, too, can be done without the agreement of the Treasury, and certainly without the agreement of the civil service unions. No wonder civil servants are alarmed over what is termed a small technical Bill.

The spectre of privatisation—unfortunately, we cannot discuss that tonight—was raised by the actions of the Secretary of State. We recall his speech on 1 June last, in which he referred to competitive tendering. He made it clear that the process that had been imposed on local councils for blue collar jobs such as refuse collection would be extended to central Government, with white collar jobs being affected. He went on to talk about law, accounting, engineering, architecture and science. He was not referring to a small number of civil servants, for about 130,000 jobs could be put at risk.

No wonder there is alarm and despondency in the civil service. The Secretary of State claims to be a great admirer of the civil service, but he has not been particularly helpful to the service in his past actions.

As I explained, the Bill will allow the Government or any delegated representative to vary conditions of service without the agreement of the Treasury or the unions, the only exceptions being areas regulated by law. The only such part of the employment conditions is the principal civil service pension scheme. Clearly, there are many matters about which civil servants are right to be alarmed.

For example, we are right to ask about equal opportunities. What about the possibility of sex and race discrimination? There are numerous issues to be considered, including pay, leave and hours of service. All could be swept away. They will all be subject to change as a result of the Bill. All agreements reached centrally through Whitley between the Treasury and the unions could be overturned without recourse once the measure becomes law. Yet it is described as a small technical Bill.

There will be no need for the Minister to specify to whom a delegation is being made, yet the civil service unions are having difficulty trying to obtain information about the way in which the measure will be implemented. The Minister may be able to withhold authority for certain functions from the person to whom he has delegated matters. Nor is it clear whether it will all be within public knowledge or be done by private arrangement.

Many problems have resulted from the attitude of the Secretary of State. After all, the right hon. Gentleman had no consultation with the unions before the Bill was introduced in the other place. Only pressure brought by the unions and my hon. Friends has resulted in any consultation. Much remains to be explained to those who work in what even Conservative Members agree is our great civil service.

It is a vague Bill. The future of many people is at stake, and their conditions of employment are under threat. They should be consulted, because many of them are saying that, instead of, "Yes, Minister," they should be asking, "What are you hiding, Minister?" Much alarm has been spread because of the lack of consultation. It is wrong that suspicion and despair are being caused in the civil service by the Government's refusal to show the whole of their hand in this matter.

The trade unions are showing a responsible attitude and asking reasonable questions, such as what functions will be delegated. That is a fair question, given the promises that have been made to them. I have a list that has been compiled, but we are not in a position to know whether it is a full and final list. Another important question is, to whom will those functions be delegated? Not only those who work in the civil service but all of us who may have to use the agencies need to know. When and over what period will that delegation take place? What conditions will be established by or in the agencies?

Another point that has not been satisfactorily explained by the Secretary of State is why those moves are being undertaken. Surely there should not only be consultation but a time limit should be set for those consultations. We would all feel much easier if the Secretary of State could assure us tonight about what monitoring of the delegated authority will take place.

Differing views have been expressed on both sides of the House. Opposition Members have asked about the agencies that have already been set up and about the inadequacies of those agencies. Again, the Secretary of State did not reply properly. It would help civil servants to know what formal review, if any, will be undertaken to see whether value for money is being obtained for the public. Should not a regulatory authority also look at the work of those agencies?

One of my hon. Friends has already said that what is happening is the break up of our national civil service, which is the envy of the rest of the world and to which we owe so much. I ask the Government not to hide their real intent behind a technical Bill. The Government's ultimate aim came to light in the other place. Although it may not be in the Bill, it will be achieved in other ways. It can cause only despair and a lowering of morale when we are told that the Government's ultimate aim is complete privatisation.

7.43 pm

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I have listened carefully to the arguments presented by the hon. Members for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) and for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), who made some constructive points, which I have been thinking about. Although the hon. Lady's points are well informed, I am none the wiser about why she objects in principle to the Bill and intends to vote against it.

The Bill ensures better management of the civil service by allowing different parts of it to develop their own strategies on matters such as pay, grading and general conditions of service. Surely that is a laudable objective. The Bill neither changes the terms or conditions of existing civil servants' pay, grading or structure, nor does it contain new powers to privatise or contract out.

It is the job of Government to ensure that the civil service is best organised and managed to deliver a better quality and value of services to the public. From the tone of the debate so far, it would appear that only the Conservative Government have had the courage to tackle barriers that impede better value and services. The creation of the "next steps" agencies—now 75 in all—is a remarkable progression towards better services for consumers. In a previous incarnation I served on the National Consumer Council and I have had a great deal of interest in protecting consumer services.

If we take the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency as an example, much has changed—and for the better. The days are long gone when Joe public had to wait months for his driving licence. Now customers come first. All DVLA staff go on customer care courses. They now sort out their own mistakes and deal with their customers directly, rather than allocating them to a complaints committee, using vast amounts of paper. They have abolished an elaborate and inefficient structure of working parties, which they have dismantled in favour of decision-making by line managers. Buggins' turn is out and promotion is now on merit. Managers have clear targets. For example, it was recently specified that 90 per cent. of driving licences must be issued within 13 days. Last year they took 16 days and before it became an agency it took months.

Opposition Members understand that old-style civil service staff management is giving way to flexibility. Staff can now be hired on a variety of part-time arrangements, giving work opportunities to, for example, working mothers and people with other family commitments to work part time rather than on an eight-hour shift. The Bill will enable those people to find new opportunities for work.

The Efficiency Unit was set up in 1979. I understand from what I have read that more than 750 scrutinies have saved more than £2 billion—I cannot prove it—by reducing waste within the civil service.

The Government are also determined to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy. We should look at the record. We have now eliminated unnecessary form filling—27,000 forms have been scrapped and a further 41,000 revised. One begins to wonder how many forms exist. Will my hon. Friend the Minister let me know at some point?

Improved management is a keystone of the Government's policy. The Opposition cannot and should not object to civil service managers, as good managers, having a clearer idea of their objectives and responsibilities and much greater freedom to recruit their own staff to achieve those. We all believe that better quality services will be delivered to the public only if the management structures and demands are driven upwards from the customer to relate to customer demand, rather than downwards from senior managers at Whitehall issuing edicts saying what is best for us.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has reassured us that the Bill is about efficiency and localised rather than centralised control of personnel, and nothing whatever to do with privatisation, about which the Opposition are concerned. We do not want a highly centralised system of control which, as we all know, helps to perpetuate the old-boy network.

While protecting the existing terms and conditions of the civil service, the Bill gives local managers greater flexibility to offer better pay, grading regimes, working hours and disciplinary arrangements, and leaves Ministers and Parliament accountable under the new powers of delegation specified in the Bill.

Performance-related pay is a key feature of the citizens charter. Some 95 per cent. of civil service pay is now covered by performance-related criteria. Therefore, productivity improvements, speedier delivery of service and improvements in unit cost performance are vital targets. The Bill enables Ministers to delegate and ask for more local accountability, thereby removing a current legal impediment to greater accountability, productivity and performance. It is well worth supporting.

7.51 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): On a superficial level the Bill is simple enough: it allows the delegation of civil service personnel management from central Departments—the Treasury and the Minister with responsibility for the civil service in the Cabinet Office—to departments and agencies. It was introduced with such confusion and lack of consultation in the House of Lords that it led to a chaotic debate. The Lords who spoke for the Government appeared to have only the most tenuous grip of the subject. There was confusion throughout their Lordships' House, where the legislation was seen as a privatisation measure. In fact, it has nothing to do with privatisation—Government organisations can and have been privatised without the legislation.

However, the Bill raises important issues. It involves the delegation of personnel management to agencies. Although the Government say that power will be delegated to departments and agencies, it will move to agencies. It is unlikely that the Treasury or the Minister with responsibility for the civil service will allow delegation to a central Whitehall Department. The Bill tries to establish the autonomy of agencies in order to enable the agency chief executives to depart from national civil service rules of employment, and terms and conditions of service.

As agencies cover more of the civil service—the late-lamented project manager for setting up the "next-steps" agencies forecast that 90 per cent. of the civil service would be covered by agencies within a decade—the Bill will mean the end of a national civil service. That is at the heart of the debate. Most Crown servants will join an agency, not the civil service or a national service. They will be employed within the rules of the agency, not national civil service rules. The Bill's ultimate objective is to have Government services in a conglomeration of agencies, all with their own terms and conditions.

I cannot see why the agency concept requires that fragmentation. In a large corporation there can be profit centres and subsidiaries, but employees can still be on common terms and conditions. I have worked for large multinational companies that had a multiplicity of profit centres and subsidiaries with common terms and conditions, and a common grading system. The virtue of such corporations is that they ensure a common corporate identity and ease of movement from one part of the business to another. A collection of agencies—which is

[Mr. John Garrett]

what our civil service will become—will not have a public service identity or ethic, which will cause substantial problems.

The result would be a Government consisting of a number of separate businesses. I must confess that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and I first proposed the agency concept in a 1972 Fabian tract "Administrative Reform—the Next Steps"—and I am glad that the agencies are called "next steps" agencies. However, we were fresh from the Fulton committee, which developed the idea of delegation within departments to responsibility and budget centres. It was a natural progression for the two of us to extend the concept to a Department that was a collection of agencies. But the crucial point was that it was still a Department. We envisaged departmental agencies within Departments, operating on the personnel and management system of the parent Department, with career opportunities for moving from the agency into the central, policy-making divisions of a Department.

The problem with the agency concept as developed by the Government is that it separates technical and executive grades in an agency from the mandarin administrators in the policy divisions. That policy flies in the face of all the experience gained since the Fulton committee. The separation of mandarins from managers is the biggest single problem in our civil service—and always has been. The Fulton committee put its finger on that problem, which has never been addressed.

The losers will be the staff. An agency management can tear up national agreements with trade unions and impose its own. There will be no obligation on agency management to consult the staff on changes in terms and conditions or business plans. Agencies already exist that do not consult trade unions on business plans or forecasts. There will be no public service standard for the treatment or development of staff. It will mean the end of the civil service as a model employer.

Under the Bill, all civil service-wide conditions and guarantees could be swept aside—pay, leave, hours and equal opportunities. There would be no guarantee of consultation on aspects such as recruitment arrangements, and training or promotion procedures. Those matters will be delegated to chief executives, who are paid performance pay to cut costs. It is a crucial factor that the chief executives who are paid to cut costs will take the money out of the quality of terms and conditions of the agency employees.

I have not heard a Minister address the fact that there is now a fundamental contradiction within the Government policies on agencies—agency chief executives are beginning to say so. The Bill embodies the principle of chief executives having greater autonomy. However, compulsory market testing and contracting out, as outlined in the "Competing for Quality" White Paper, contradict the responsibilities of those chief executives. A chief executive has no autonomy if he or she is made to contract out a major part of the agency's activities.

The Government override the autonomous powers of agency chief executives by demanding that some of the agency's functions must be contracted out. Agency chief executives will find themselves running a rump of services. The concept of the executive agency will be negated if the executive functions are compulsorily contracted out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Eight hon. Members hope to catch my eye and I understand that the Front-Bench teams wish to start their winding-up speeches at 9.20 pm. If hon. Members co-operate by limiting the length of their speeches, I may be able to call all those wishing to speak.

7.58 pm

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): The debate has been enhanced by the speech of the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett). That is particularly true of his opening remarks, stating in clear and honest terms that the Bill was not about privatisation. He is absolutely right. He continued to describe how the Bill legislated on an agency basis. I have no difficulty in agreeing with the hon. Gentleman's concept of the Bill.

I pay a warm and generous tribute to civil service staff. There is not one hon. Member who does not owe them a great debt for the work that they do on our behalf, as we in turn work for our constituents. In 1979 the civil service employed more than 730,000 people. By November last year, that figure had been reduced to 553,000. I do not applaud that, in itself. With staff reductions on that scale, anyone in public or political life would want certain quality criteria to be met as a result. I suppose that we would all say that we want a good service—there is no dispute about that. I also happen to believe that we are getting a good service.

I have spent a lot of my life searching for value for money—indeed, I even wrote a book about it. I am a dedicated disciple of the idea. I think that the civil service bears wonderful testimony to value for money in the public sector. I can say as firmly and as surely as I have ever said anything that the savings resulting from these exercises have amounted to more than £2 billion. I am sure that all hon. Members have their own ideas about how we might use that money in our constituencies—on health, and so on. I value those savings immensely.

Three times this evening I have heard Opposition Members say that, as a by-product of this Bill, contracts would be torn up and conditions of employment abandoned. I want Ministers to know that the allegations that I have heard three times this evening—that holidays will be abandoned and that sick pay will be taken away from civil servants in these agencies—are intolerable. In Committee and on Third Reading, I want to hear an absolutely positive statement from the Government that none of this will happen.

Several hon. Members have mentioned Earl Howe's speech in another place. Interestingly enough, having looked through it, I did not find that he said that this was a tiny, technical Bill. I will check again in the next 24 hours, but I have read his speech, delivered on 29 October and reported at column 1298 of the House of Lords *Hansard*. When Members read it at their leisure, they will find that he did not say the words that they have attributed to him.

I believe that the service given to the public by the civil service has been a success story. I am quite happy to shout that out loud and clear. It came about because of a new spirit in the civil service. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) that morale in the service is at an all-time low. On the contrary, a fine spirit is alive in it. It was encouraged by the introduction of the citizens charter, and management techniques have also improved. Clause 1(2) is all about management procedures.

The civil service can only be as good as the managers who run it. A great many secondments take place now; managers go and learn in the private sector from national corporations like those that the hon. Member for Norwich, South mentioned. There, they obtain new skills for their jobs and become better managers. I am sure that agencies will provide a better service. I may be accused of prophesying here, and I confess that I do not know whether what I have said will come true, but I sincerely trust that it will.

My next point will be of interest to all Members of this honourable House who represent constituencies in the provinces. Along with the delegation of powers and improved management techniques, we want more and more of the civil service to be located outside the metropolis. Four out of five civil servants are already employed outside it. With the grace of God and a fair wind, quite a number of them are coming to heaven—by which I mean the black country. A further 700 civil servants have just arrived, with a newly-equipped centre.

I am not here only as a representative of my constituency; I am also here to tell the truth. The truth is that I am angry about a letter that I received from the Home Secretary, dated 3 November. I have been fighting a battle to have the prison service headquarters relocated to Derby, but it has not happened. Nevertheless, we shall continue to seek the relocation of civil servants and their managers to our area.

I believe in private enterprise, in market forces and in value for money. I am very pleased, for instance, that the meteorological office has at last started to believe in those things too. In the past two years it has generated 17 per cent. more revenue by selling its services. That is marvellous—[HON. MEMBERS: "Selling more weather?"] Certainly.

Time and again I have had dealings with the passport offices because constituents have had difficulties getting their passports, but I am pleased to note that the Peterborough office which serves my constituency can now deal with applications in only seven days.

The Bill is worthy of consideration and of being passed. If we approach its few clauses in the right spirit in Committee and on Third Reading, I believe that it will improve the civil service in ways of which the House will be proud. I commend the Bill to the House.

8.9 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) suggested that some of the Government changes to the civil service are responsible for the weather. If that is the case, Conservative Members in Cornwall and other tourist areas should be worried about the weather last summer. However, I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman's claim will stand up to much scrutiny. The Bill is unlikely to have such far-reaching consequences.

I have some sympathy for Ministers who say that some of the concerns expressed by Labour Members have been outside the scope of the Bill. The Bill's scope is narrow but I understand why Labour Members have raised issues such as the management and future of the civil service, because the Bill inevitably raises such questions. The Minister failed to give adequate assurance about the Government's intentions on how the Bill should be used. I hope that at the end of the debate we shall hear more about what change the Government envisage.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) said that the Labour party was in favour of decentralisation and that the Bill paved the way for the break up of the civil service as we know it, but the hon. Lady cannot have it both ways. Decentralisation of the civil service and the delegation of management powers is a move away from the present centralised structure. That is the choice confronting hon. Members. Some Labour Back Benchers clearly said where they stand on that choice but the hon. Lady did not make clear where the Labour party stands.

The Liberal Democrats in the other place and in this House have always made it clear that we support the principle of decentralisation contained in the Bill. It is ironic that the Government should lay so much stress on decentralisation when so much of what they do in other areas is centralisation. The Minister should blush when he speaks about the Government's commitment to decentralisation. We welcome the delegation of powers. That change in the public and private sector reflects modern ideas about how people work best and how organisations are best managed. In an organisation as large as the civil service that is especially relevant.

Mr. Wilson: Being in favour of decentralisation is rather like being in favour of good weather. Is the hon. Gentleman also in favour of fragmenting pay, grading, holiday arrangements and conditions of service within the present national civil service? In line with recent events I expect that he is in favour.

Mr. Taylor: Decentralised power has to include pay and conditions. We have made that clear in our policies and some Labour Members have attacked us for it, but one assumes from some of Labour's policies, not least its devolution policy, that it holds the same view. Labour's position on that must seem peculiar to Scottish Labour Members. Labour attacks those who argue for decentralisation and devolution of power and attack us for admitting the logical conclusion, that decisions on pay and other structures will be taken at local level. It is hard for Labour to argue its measures for Scotland and Wales and, ultimately, for the regions of England while at the same time maintaining a monolithic structure for delivering those measures. That is peculiar and does not seem to make sense.

I hope that the Minister will address some of the concerns that are raised by the Bill. Some of them were addressed in the other place, not least as a result of Lord Russell's contribution. Changes welcomed by the civil service unions have been made and the legislation has been clarified. It is deeply ironic that the Minister charged with responsibility for the citizens charter should introduce a Bill with so little notice and consultation because that is wholly contrary to the principles that he is in office to espouse. The trade unions and the staffs involved have some justification for making that complaint. Ministers acknowledge that, because we understand that in the other place and in dealing with the representatives of those staffs they have accepted that the matter was not well handled.

[Mr. Taylor]

I hope that lessons will be learned from that. If the Government paid more attention to what their rhetoric means that mistake would not have occurred.

We need detailed reassurance from the Minister about the role of the recognised unions in the Government's plans. Will local management have to deal, as it should, with the recognised union representatives? The Bill does not mention that but refers to staff and representatives, although one would expect reference to recognised trade unions. There is some concern that the rights of representation will be changed. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) knows, the Government's record on GCHQ has not been good.

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): I represent many thousands of civil servants at GCHQ. They are magnificent people at management level and throughout the structure. I am sure my hon. Friend agrees that the banning of trade unions at GCHQ remains a scar on the Government that should be removed at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Taylor: I agree, but I had better not pursue the matter or I shall be called out of order.

The Government's plans about representation are not clear and there is no reference in the Bill to recognised trade unions. I hope that the Minister will reassure us about that because if he does not the concerns will be much greater. How will consultation be managed? How will the staff know what is being proposed, the time scale and the scale of the measures, and how and in what form will the staff affected be able to present their point of view and make sure it is taken into account?

I should like to ask the Minister about accountability to the House. Many hon. Members hold the view that the changes to the executive agencies and the way in which hon. Members can hold Ministers to account for what is happening in their Departments has not worked effectively. It is not just a matter of putting on record the replies from executive agencies. Constituents often raise issues that go to the root of policy and its effective implementation, but my letters to Ministers have been referred to the executive agency for reply as a matter of day to day management. I have often felt that that was not right—that the issues that I was raising were issues for the Minister. It also creates complications for any Member of Parliament who is trying to deal successfully with his constituents' problems. I think that the process should be reviewed.

I do not see why Ministers should not seek advice about what is happening from those who are responsible, but I feel that they should be aware of the problems and of the response to those problems, and should draw some conclusion about whether their general policy guidance and the decisions that they have made are being applied effectively.

The Liberal Democrats have no difficulty with the principles espoused in the Bill. We agree with the proposals for decentralisation in what the Minister has described—and I agree with him—as a limited piece of legislation. Nevertheless, I feel that it is incumbent on the Minister to go into more detail about the changes that are envisaged, and the effect that they will have. It is scarcely conceivable that Ministers have—as they claim—put in hand the assumption of a power without having any plans, views or even notions about where that power will apply, whom it will affect and how those people will be affected.

8.21 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): It does not surprise any Conservative Member that the official Opposition have chosen to oppose the Bill. Inherent in every Labour speech that we have heard is the fact that the party does not understand the concept of producer dominance—the concept that a service can be ruined by the fact that it is dominated by the producers, rather than by the customers or clients. At the risk of deviating from Government policy, I rather welcome Labour's opposition to the Bill; it gives new boys like me an opportunity to have a go, and thus provides Labour Members with the chance of a little sport.

I approved very much of the speech made by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). I am delighted that he and his hon. Friends are again riding to the Government's rescue. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman must make an effort to reveal some daylight between his colleagues and Conservative Members. I therefore appreciate his point about timing and consultation. Let us be practical, however. The Bill does not change the pay or the conditions of employment of one civil service employee; it merely delegates certain authorities in respect of those matters. The idea of embarking on a long period of consultation with trade unions exemplifies what is currently wrong with the civil service; it is impossible to decide anything, or to make the service respond quickly to the changing circumstances of the modern world.

Mr. Wilson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the legislation which led to compulsory competitive tendering in local authorities did not change the conditions of even one employee, but led to the present circumstances in which tens of thousands of people throughout the country —people who formerly worked in low-paid jobs in relatively secure conditions—now work for slave labour rates, enjoying very few conditions of that kind? Does the hon. Gentleman welcome that development?

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself. He knows that competitive tendering in the health service and in local authorities has saved millions of pounds.

When I fought the 1987 general election, one of the problems experienced by the Conservative party in Scotland—particularly in Glasgow, Central—was the fact that, although a huge amount of competitive tendering had proved very beneficial for English voters, competitive tendering had not begun in Scotland. It was thus very difficult to explain its benefits to the Scottish people. Since 1987, competitive tendering has been widely introduced in Scotland, saving millions of pounds, and I am pleased to say that at the last election we started to win back Scottish seats. *[Interruption.]* I should be interested to know whether the Opposition are suggesting that it was ever possible for the Conservatives to win Glasgow, Central, but that is a separate point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Bill is not about competitive tendering.

Mr. Jenkin: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The philosophy behind the Bill is surely about better enabling the best practices of business and the private sector to be brought to bear on the problems of the public service. The civil service—by no means all of it, as was suggested earlier, but the generality of it—used to offer only three real perks: virtually total job security, complete anonymity and protection from the customer, and an index-linked pension at the end. In exchange, employees used to accept low status, low pay, poor morale and the dissatisfaction involved in providing a relatively poor service. In contrast, the private sector, when successful, demonstrates freewheeling dynamism instead of bureaucratic sclerosis. I pay tribute to those who work hard in the civil service, and who provide a good service. Nevertheless, when I hear people say that our great civil service is what has made the United Kingdom such a great country, I sometimes wonder whether they are aware of the irony of what they are saying.

The philosophy behind the Bill is concerned with transforming public services: first, by increasing efficiency; secondly, by improving accountability; and, thirdly, by enhancing cost control. I do not apologise for that last item. Running an efficient civil service is all about effective cost control. It is extraordinary that some Opposition Members should complain that the whole exercise is aimed at reducing costs, as though that were a sin.

To achieve efficiency, we must first accept the reality that Ministers cannot possibly be accountable and manage everything for which their Departments are responsible. The Bill accepts that reality. Good managers manage mostly by exception; that is what allows Ministers to decide overall strategy, and to target specific areas of concern. The Bill enhances that capability. Ultimately, management is about finding the right people, not just about making strategic decisions. It is about deciding priorities, allocating resources and leading, motivating and inspiring. That is what is so often lacking in public services. The key ingredient in its achievement is the delegation of responsibility. Whatever job is involved, the higher the degree of self-motivataion that is required for that job, the more satisfying it will be when it is done well.

Managers often fail to recognise that the best talents for a task are usually just waiting to be discovered in the person who is already doing the job. That is the philosophy that the Bill seeks to apply, not just to the formal top structure of the civil service but right to the grass roots. It seeks to establish, in place of management accountable to the lowest common denominator of talent or intelligence, management which raises motivation, expectations and aspirations to bring out the natural talents of employees at every level. That can be found in any really successful business. Such businesses contain people whose work enhances their own sense of well-being and purpose.

Although the Bill is not about privatisation, Conservative Members should not be bashful. We have seen a dramatic transformation of management and efficiency in privatised companies such as British Telecom, British Gas and the water companies. We need the same cultural change in parts of the public service which cannot be privatised. Again, the private sector provides the experience and examples on which the public sector should draw in terms of accountability.

This is not to be dogmatic. There is a huge variety of examples and experience in the private sector. For example, a company for which I worked—Ford—is a unitary single generic product company, in contrast with Hanson Trust, where there is a huge variety of subsidiaries achieving a multiplicity of things. The scope and nature of delegation remain very important in both circumstances, but accountability in both cases is in doubt. Good government of both companies rests in the hands of the directors, just as good government of Government Departments and all their responsibilities rests in the hands of Ministers.

Setting the hare running on such matters as the dilution of the Carltona principle or the exact detail of pay negotiating machinery misses the point entirely. We want accountability which is flexible and effective and which works—accountability as much to service users, clients and customers, as ultimately to Ministers and Parliament.

Hon. Members have complained about the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, for example, but we are now light years ahead of the chaos and inefficiency of that agency. So we have efficiency and accountability, both leading to better cost control. The Audit Commission and the Public Accounts Committee will still be able to expose the inefficiency where services fall short of the required standard.

With such a beneficial transformation of public services in progress, the only possible complaint can be that the Bill does not go far enough. What about those hoary old red chestnuts, Labour's notorious local authorities—it would be too boring to name them—which have become bywords for extravagance, waste and ineptitude? How can we frame different legislation to tackle the inefficiencies there? No wonder so much cynicism regarding this measure is expressed from the Opposition Benches. They pick away at the sawdust in our eyes because of the motes in their own. One would take their criticisms more seriously if they appeared to care one jot.

8.32 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) has said that we are light years away from the inefficiency at the DVLA, or DVLC, which is within my constituency. That sentiment puts him at odds with his own Front Bench Members, who are ever ready to compliment the centre on the quality and efficiency of its work.

Mr. Jenkin: The agency status of DVLC in Swansea has transformed the management, and I totally agree with what the hon. Gentleman says. But it is the agency status that has achieved that.

Mr. Anderson: The agency status came into being in April of last year. No one can seriously claim that there has been any increase or decrease in the quality of the product since that time. There were teething problems in the 1970s, but the quality of the product has been very high indeed since the mid-1970s.

One other matter that puts the hon. Gentleman at odds with his Front Bench is his suggestion that the philosophy behind the Bill is the transformation of the public service. Surely the whole essence of the selling of this Bill by those on the Government Front Bench is that it is really a rather unimportant Bill. I noticed that the Secretary of State, in opening, called it a "poor little Bill". He talked about "a technical Bill of limited scope", not the transforming Bill which the hon. Gentleman suggests.

[Mr. Anderson]

In another place, it was suggested that the Bill was an exercise in good management and delegation, an exercise in decentralisation—hardly the hallmark of this Government's policies, certainly if we look at local authorities.

There has clearly been a wish on the part of the Government to down-sell this Bill as technical and of little consequence. Indeed, one wonders why they found it worth while to bring this so little, so poor Bill before the House at all. On the other hand, we on the Opposition side and those in the other place see that this Bill could pave the way for privatisation.

One reason why we are a little alarmed and suspicious is that, on 1 June, the very day before the Bill was introduced in the other place, the Secretary of State gave what is known as *The Sunday Times* speech, in which he talked about a revolution in the organisation and delivery of our public services, a revolution that would affect both users and their providers. That was the context within which the Bill was introduced. Perhaps it is simply the practice of this Government, as was seen so dramatically over the Maastricht Bill, to speak to different audiences with different tongues. So the Government can hardly be surprised that we are suspicious of the motives behind the Bill.

We note, for example, that the Efficiency Unit envisages not less than a quarter of our civil service being privatised. We know that there has been little debate on this, but I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has given an undertaking to the House that he will put pressure on his own business managers to ensure an adequate debate in the House on that theme.

So what is the true interpretation? Is it a little Bill, a Bill of little consequence, the Minister's "poor little Bill", or is it something which, although technically on the strict reading of the words is indeed that, has much larger implications? We clearly have much scope for suspicion about the motives of the Government, and they have only themselves to blame because of the nature of their rhetoric—the bonfire of controls, the rolling back of the frontiers of the state, and so on. As they press on dogmatically against the public service with an unchecked wish to destroy the public service as we know it today, they can hardly be surprised if we seek to oppose them.

I make no apology for seeking to illustrate the dangers created by this Bill by taking an example in my constituency, the DVLA, because I am confident that, as I hope to show the House, a number of lessons can be learnt about the dangers of setting off along this route.

Last Friday, for example, I, together with all my colleagues from West Glamorgan, including my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell), who is present now, and two of my colleagues from Dyfed, attended a remarkable meeting called by the civil service unions over the future of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in my constituency. There were more than 600 civil servants there, all anxious about their jobs and the clear threat to their jobs provided by the Government's proposals.

The Government now seek to put a gloss on a leaked document from the chief executive saying that it was all part of a routine exercise and perhaps should not be taken too seriously; that it was one of several options and it was premature to criticise it; and indeed that Ministers had not yet made a decision on it. The effect of the position envisaged in that document—the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) will know how important this agency is to the employment structure of an area of high unemployment—would be the loss of more than 3,000 jobs. He and the House will understand the anxieties of the work force there because of the uncertainties raised.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I fully appreciate what the hon. Gentleman has said about the DVLA, and, having lived in that area for many years, I realise that the loss of the DVLA from his constituency would greatly increase unemployment. But I believe that the hon. Gentleman has clarified the position by saying that there is no Government proposal to do what he has stated. There is a continuing policy of looking at various agencies and Departments and, as has been said, far more civil servants have moved from London to the various districts than the other way round.

Mr. Anderson: I invite the hon. Gentleman to read the document, and to note its terms and tone. If the proposal is adopted, and as the chief executive has properly admitted that there is no way in which jobs would remain in Swansea following contractorisation, it would mean a complete reversal of the policy of dispersal of civil service jobs to areas of high unemployment. There would be no way in which the Government could have control over the siting of those jobs once they had been put out to the private sector. That is the stark reality of the effect of the Government's proposals.

Let me briefly cover some of the broader issues that arise from the chief executive's proposals. I invite the House to consider the tone of the document. We are talking not about someone setting out options but about the clear advocacy by the chief executive of a particular solution—contractorisation—which can lead to one outcome alone: the moving from Swansea of the 3,000 jobs. The social effects are mentioned only in a rather sad aside—something to be considered for a public relations exercise rather than to be treated as fundamental. When I give the Minister a copy of the document, he will no doubt see the reason for the profound anxiety to which it gives rise.

The Bill can be seen as a step along the road towards privatisation, just as the internal reorganisation of Government Departments towards company status is a step in that direction. Matters of considerable constitutional and legislative importance and of accountability arise. I invite hon. Members to consider examples such as the vehicles inspectorate, the very integrity of whose system is under threat. If the testing of heavy goods vehicles were taken away from the civil service, something of much value would be destroyed.

The chief executive's document considers how best to avoid legislation—and, in effect, parliamentary scrutiny—by keeping a residue of perhaps 150 jobs at the centre and sending the rest to the private sector; who knows where?

The threat to a unified public service has already been referred to, and I shall not develop the arguments advanced by my hon. Friends on that subject.

Standards of pay—regional pay and the downgrading of pay in areas such as mine where market forces are less strong—are also a cause for concern. The whole pay structure may be downgraded in Northern Ireland, for example.

Another worry is the politicisation of the civil service as a result of the process. The chief executive's document is not the product of a neutral civil service. We are talking here about civil servants who have adopted the Thatcherite political culture and who know that, if they dance to the tune of their political masters, they will get what they want. In their eyes, that is the way to promotion. I make no apology for criticising Stephen Curtis, the director of the DVLA, because, in writing the document, he stepped outside the civil service and became a quasi-politician, thus laying himself open to the criticism to which all politicians are subject.

There is a conflict with social objectives. The Secretary of State for Wales was unaware of the contents of the document. As happened with the mines, he will be brought in after the event even though the matter is so important to the Welsh economy.

Finally, the document is in profound conflict with the dispersal policy of previous Governments. The DVLA was sited at Swansea by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who was then in a Labour Government, precisely to bring a major job creator to an area that had become an area of high unemployment because of the pit closures. If, as is envisaged in the document, those jobs go to the private sector, they cannot and will not be kept in Swansea, as is readily acknowledged. They will go we know not where —probably to an area which does not need them quite as badly as Swansea. The proposals drive a coach and horses through the proper view of Government that such jobs should be dispersed.

That is the nature of the anxiety affecting the city of Swansea. I hope that the Prime Minister will allay that anxiety by repudiating the document, even though it is very much the product of the philosophy that has wreaked such damage in the country as a whole. I hope that we shall have a debate on the document, which shows the extent to which the Government are out of touch. I believe that we have every reason for being suspicious of the Bill. In line with their previous record, the Government are fattening the service for market. The Bill is a step along the road to privatisation and away from the unified public service that has served the country so magnificently over the years.

8.45 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Time is short, so I shall confine my remarks to two matters of concern and one point of complaint.

The first matter of concern is accountability. We are told that the Bill relates largely to "next steps" agencies and, as the Minister knows, our experience of those agencies' accountability has not been good. I hope that the situation will improve. The Bill facilitates the delegation by Ministers of certain functions to the heads of agencies and further down the structure. Clearly, we should be concerned about the degree of accountability to the House not just as regards fiscal rectitude but on policy matters. How will that accountability be secured and what steps will be taken to ensure that the House is fully informed about the agreements and arrangements that are made below ministerial level by the chief executives of the agencies?

The second matter of concern is that, although the Bill facilitates the delegation of certain functions, we are not told exactly what functions may be delegated. A number of functions were mentioned in another place. I believe that arrangements for performance pay and starting salaries of new staff were referred to. It is clear that a large range of functions can be delegated, excluding only pensions and so on.

As the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) said, the Bill opens the way for the break up of the unified civil service. If full advantage is taken of the scope of the Bill, it will result in the break up of the unified civil service. It will lead to a structure whereby different agencies deal with different functions and operate as almost self-sufficient units with different terms and conditions of employment.

That will give rise to regional variation, and to my hon. Friends, my constituents and me that is a very sore point. As the Minister knows, Northern Ireland has the highest unemployment in the United Kingdom. We have a low-wage economy. We are the poorest part of the United Kingdom and, relatively speaking, we have been getting poorer. The Bill opens up an appalling vista. The extent to which we have been relatively disadvantaged under the present Government will now be used as a basis on which to disadvantage us yet further through regional agreements that will reduce the pay of a significant number of people in the public service. That is a matter of very great concern. I ask the Minister to tell the House whether the Government intend to use the Bill as a way of moving towards regional rates of pay. When he has dealt specifically with that, I should like him to address further the question of accountability to ensure that new arrangements for terms and conditions made by persons to whom the Bill enables delegation to be made can be raised and debated in the House.

That brings me to my point of complaint. It relates to clause 3, which authorises legislation for Northern Ireland by negative resolution. As the Minister knows, that means that the Order in Council, which will be the Northern Ireland equivalent of this Bill, will not be debated in the House at all.

Strictly speaking, Mr. Deputy Speaker was very kind to me: the comments that I made earlier about Northern Ireland were not in order, since the Bill does not itself make changes in regard to Northern Ireland. So one is not in a position, strictly speaking, to debate the detailed effect of the Bill, because it does not affect Northern Ireland; it is a question of the Order in Council, which is not only unamendable but undebatable. It is a shoddy way of legislating, and the Minister ought to be ashamed of himself for having any part of it. It degrades the House.

I would have liked to take up some specific matters with regard to Northern Ireland, but obviously the Minister cannot reply. I cannot complain about that, because I know that Northern Ireland Office Ministers had intended to be on the Front Bench this evening but were unavoidably prevented from being here.

8.50 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Given the nature of the Bill before the House, I must declare an interest as parliamentary adviser to the National Union of Civil and Public Servants. Since the Minister looks interested, I ought also to explain to him that the very reasonable fee

[Mr. John McAllion]

that the union pays for my services is donated in its entirety to the Dundee Labour party, so I have no personal gain whatever from my relationship with NUCAPS. I wish that were the case with every hon. Member.

No one on the Opposition Benches has been in the least convinced by the arguments from the Government Benches that this is an inoffensive Bill or simply a technical one with a relatively restricted scope, because it is only one piece of a much larger jigsaw that the Government are steadily putting together—a jigsaw that includes market testing, contractorisation and, as the Minister admitted, full-blown privatisation.

It is important that the House sees the Bill in the context of all these other measures—that it does not simply shrug the Bill through but sees it for what it is: another important step on the road to the privatisation of the civil service. Although the Bill may not say that directly itself, it is part of a move in that direction.

I listened carefully to the Minister when he introduced the debate but he did not really set out the Government's case for bringing the measure forward. If one wants to find out the Government's case, one must look at the record of the debate in the other place, particularly in Committee, when the Government spokesperson explained why the Government believed the Bill to be necessary.

It was explained that there is, for example, no existing statutory authority for transferring functions or responsibilities from Ministers down to heads of Departments or agency chief executives, and that the Bill now creates the statutory authority for that transfer of responsibility and functions to take place.

It was pointed out that the Government had identified a need to delegate selectively, either by function or by Department or indeed by agency. It was explained that so many of these transfers will be taking place in future that the existing transfer of functions orders would be unable to cope, so there was a need for a statutory basis on which transfers could take place.

It was also pointed out in the other place that Ministers' existing discretion partially to pass power down the line does not properly decentralise responsibility, because always in the end there is a need to refer back to the Minister for the Civil Service or to the Treasury; the Bill means that, in the delegated areas, there will now be no need to refer back either to the Minister for the Civil Service or to the Treasury, and the chief executives in agencies and departmental heads will be free to get on with it—free to manage, as the Government describe it, when what they really mean in delegated areas is that they will be free from accountability through Ministers to the House.

There has been some debate over which functions are to be delegated, but according to the Government's own notes on clauses, these are the functions relating to the management of the civil service. The notes on clauses go on to explain that these management functions will now be delegated to the extent, and subject to the conditions, thought appropriate by the Treasury and the Minister for the Civil Service.

The Minister said tonight that powers to determine manpower levels would not be delegated, but we have only his word for that, because the Bill says that they may be delegated to the extent and subject to the conditions which are thought appropriate by the Minister and by the Treasury. So if some Minister in the future decides that it will be appropriate to delegate the determination of manpower levels in the civil service, the Bill will give him the right to do it.

There is no point in Ministers giving us assurances from the Dispatch Box about what they will and will not do; even a paper like the Tory *Daily Telegraph* says that it can no longer take what the Government say at its face value, because there is always a U-turn the next day and the Government do something different from what they said originally.

So it is not good enough to have assurances from the Dispatch Box. If it is not written into the Bill that certain powers cannot be delegated, we must assume that all powers can be delegated if Ministers feel it worth while doing so.

There will be no debate about which functions will be delegated immediately: they relate to recruitment, pay, working hours, holidays and so on. Once responsibility for those areas is delegated, certain consequences are inevitable. The Minister claimed at one point that none of this would change the terms and conditions of civil servants in any way, but those national agreements which have previously been arrived at between Ministers and the civil service unions are now completely undermined. Individual Departments and agencies will be able to vary any condition of service for which a delegated authority exists without the agreement of the Treasury or the civil service unions. That must inevitably affect recruitment, promotion, pay and any other conditions of service outside pensions.

If the Bill becomes law, Ministers are giving themselves the power to tear up national agreements which they have previously reached with the civil service unions.

In the other place, fears were expressed that the Bill was a privatisation measure, and the answer was that this was not so, because the Government had only changed the way in which staff were managed. It was explained that, although the terms and conditions of staff in Departments and agencies might increasingly differ from some abstract civil service norm, they would still remain civil servants. But one can still be a civil servant and work under very different terms and conditions from those one enjoyed previously under a national agreement in a national civil service.

The Government are driving towards the breaking up of the national civil service and agreements arrived at, and ensuring that there is a reduction in pay and conditions for many individuals.

The Minister has said that chief executives and departmental heads have no powers to change the terms outwith normal procedures; he stressed that the normal procedures included the national agreements which made provision for consultation with unions, and he assured us that, before anything changed, the unions would be consulted.

The two Liberal Democrat Members who took part earlier in the debate staged a touching scene between them. One of them asked whether banning the unions was not a scar on the record of the Government. I agree with him that it is, in the way in which they have banned trade unions at GCHQ. But equally, what the Liberal Democrats are supporting in the Bill, along with the Government, undermines trade unions throughout the civil service.

It is not enough to consult trade unions about local agreements; they are national unions, which seek national agreements for all their members wherever they happen to work, and the Bill completely undermines this. So it was a case of crocodile tears by the Liberal Democrats to say how much they cared for trade unions when they support a Bill which undermines the position of the unions in the civil service.

We are also told that the Bill has no direct connection with contracting out. It may have no direct connection, but the indirect connection is obvious. The management of departments and agencies has been delegated down to chief executives. The responsibility for recruitment, appointments and terms and conditions of service has been transferred from Ministers to chief executives. National agreements with trade unions have been torn up. One does not need to be Sherlock Holmes to discover what will happen next because it is already happening in the “next steps” agencies in the civil service.

I will be writing to the Minister about the situation in the Central Office of Information, where the chief executive has recently taken up the market testing initiative. He put the print section office in Lambeth out to tender. Eight bids were received, the lowest from a company called Williams Lea, which was duly awarded the contract. The unions insisted that, under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the acquired rights directive, their members must transfer to the new employer on existing pay and conditions.

The COI took legal advice and had to agree with the trade unions. The new employer was informed, but its reaction was astonishing. The new employer agreed to pay the existing wages and observe the conditions, but only if it was allowed to increase by a significant amount the bid which had won the contract. Even more astonishing was the fact that the chief executive agreed to that proposition, and the company was allowed to up its low bid and add on significant sums to meet the requirements of the European directive on wages and conditions for workers.

That is an absolute scandal. If that sort of thing happened under a local authority, the officials would be sacked and the councillors thrown out of office and surcharged. However, no one is doing anything about the situation in the COI. The chief executives in “next steps” agencies should be subject to even greater parliamentary scrutiny, not less, as will happen under the Bill. That is why it is very important that we consider such matters.

9 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), I am a parliamentary adviser to a civil service trade union. In my case, it is the Inland Revenue Staff Federation. Like my hon. Friend, I derive no personal benefit from that work, but the IRSF contributes to the salary of my secretary at the House of Commons.

I am also a member of the Public Accounts Committee. I was very interested to hear tributes to the work of the National Audit Office from no fewer than four Conservative Members. I wish that they had been present during our debate last week about the work of the PAC. However, they paid handsome tributes this evening to the work of the NAO.

I must make three points, the first of which has already been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett). He reminded the House that the National Audit Act 1983, which created the NAO, was opposed by the Conservative Government. Secondly, I must point out that the NAO is not an agency. The NAO, which has done sterling work in making savings for the taxpayer, is a department of the House and has nothing to do with “next steps” agencies. Finally, the fact that the NAO can point to savings of £2 billion is a measure of the Government’s waste of taxpayers’ money.

The NAO is much less enthusiastic about “next steps” agencies than are some Government supporters. If Conservative Members want proof of that, they need only look at the NAO report on the vehicle inspectorate, the first “next steps” agency, and examine the proceedings of the PAC earlier this year on that subject.

The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) and Government spokesmen have told the House that the Bill does not change pay or conditions for civil servants. Frankly, that is disingenuous. If it is not the purpose of the Bill to change the pay and conditions of civil servants, what is its purpose? The Bill is obviously intended to do that, and that is the reason for delegating the authority to chief executives and other managers in agencies and possibly in Government Departments.

The Minister was anxious to assure the House that the Bill is not concerned with privatisation or market testing. It is not a question of what is in and what is not in the Bill. What is important is what is behind the Bill. What is behind the Bill is the Government’s policy of market testing and privatisation. That is accepted and understood by civil servants.

The Bill is a paving measure for market testing. The Minister said that we can have a debate on a date as yet unknown. He also said that we have already had a day’s debate on the issue in the debates on the Queen’s Speech. He is being disingenuous again. A debate on the Queen’s Speech is a debate about the Government’s policy for the coming year. It is no substitute for a debate on a particular policy, any more than it is a substitute for a Second Reading debate.

I would have expected the Government to arrange a debate in Government time about their policy of market testing before they proceeded with it, but they are proceeding with it anyway. There is already a drive towards market testing without any debate or authority from the House. Only last week *The Times* carried an advertisement inviting tenders for typing, secretarial and office support services in the Inland Revenue. That is happening without hon. Members being given any opportunity to debate the very important policy considerations that are involved in that advertisement. There has been no opportunity to debate the effect on the confidentiality of taxpayers’ records of the privatising of the Inland Revenue’s typing services. Indeed, there has been no opportunity to draw to the attention of the Government the noose into which they are putting their own heads.

I represent Birmingham, Hodge Hill. Adjacent to my constituency is Solihull. There are several Inland Revenue offices in Solihull, including the office where staff do typing for policy reviews, and the office—some of my constituents might be employed there—in which they type press releases in advance of the Budget. If those press releases

[Mr. Terry Davis]

are typed by the employees of private companies, how can the Chancellor of the Exchequer guarantee the total confidentiality that is given to Budget contents?

Not long ago, a Chancellor of the Exchequer was forced to resign as a result of a leak of Budget contents, yet the Government are now going to privatise that essential typing service. I do not think that they realise what they are doing, but they have not given Opposition Members who understand what they are doing an opportunity to tell them before tonight, and it will be too late when they arrange a debate at some unknown date in future.

Mr. Nigel Evans: The hon. Gentleman is saying that if each agency is privatised we will have to watch out for leaks, but in the same breath he says that leaks are already happening. I do not understand.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman is probably too young to remember that, in the 1940s, a Chancellor of the Exchequer gave an inadvertent leak to a journalist which was printed and which led to his resignation. It had nothing to do with civil servants; he was a Member of the House—a Minister. I am drawing attention to the opportunity in future for leaks, because the essential service of typing and secretarial support services will be privatised.

I listened to the contribution from the Liberal Democrats with great interest. I was not aware that their policy of devolution involved breaking up the civil service —by devolution, decentralisation—or that they plan to have local departments of social security, local tax gatherers, local customs and excise, and, no doubt, local rates for VAT. They tell us that it is all going to be local and there will be local pay and conditions to go with it. I must tell the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) that if we have local pay and conditions for civil servants in Devon and Cornwall, experience does not tell us that they will get higher wages; experience tells us that there will be lower wages. The Northern Ireland spokesman, the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), was absolutely right to draw attention to the effect on civil servants in the Province if the Government are allowed to go ahead with the Bill.

The Bill will break up the civil service, as many of my hon. Friends have said. It is designed to ensure not only delegation to departments and chief executive agencies but local pay arrangements. Local pay arrangements will inevitably mean a drive to reduce wages and introduce worse conditions for civil servants not only in Ulster but in Scotland, Wales and the regions of England. It will be a case of driving down the wages at a local level of civil servants who, at the moment, enjoy higher wages as a result of the solidarity and unity that come from being members of a progressive trade union.

The Bill is about doing to clerical jobs in the civil service what the Government have already done to dirty jobs in the health service.

9.7 pm

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): I shall raise several small points, as many major points have been covered by my colleagues. The Minister stressed the difference between policy and strategy on the one hand and implementation on the other hand. Of course, it is not quite so simple as that. Very often, implementation creates policy. Because of new technology, many of the activities of the civil service are essentially footloose and could effectively be located anywhere. I am not sure whether it is intended to delegate to chief officers of agencies the power to decide a location—not necessarily the location of an entire unit, but the balance of staffing between locations.

Hon. Members heard that it is not intended to allow chief executives of agencies to determine staffing levels, but presumably it will be left to them to determine the location of staff. That could run counter to the dispersal policy followed by Governments, although insufficiently vigorously, over the years. It would be helpful to have clarification of the balance to be struck between that policy, regional policy and this new policy.

The Minister said that it was possible for any conditions that the Government saw fit to be imposed on any delegation. To allay the anxieties that we have been assured are unfounded, it would be helpful if the Minister could outline the conditions that he intends to impose on any delegation to agencies. Delegation can be extremely creative and helpful in liberating the talents and abilities of staff.

However, there is a danger that delegation will not liberate. Labour Members are anxious that the Bill is simply a cost-cutting exercise. If terms and conditions are to be addressed, there will be a great temptation simply to seek the cheapest possible alternative. I should like to know whether the Government intend directors of agencies to be genuinely free to strike their own deals. I and many of my hon. Friends have been lobbied today by representatives of the universities, which were under the impression that they were free to strike wage deals with their staff. However, when the universities struck a deal that they could afford they were told by the Government that it was not acceptable. We must be told whether chief executives will have freedom in such circumstances.

I have also been told by some national health service staff in Scotland that if they get trust status they will not be obliged to put services out to competitive tender; they will be able to retain them in-house. Will chief executives of agencies be free to decide not to contract out some elements of their activities? Again, we should have some knowledge of the Government's intention.

The logic of delegating implementation is that chief executives will be free to construct their own reward systems. If they construct their own reward systems, there is an obvious logic in allowing separate cultures to develop. If agencies are allowed to develop their own cultural systems, that will inevitably lead to the break up of the ethos of the civil service.

It is accepted by the Opposition, though the Government seem to be unwilling to accept it, that there is a difference between the ethos of a privatised organisation and that of a centrally directed civil service. I should like to see some changes in the civil service. There is an over-cautious element to the civil service ethos, but the civil service values service above economy. The balance between equity and economy will need to be addressed by the Government and by directors of agencies. At present it is not clear how the Government want that balance to be struck.

Presumably, the Government want to give directors of agencies the power to determine their own structures. That could lead to the abolition of existing hierarchies and systems of promotion. It would diminish the extent to which staff can be transferred between departments and would change the comparability of area-based systems.

Moving to a completely decentralised subcontractual system is an interesting idea. I am not sure whether that move is the Government's intention, but it was certainly suggested by some Conservative Members tonight.

I do not want to give the impression that Opposition Members are dominated solely by the producer interest. I do not believe that the civil service exists simply to employ people, but many people in the civil service are genuinely worried about the future and the direction in which the Government are moving. Creating anxiety is not the best way to encourage good results.

The Government must clarify the extent to which decentralisation and deregulation will go. We are dealing with the potential destruction of a unified civil service. Part of the strength of the civil service is the commonality and shared culture of its members. I seek clarification from the Under-Secretary of State about the extent to which there will be abdication of responsibility, as distinct from decentralisation. I should be keen to hear the shopping list of activities to which the Bill is intended to apply. Until we know that, it is difficult to judge how far the Government intend to take it and how far we ought to react.

Finally, I want clarification of the parameters within which delegation is to be exercised. The difference between delegation and abdication is that the former gives powers downwards, within a clear framework. It is not clear from the Bill what that framework will be and whether there will be any rules. The Chancellor of the Duchy said that he had proposals in mind. I should like to hear what they are.

9.15 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) complained about the absence of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from the Front Bench. I must make it clear that the right hon. Gentleman informed us that he would have to leave early to take part in "Question Time", and I assure the House that the Opposition are delighted that the right hon. Gentleman is representing Conservative party interests on "Question Time" tonight.

Equally, I have no complaints about the fact that the Liberal Benches have been gloriously deserted for some time. I understand that they have gone back to their constituencies to prepare for crucifixion.

Another matter may need to be clarified. There have been references to the Earl Howe, and I could see some puzzled brows as hon. Members wondered whether the dead sheep had made a comeback. The Earl Howe is Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the House of Lords. It is something of a puzzle why the Bill, which impinges on many subjects but not on agriculture and fisheries, should have been in the hands of that Minister. I can only think that it is because he is probably the best-qualified Minister to sell a pig in a poke, or a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster referred to the view taken by Baroness Turner, our colleague in the House of Lords who dealt with the Bill. He shamelessly misrepresented what she said. Our little exchange earlier apart, it is important to put it firmly on the record that she said that she accepted

"that the Bill itself it not a vehicle for privatisation"—

I would put in parentheses, "in itself" but she added:

"we still object to the manner in which . . . it is intended"—

I put the emphasis on the word "is"—

"to hive-off Civil Service functions to the market."

She rightly said that "We"—the Opposition—

"do not believe that . . . the functions will be any better performed—on the contrary."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 29 October 1992; Vol. 539, c. 1299.]

I hope that that puts beyond any doubt what Baroness Turner did and did not say on the matter.

I recommend hon. Members to read the speeches in the Lords by Lord Houghton of Sowerby, whose experience was most impressively brought to bear. I do not think that anyone who reads the debates, or who considers what underlies the legislation, could for one moment accept the dismissive and almost self-deprecating tone of the Chancellor of the Duchy, who told us what a pathetic little measure this is. I do not know whether we were supposed to feel sorry for him because he has been left to mop up legislative trivia, after having been in charge of great affairs of state. When Tories are self-deprecating they are often at their most devious.

What ever else it is, the Bill is not a modest technical measure; it is fundamental to the operation of the civil service and therefore of Government. The Earl Howe—it sounds a bit like an American jazz singer—was rather more lucid in spelling out what the Bill was about. He said:

"But the time is past when it was right, if it ever was, for the Treasury and the Minister for the Civil Service to regulate in detail the personnel arrangements ("—

he probably said "open brackets"—

"pay, grading, recruitment ages and qualifications, holidays, hours of work, appraisal systems and so on) for half-a-million civil servants. This Bill will enable the central departments to delegate that responsibility to others who are, in relation to their individual businesses,"—

"businesses" is an interesting choice of word—

"better placed to take such decisions."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 June 1992; Vol. 538, c. 12.]

Earl Howe was spelling out how, as a result of the Bill, pay, grading and conditions would no longer be negotiated —an important point—far less apply on a national basis, but would be broken down into the individual businesses. There is nothing modest or technical about that move. It is deeply fundamental.

Lord Houghton of Sowerby immediately identified the seriousness of the matter. He said:

"The Government are proposing reforms which are equal in significance and importance to those made over 100 years ago in an entirely opposite direction by Sir Stafford Northcote. That was then the basis: centralisation, uniformity, standardised recruitment, stopping log-rolling and all that kind of thing. The Civil Service has been built on the traditions that were then laid down. Now the Government believe that there is an opportunity, and probably a need in certan ways, to do something drastic in order to try to revitalise, if you like . . . What the Government are doing is so indefinite and imprecise, yet full of potential threats to jobs, that your Lordships' House cannot expect those of us who are deeply concerned with the Civil Service"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 7 July 1992; Vol. 538, c. 1064.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not be quoting from speeches made in the other place other than those of Ministers.

Mr. Wilson: I need not pursue the point. Lord Houghton of Sowerby, with his tremendous experience in this area and as a former holder of the position held by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, recognised the fundamental nature of the Bill and was deeply offended by it. Moreover, he was deeply offended by the fact that a Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, which I understand

[Mr. Wilson]

is historically a non-political position in terms of controversial legislation, should be putting such a measure through.

I find it offensive that a deception should be practised on Parliament by a Minister telling us that something as basic as this is a modest technical measure, a poor little thing of a Bill. It is not. I might accept it if it came from the used-car wing of the Conservative party, because they have no understanding of history or historical precedent within the civil service or of traditions that go back 100 or 150 years, but I do not believe for one moment that the toff wing, represented by the Chancellor, suffers from any such delusions. If he does not suffer from such delusions, what he told the House was an intended deception.

Mr. Waldegrave: That is a little bit out of order and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw it. We can have a perfectly legitimate argument about this, but no one is attempting to deceive anyone else.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman will wish to withdraw that.

Mr. Wilson: I shall, with pleasure, withdraw it. I hope that the Minister and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will find it acceptable if I say that to call it a poor little thing and a modest technical measure is a misrepresentation of the Bill. It is neither of those things.

What problem does the Bill seek to address? Is there some great wave of corruption in the civil service or some terrible ill within it that needs something as drastic and fundamental as this? The Earl Howe told us quite the contrary. He said that there is no political jobbery and that the Civil Service Commissioners ensure that appointments are won on merit. He reassures us about all the standards of the civil service in which all of us would want to believe. Therefore, there is no problem of that nature for the Bill to address.

The problem is to match the "next steps" agency with administrative devolution. Again, none of my hon. Friends finds a great problem with that concept. As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) and others have clearly said, not only do we not oppose fundamentally, but we have had much involvement with and responsibility for, the concept of the devolution of the civil service into agencies and to the whole "next steps" programme.

To achieve administrative devolution, which is what is nominally intended, there is no need to break up the national civil service. We do not have to destroy Whitley council terms of pay and conditions. The reasons for doing that are to fragment, compartmentalise, isolate and break down the civil service into free-standing businesses—the phrase used in the other place—and we know what the next step is from that accomplishment.

The next step is precisely what is happening now at the DVLA in Swansea. Let us not be disingenuous about it. Written on the face of the Bill are the precise consequences that can flow from what is in the measure. It cannot privatise, it cannot contractorise and it cannot of itself produce market testing. But as my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and others rightly pointed out, the Bill is a necessary part of the jigsaw. It is the forerunner of various other measures and the sort of thing that is now happening in Swansea.

Let us examine the Swansea situation. In my experience, relatively limited though it is, I have never seen a document such as the one before us about Swansea. We are used to treachery, to thousands of jobs just being cast aside and to the hidden agendas that result in closure announcements. But the concept of a man who is responsible for the employment of 4,600 people sitting down and putting pencil to paper in such terms is monstrous.

Let us first define the problem that calls for such a draconian solution for the DVLA in Swansea. Above the name and a not very striking photograph of Mr. Stephen Curtis we are told of the success of 1991-92 by the public sector DVLA:

> "We broke new ground by winning the contract to licence small ships against fierce competition from the private sector",

he claims. In a tribute, he goes on:

> "Meeting our customers' needs could not be achieved without the committed efforts of our staff."

They should put that on the walls as a testimonial to their efforts and as an interesting commentary on Mr. Curtis's concept of loyalty.

The document is required reading for this debate and to know what underlies the legislation. Mr. Curtis was then charged with the task of setting out the future framework for the DVLA. It is done with astonishing crudity, even if it was not meant for other eyes. The idea that anyone in that position could write such material and not believe that, even at levels of senior management, people would make sure that it reached the public domain is as naive as it is contemptuous of the people who work in that establishment.

Having outlined the virtues or joys of contractorisation —one of which is that it does not need legislation, as opposed to privatisation—Mr. Curtis concludes:

> "It would therefore be necessary to make most staff at DVLA redundant."

He goes on to give the costs of doing that and adds:

> "In addition to these costs, the Swansea buildings would be likely to become a white elephant."

Mr. Donald Anderson: My hon. Friend might care to ask how a man who so lightly penned such a document, envisaging the destruction of 3,000 jobs, could hope to retain the loyalty of the work force.

Mr. Wilson: My hon. Friend's question is rhetorical. The views of the work force are probably unprintable. I shall not try to describe them.

Mr. Curtis goes on to find that there remains a role for Government, the Secretary of State will be pleased to hear. That role is to pay indemnity money to the contractors for the costs that they would incur in making 3,000-odd people redundant.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Has the hon. Gentleman ever visited the DVLA in Swansea? I come from the area and recall the time when it was the DVLC under a previous Labour Government. In those days, the carpets were stripped out every two years and new carpets put in when they were not needed. The building was decorated when that was not needed. Does the hon. Gentleman know——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief and to the point. They should not be speeches.

Mr. Wilson: I am sorry that we did not hear the end of the story. I am sure that it was good news for the carpet manufacturing industry in its day. The account that the chief executive gave in his foreword to this year's annual report scarcely squares with the horror stories detailed by the hon. Gentleman. I must admit that I have not visited the DVLA, but I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman, who is obviously deeply concerned about those matters, has managed to visit the debate at 9.30 at night. With his interest and awareness, he must have known of the topicality of the Swansea issue, which has been discussed by hon. Members throughout the debate.

The Government are to engage in indemnity for redundancy costs under the programme envisaged by the chief executive of that agency. At this point, we come to the Secretary of State's role as Minister with responsibility for open government. Mr. Curtis, chief executive of the DVLA, has strong views on open government. He says:

> "For the present, while we are considering the issues . . . there is little we could say to unions and staff that would be helpful. Uncertainty . . . is a strong stimulant to unease and industrial action. Also"—

this is classic—

> "given the close links between unions at DVLC and local MPs, it would be likely to lead to Parliamentary Questions and requests to meet Ministers."

Mr. Donald Anderson: Let there be no doubt that there are close links. There must be if we are to guard our people against wishes of people like that chief executive and the dangers that will flow from Government policies.

Mr. Wilson: Again, I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Curtis therefore recommended that the whole exercise should remain confidential. Were it not for some public spirited public servant ensuring that the document did not remain confidential, nobody in the DVLA, the House, the media or south Wales—certainly not the Secretary of State for Wales—would have had any idea what was going on.

The Minister must comment tonight not only on the content of that document, the fate of 3,000 people in Swansea and the whole concept of regional policy as opposed to the privatisation programme. He must comment again on the attitude underlined in the document and the contempt for any apology, for open government or for consultation with those affected. That is what is at stake in the document and the Minister should say tonight, without further consultation or messing about, that the uncertainty for those people and their families' lives and for the south Wales economy should be ended now. The document should be consigned to exactly where it belongs—the bin—and Mr. Curtis should be sent along to put it there in person.

The document is supremely arrogant, written by a man who believes that he is licensed to make such proposals. That is the direct link between the Bill and that document. If those freestanding businesses are established, with the power to negotiate wages and conditions of staff down to the last jot and tittle, and if, as the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) so rightly said, they are entitled to discriminate on a regional basis to achieve the lowest common denominator of wages, we are entitled to believe that they will also have the powers mentioned in the document to close down, strip bare, asset-strip, privatise, and flog off to their friends in the private sector. That is the document's significance in the context of the Bill.

It is not a purely Welsh matter, although it is obviously mainly a Welsh issue, and a deeply important one. I shall not take the time of the House by reading the list of other jobs affected. However, jobs are affected in smaller but significant numbers as follows: 44 in Birmingham, 47 in Chelmsford, 150 in London, 46 in Manchester and about 100 in Scotland. Many other Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency centres throughout the country will be affected. In all those places the duplicity of the chief executive of the DVLA towards his own staff has implications and ramifications.

There have been some good contributions to the debate and some illuminating ones—not least from the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin). He informed us that in a previous parliamentary foray he had been the Tory candidate in Glasgow, Central. It must be a relief for him to have ended up in Colchester, North, where there are 35,213 Tory votes, which must provide a contrast with his last electoral outing.

He was able to be frank on the subject. He said, in a self-effacing way, that we should not be bashful and that the legislation was about privatisation. Of course, the legislation is a move towards privatisation. I read in "Dod" that the hon. Gentleman is indeed as precocious as he sounds—it says that he was born in 1959 and was president of the Cambridge Union in 1962. He has been progressing ever since, via Glasgow, Central.

The hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) made an interesting speech. He rightly said that it was not a technical Bill, but contained something much more substantial. He said that if it meant interfering in the wages, conditions and the reasonable expectations of civil servants, he would object to it. That is to his credit.

I strongly agree with the hon. Member for Upper Bann on both regional pay rates and the treatment of Northern Ireland in the legislation. As a Member with a Scottish constituency, I often take exception to the way that Scottish business is treated in the House, but we are well treated compared with the way in which Northern Ireland legislation is handled, which is a disgrace. As there is a separate Northern Ireland civil service and separate legislation, for the issue to be lumped in a clause in the Bill without any opportunity to debate it is wrong. That is no way to treat the jobs, careers and structure of government in Northern Ireland.

We shall oppose the Bill, although not tonight, as we shall give the Government the opportunity to answer some of our objections to it. We shall work on it in Committee and explore not merely what is on the face of the Bill, but what underlies it. If no improvements have been made by Third Reading, we shall oppose it.

I think it fair to ask the Minister to deal specifically, firmly and in plain language with the points raised about Swansea. That is a fair request in the light of the importance of the subject in today's deliberations. On top of everything else that is happening in this country, the idea of holding the axe over the heads of such a large number of people in a part of the country that has suffered so much economic recession, depression and loss of jobs is intolerable. The document is in the public domain and the Minister has the opportunity tonight to say that it has, and will have, no standing in Government eyes.

9.38 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): It is not often that the House has the opportunity to debate the civil service, and today we have had a vigorous and wide-ranging debate. On behalf of the Government, I am grateful for that, and I shall try to respond as briefly as possible to the wide range of issues raised by colleagues.

It has emerged clearly from the debate that there is common ground on our commitment to an effective and efficient civil service. We all believe that to be of great importance. We all stand on the constitutional ground —the need for a professional civil service serving all Governments with the same dedication. That is fundamental to the British system of administration, and experience of other countries and other times shows that we cannot take it for granted. The Government, like all parties in the House, are wholly committed to continuing that tradition. I welcome the words of my hon. Friends the Members for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) and for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) in support of that commitment and I congratulate them both on their excellent speeches.

We cannot and must not be complacent about the civil service, however. It employs a great many people and costs a lot of money. That is a simple matter of fact, not a criticism. Provision for the civil service in 1992-93 was about £19·4 billion. It is the duty of the Government and this House—through, for instance, the Public Accounts Committee, and I see the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) in his place—to ensure that we get the best possible value for money from this expenditure and the best possible quality of service for our constituents who use the services provided by the public service.

I should like to take this opportunity, since I have been given the information, to answer the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) about forms. His question was perhaps rhetorical, but I have the answer: the total number of forms in the main Departments in 1989 was 86,982. That sounds an awful lot, but there was a reduction of 36,004 between 1982 and 1989, so a great deal has been achieved. Nevertheless, we are still an active and perhaps sometimes intrusive organisation.

The Government have a clear agenda for the public service. There is certainly no hidden agenda for public service reform. The Chancellor of the Duchy gave a full explanation of the Bill in his speech. The Government are just as open on other matters—on our view of "next steps", on the citizens charter, on market testing, and on contracting out. It is the worst-hidden agenda in history. The Opposition may not like some of the ideas that we propose, but they are being broadcast loud and clear.

Some reference was made to my right hon. Friend's speech to *The Sunday Times* conference. It offered a clear exposition of the Government's policy, but the Bill has nothing to do with privatisation or contracting out. It is about delegation within the public service, not outside it. It builds on the great success of the "next steps" initiative, which has enjoyed welcome bipartisan support.

I was delighted, as was the whole House, to learn of the claim to authorship of the "next steps" concept by the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett). He certainly seems to have used the language before anyone else. We have had good reports from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. In addition, I should like to quote the words of the Leader of the Opposition, delivered when he was shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer. I am grateful to the hon. Members for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) and for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) for reinforcing what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said at that time. He said that it is

"obviously very much in the public interest that"

the delivery of public services

"is carried out with the greatest efficiency and effectiveness".

Next comes an important sentence, the truth of which I am glad that the hon. Member for Govan acknowledged again today:

> "It should certainly be our priority to ensure that services are run in the interests of consumers and that any injection of public resources results in a commensurate improvement in the service to the customer".

That stress on the importance of the customer is fundamental, and it is good to hear that it is common ground.

In the same speech, the Leader of the Opposition talked about continuing with "next steps":

> "I do not think there would be merit in a new Government seeking to uproot all the plants in the garden . . . and then expect them to grow well"—

so the Opposition endorse the "next steps" agency concept.

I think that the House recognises the limited scope of this Bill. It was explicitly affirmed by the hon. Member for Norwich, South, who has told me that he could not stay for the wind-up speeches. He speaks with great experience of these matters, and this is indeed a Bill of limited scope, as was recognised in the other place.

Our position on market testing and contracting out is controversial, but it is accepted that this Bill is a technical measure with no direct impact on such policies. I hope and believe that good management is not a partisan issue.

The hon. Members for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) and for Truro (Mr. Taylor) spoke about consultation with staff on the Bill. They exaggerated the importance of what did or did not happen. However, in retrospect we regret that we did not discuss the Bill more fully with staff before it was introduced in the other place. In mitigation, may I say that we have always seen the Bill as highly technical and limited, although I think that in retrospect we underestimated the scope for misunderstanding.

I emphasise that strong steps have been taken and that we have frequent and exhaustive consultation on the matter. There have been detailed written replies to twenty-two questions asked by the unions. There were two long, late-night meetings in the interval between Second Reading and Committee in the other place, and another high-level meeting in the interval between Committee and Report. We have provided additional written information to the unions, a further meeting is planned on 13 November, and officials have responded to every point raised by the unions, which have recognised and appreciated the steps that we have taken.

Before dealing with larger questions about pay discretions and accountability, I should like to deal with the matter of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. We all respect the constituency concern of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and it was appropriate that he should raise the matter. I repeat what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy said—that all possible options for the future of the DVLA have to be examined as a normal part of reviewing its framework document, which expires in April 1993. The trade unions will be invited to give their views on the matter. It is worth bearing in mind—this is perhaps a new point—that a similar process was undertaken before the DVLA became an agency and the current framework document, with all that it implies, was agreed. No decision has been taken; consultation will, of course, take place before any decisions are made; and local employment conditions will naturally be a relevant consideration in reaching decisions.

Mr. Donald Anderson: This is not an academic exercise because in the document the chief executive advocates, in effect, the closure of the centre with the loss of about 3,000 jobs. To avoid uncertainty and anxiety, will the Minister give a clear undertaking that the chief executive's conclusion will not be implemented and that those jobs will remain at the centre in Swansea?

Mr. Jackson: It is appropriate for the Government and the agency to look at all the possible options for its future. Any anxiety and distress is attributable to those who leaked the document. It is perfectly appropriate for such matters to be considered and it is right that they should be considered confidentially until it is appropriate for people to be consulted about the proposals.

Mr. Wilson: It is rather sad that the Minister blames the people who leaked the document rather than the person who wrote it. Has he any comment about the person who wrote it and, more particularly, about the terms in which it was written? Will he address the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea East (Mr. Anderson) that the document is not a neutral appraisal but contains a degree of advocacy, that it is deeply disturbing and that it casts a shadow over the jobs? Does the Minister feel any responsibility to give any reassurance to the thousands of families in south Wales who are deeply worried?

Mr. Jackson: It is appropriate that there should be a careful look at all possible options for the future of the DVLA and other organisations. I repeat assurances that my right hon. Friend and I have given, that no decisions have yet been taken, that consultations will take place before any decisions are made, and that local employment will be a relevant consideration in reaching decisions.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Minister understand that those of us on the Public Accounts Committee understand that the new London police computer will be programmed in either the Philippines or Indonesia because it is much cheaper to do it that way? We are not debating options, but the removal of huge sections of civil service work to countries where there is cheap labour. That is not just a qualitative but a quantitative change in the amount of available work.

Mr. Jackson: I must press on. I cannot comment on what the hon. Gentleman has said, because I am not informed about it, but I feel that he should bear in mind the importance of achieving a balance between value for the taxpayer's money and the effectiveness of the service.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) raised a point about the use of the negative resolution procedure. The orders in question will be used as a technical and enabling measure, like the Bill itself. In itself, the procedure will have no direct effect on the terms and conditions of staff. The principles will be discussed fully during the Bill's passage, and the orders must conform to the powers contained in the Bill. The operation of all delegations which take place in Northern Ireland will be subject to consultation with the relevant staff interests.

Pay discretions have been a central issue, raised by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), for Norwich, South, for Warrington, North and for Redcar. All of them supposed that the Bill would make a difference to the pay and conditions of staff. Let me tell them—and the hon. Member for Hodge Hill, who spoke especially strongly—that the Bill is not needed to implement discretions on pay, a number of which are already in place. What it allows is the formal delegation of authority to determine pay.

It has long been Government policy to give Departments and agencies more responsibility for pay when that is cost-effective. My hon. Friends the Members for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) and for Surrey, East were especially strong on that point, and stated the underlying philosophy very well. The Bill will not affect the rate at which the process takes place.

The hon. Member for Warrington, North was wrong in what he said about the position of the trade unions under the new arrangements. All the new long-term pay agreements that are concluded with the civil service unions contain provisions for consultation and negotiation on the introduction of alternative pay arrangements, and those arrangements will continue under delegation.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jackson: I will, but I am running out of time.

Mr. Hoyle: I interrupt the Minister only because he referred to something that I said. Is he now saying that the conditions negotiated centrally under Whitley will continue?

Mr. Jackson: I am saying that national agreements will continue in force, but some of those agreements already provide for local negotiations between the agency chief executives and the trade unions. Many terms and conditions are not subject to national agreements at all. That has long been the case, and I think that it must be right to ensure that the details of pay and conditions fit the needs of what have been described as businesses—that is, I think, appropriate language for what are often very business-like organisations—and enable them to deliver services effectively to users, while providing value for money.

Staff are already aware at all times of who settles terms and conditions. That is already done with discretions, and it will be the same with delegations. At national level, we shall inform the unions of proposed delegations and give them an opportunity to comment; at local level, we shall consult departmental trade unions on the use of any delegated power to change terms and conditions. Nothing in the Bill will directly affect the terms and conditions of civil servants. Delegating has no effect on the legal rights of staff or, indeed, on the normal processes of consultation. This is a Bill that enables, not a Bill that determines.

Let me deal briefly with the issue of market testing which, although it is not directly raised by the Bill, has been raised by a number of hon. Members. Market testing is outside the scope of the Bill, but we do not see it as an ogre sent to destroy the civil service, as some Opposition

[Mr. Jackson]

Members seem to—at least, that is what their language implied. It is part of the Government's duty to ensure that the citizen and the taxpayer receive the best value for money, and the highest quality of service. That need not be a partisan point, and I am sorry that it has to an extent become one today.

I quote from a speech made by Councillor Jeremy Beecham, the Labour leader of Newcastle city council. This is what he said about the experience of market testing and compulsory competitive tendering in local government:

> "The purchaser-provider split and the development of service level agreements between the provider of central services within authorities and client departments have caused a re-examination of performance, with generally beneficial results."

He said in the same speech:

> "Local government has to recognise that the public is not intrinsically interested in who is providing a service but in what kind of service they receive."

Those are very wise words from the leader of Newcastle city council. They are in the spirit of what was said by the Leader of the Opposition in his Royal Institute of Public Administration lecture about the importance of always maintaining a clear eye on the consumer-customer perspective. Those points were well made by those people and also by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North.

The question of accountability has been an important theme in this debate. It was raised especially by the hon. Members for Redcar, for Norwich, South, for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and for Upper Bann.

I think that the hon. Member for Redcar slightly misunderstood the position. For the "next steps" agencies there are two channels of accountability. First, there is the channel of the agency chief executive to the Minister and, through the Minister, to the House of Commons. I have direct personal experience of that from my previous job in the Department of Employment, where I was the Minister responsible for the Employment Service. I very often met hon. Members from all parts of the House to talk about the business of the Employment Service and to exercise that parliamentary accountability for the activities of the service. The other channel is that of the accounting officer —where appropriate, the agency chief executive—to the Public Accounts Committee.

The hon. Lady seemed to think—perhaps I misunderstood her—that the effect of these developments is that only the latter channel remains. That is not correct; both channels will remain. On the broad issue of accountability, I believe—I speak with some personal experience in this —that the "next steps" agency programme will help to enhance accountability. That point was well recognised by the hon. Member for Truro, speaking from the Liberal Benches.

The hon. Member for Norwich, South evoked—but did not, I think, support—the old monolithic concept of the civil service: the idea of a uniform, unified organisation employing hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of people all on the same pay and conditions arrangements, with strong central control driven on the one hand by the Treasury and on the other by the idea of the accountability of Ministers to Parliament for everything, including, in Bevan's words, the fall of the bedpan in the hospital.

We are bringing forward a new concept of public service which I think is generally supported. The hon. Member for Truro was speaking in that sense. That concept recognises the diverse nature of the many functions—the many businesses—which exist within the civil service, breaking those down into functional units, delegating responsibility as close as possible to the customer and enabling relocation to take place. That point was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West, and the hon. Member for Govan. Delegation, to answer the latter's specific point, tends to lead to relocation. Delegation of responsibilities, bringing things closer to the public and then setting the relationship between the centre and the agencies within the terms of a contract, a framework agreement, monitoring, annual reports to Parliament, I believe will in practice strengthen the accountability to the House of those institutions and organisations in the civil service.

The hon. Member for Truro raised a point about the boundary between policy matters and operational matters and I want to take up the specific details of what he said. There has been some debate about whether the shift from the monolithic concept to the devolved concept constitutes the break up of the civil service. Many hon. Members stressed this point. To pick up the phrase used by the hon. Member for Norwich, South, I do not believe that the civil service identity depends upon uniformity of pay and conditions across the whole of the service. The hon. Member for Truro said some sensible things about that. The hon. Member for Swansea, East, on the contrary, used some rather over-heated language. It is not merely a uniform set of terms and conditions of service which defines the civil service. The civil service is bound together by the nature of its work in support of the Government of the day and by professional and behavioural standards and duties which derive from the nature of its business as a Crown service. Nothing in the Bill detracts from that fact. The guiding principle is ministerial accountability to Parliament, and that remains. We shall, of course, publish details of delegation for the benefit of the House.

We have had a useful debate, which has afforded us a rare opportunity to consider the future of the civil service. I hope that there will be further opportunities. The Bill is a technical enabling measure and, although there may continue to be differences of opinion about the broad question of the future of the civil service, I believe that there is, and should continue to be, common ground as regards the details of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Unemployment (Jarrow)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I am grateful for this opportunity to draw the attention of the House to the intolerably high unemployment in my constituency, which is getting worse daily.

I was born and bred in Jarrow and have lived there all my life, and I am proud to represent that constituency. As I said in my maiden speech in 1979, Jarrow is a proud constituency, populated by honest, hard-working people: miners, not millionaires; shipbuilders, not shipowners; builders, not bankers; and engineers, not racketeers.

It is 56 years almost to the day since 200 proud men and Ellen Wilkinson, our then Member of Parliament, left Jarrow to go on their historic crusade to London demanding the right to work. I was born—and later educated at an elementary school—within 200 yd of the start of that march. Those men marched to London not for an extra slice of bread or bowl of soup but for the right to work and the dignity of a pay packet. If one good thing has come of the savage cuts in the mining industry, it is that it has focused the nation's attention on the plight of the unemployed—as the Jarrow march did in 1936.

The town of Jarrow was destroyed. Ellen Wilkinson wrote a book entitled "The town that was murdered". Such is the scourge of unemployment in Britain that people throughout the country could write similar books about their own communities. Month after month, we hear of increases in the unemployment figures, and it makes my blood boil when Ministers shed crocodile tears at the Dispatch Box.

I speak with some knowledge about unemployment. I have been unemployed on numerous occasions. I have had to stand in a queue at Victoria road, Hebburn, and sign the book with a one and a half inch pencil tied to a 2 ft piece of string so that no one could steal it. I have known the indignity of being on the dole, and I get very annoyed when I hear statements from the now discredited Chancellor of the Exchequer to the effect that unemployment is "a price worth paying". The Government just do not know how unemployed people feel. They do not know what misery they are causing.

Since 1979, the last pit in my constituency has closed. The last coking works have closed at Monkton and Hebburn. The last steelworks has closed in Jarrow. The last shipyard and ship repair yard has closed, and on the site of the shipyard where my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) and I were chairman and secretary of the shop stewards committee there is now a housing estate. The biggest dry dock on the east coast of England—Palmers dock in Hebburn—lies dormant.

Many of the miners in my constituency who have finished work at Boldon colliery and Monkton coking works have transferred to Westoe and Wearmouth, where the pits are now threatened with closure.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): Is my hon. Friend aware that, for all the assurances given by the President of the Board of Trade to the House and for all the evidence given to the Select Committee by the chairman of British Coal, British Coal is today dismantling the winding apparatus at the colliery where the coal-raising shaft for Vane Tempest is situated? By subterfuge and deceit, it is working towards the inevitable closure of Vane Tempest and the sacking of 900 workers, many of whom no doubt come from my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Dixon: I fully endorse the comments of my hon. Friend, and I wish to refer to that later in my speech. Incidentally, Madam Speaker, although I forgot, I had every intention at the beginning of my speech, since this is the first opportunity I have had since you were elected Speaker of the House, of congratulating you. You know how pleased I was when you were given that position, but this is the first time that I have spoken in the House since then.

I would also like to talk about shipyard workers. Many of them who worked in Jarrow and Hebburn were transferred to Swan Hunter. What has happened now? Swan Hunter is going to shed 1,400 jobs. During the Falklands dispute, workers in the shipyards on the River Tyne toiled around the clock to get the task force finished. But as soon as the Falklands dispute was finished, they were finished too.

It is a repeat of what happened in 1936 after the Jarrow march. My father worked in Palmers yard at Jarrow. He was paid off, sacked in 1934 when the yard was closed and did not get another job until the second world war, when he was taken back into the shipyard. Then men were fined if they did not work overtime. That is the sort of situation that the workers on the Tyne feel prevails today.

If the Government do not assist the shipyards, there will be no shipbuilding industry in this country. I hope that the Minister will take note of the representations being made by my hon. Friends the Members for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), who are to meet him next week. I hope that the Government will place that order for the helicopter landing ship as early as possible and perhaps save some of those shipyard workers' jobs.

It is rather a coincidence—the Minister kindly reminded me of this before the debate—that six years ago I had an Adjournment debate on this very night, when it was the 50th anniversary of the Jarrow march. I referred then to the shipyard workers and suggested that orders for the type 23 and the second AOR should be placed at Swan's as early as possible.

For the first time in living memory, no ships are being built on the south side of the River Tyne. We are the only maritime nation in the world that has no maritime policy, and the way things are going, we will be the only island nation in the world that has no shipbuilding industry.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I represent an adjoining constituency which is very similar to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon). We now have no shipbuilding industry whatever in Sunderland, North. The remaining colliery, which my hon. Friend referred to earlier, is now the largest employer in the constituency, and it is under threat. The situation in the north-east, as I am sure the whole House is aware, is the worst in mainland Britain. If Wearmouth colliery closes, the largest employer in Sunderland, North will be the police station. That is the way things are.

I am quite sure that my hon. Friend will agree with me that what we are looking for is not various development agencies or fine words from Ministers. We would like the President of the Board of Trade to tell us in the north-east

[Mr. Bill Etherington]

that he will bring forward policies which will take us back to the prosperity that we had in 1979, when the present Government inherited a good area in the north-east, which they have completely destroyed.

I find it appalling that all we keep being told is that we are going to be given small amounts of money through various development agencies which are doing nothing whatever to improve the situation in the north-east in the context of a failed national policy.

Mr. Dixon: I fully endorse the comments of my hon. Friend. Indeed, I worked at Pickersgills, Bartons and Thompsons, and the other yards that are no longer there. There is no shipbuilding at all in the Sunderland area. Not only are no ships being built on the south bank of the River Tyne, but if Westoe, Wearmouth, Easington and Vane Tempest collieries were to be closed, for the first time in history there will be no coal mined in county Durham. That is the situation today.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): My hon. Friend will recall that people from Jarrow and throughout the Durham coalfield travelled south to Mansfield and the area that I represent. As a result of the Government's latest announcement, thousands of them face redundancy and losing their homes once again. Will my hon. Friend address that point and the fact that those people will have to move again to find work, when there are more than 3 million unemployed people in Britain?

Mr. Dixon: I will address that point if there are no more interventions. I agree with my hon. Friend. The experience in Ellen Wilkinson's famous book, "The town that was murdered" can be repeated throughout the country.

Almost 5,000 men and women are out of work in Jarrow at the moment. That is 22 per cent., but percentages do not count. Someone who is out of work is 100 per cent. unemployed. Percentages make no difference to people who are on the dole. South Tyneside district comprises my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). More than 1[illegible],200 men and women are out of work in that area, and to that we can add another 3,750 who have been removed from the official unemployment count by the Government's massaging of the unemployment figures. The unemployment figure in south Tyneside is more than 25 per cent.

Westoe colliery, which is threatened with closure in South Shields, is the fourth largest employer on south Tyneside. If it closes, 1,200 more men will be thrown on to the unemployment register. If we add that figure to jobs in related industries, we are talking about more than 2,000 more people being made unemployed. Of those who are out of work, almost one third have been out of work for more than 12 months. That is the size of the problem in our area.

On Saturday 24 October, I attended a conference called "Working together against unemployment in Jarrow", organised by Roy Morrin and the Churches of Jarrow. Each of the major denominations in the town was well represented, along with Dr. David Jenkins, the Bishop of Durham, the Rev. John Nicholson, the Baptist Union's area superintendent, and Bishop Ambrose Griffiths of the Hexham and Newcastle diocese of the Roman Catholic Church.

During that conference, four unemployed people gave personal testimony to show how unemployment was affecting them. They all spoke of the growing sense of isolation, loss of self-confidence and inability to make choices in many aspects of their daily lives. Two of them told of how they had become so depressed at being without paid employment that they required hospital treatment. Two also spoke of their feelings of guilt and frustration at having to sponge off members of their family for basic necessities of life.

Another contribution was made by a woman whose shipyard worker husband experienced regular bouts of unemployment. Even in the shipyards that are working at the moment, men are often made redundant for periods. She told how the uncertainty of her situation had created budgetary problems which caused tensions in the family.

The contributions of those five people had a moving effect on the conference. I only wish that a Minister had been present to hear them speak. Those people know what it is like to be out of work. If a Minister had been present, we might not hear nonsensical statements about unemployment being a price worth paying. Similarly, we would not hear Lord Tebbit talking about people getting on their bikes. The Government should be aware that the young and active get on their bikes to look for work. They do not take with them the parks, libraries, community centres and old people's homes. They are left behind, and there is an imbalance in the population.

Half the population of the borough of South Tyneside is wholly or mainly dependent on welfare benefits. Forty-one thousand poll tax payers qualify for rebates. There is serious disability in 15,000 households where attendance allowances or serious disability allowances are received. There are thousands on the disabled registers at jobcentres. There are 5,000 people on the long-term sick register. There are 11,000 widows, and 22,000 people are claiming income benefit. Approximately 2,000 families receive family income supplement. One third of the children on the school rolls receive free meals. Those are the people the Government hit when they talk about public expenditure cuts. Those people have nothing at the moment, and they must rely on state benefits. It is about time the Government realised that.

I do not want to be too critical. The Minister has drawn the short straw in having to reply to a debate on unemployment. I honestly believe that the best long-term policy would have been for a few more Conservative Members to vote with us on the confidence motion last night, followed by a general election in a month, and a Government who will deal with unemployment. However, that did not happen. Many Conservative Members chickened out and we are left with the present Government. The Liberal Democrat Benches are as full tonight as they usually are for such debates.

I shall give the Minister some short-term measures to provide immediate help for my constituents. I have discussed this matter with the leader of South Tyneside council, Councillor Albert Elliott, and the deputy leader, Councillor Stephen Hepburn. In South Shields, there is a business enterprise zone, and it has to be replaced. Tedco presently operates a 140-unit business enterprise centre in South Shields. More than 50 firms currently occupy 122 units on the site and employ about 200 people. The freehold of the premises was sold by Plessey to Interconnection Systems Ltd. in 1991. ISL is the most successful manufacturer of printed circuit boards in the United Kingdom. That shows how shipyard workers can be retrained for that industry.

To meet ISL's expansion plans, it requires the rest of the site which at present is occupied by Tedco. To facilitate that extension and the possible creation of 300 jobs, Tedco has applied for Department of Trade and Industry assistance to build a new business enterprise centre on a 4·5 acre site at the Viking industrial park in Jarrow. The new 5,000 sq ft centre will include 111 managed workshop units and space for Tedco's support and training activities, and will create another 150 jobs on top of the 200 that would be transferred from South Shields.

The Government could give resources to a business development programme which would identify job opportunities and retention within the existing business community. The Government could introduce enterprise status for the Boldon business park, which is where Boldon colliery used to be, a highly successful park which is capable of development, and also for the Monkton site of the now derelict cokeworks which requires reclamation. That could be made into an enterprise zone to attract jobs and workshops. The Government could give resources to the Viking industrial park on the site of the old Jarrow steelworks along the riverside.

The Government could give assistance to the community-based training enterprise network, which would deal with long-term unemployment. That would follow the example of the Low Simonside initiative, but it would be a mobile service. It would be aimed at providing advice and assistance for the long-term unemployed such as mature adults who have not worked since the shipyards and steelworks closed during the early 1980s. It would assist women who gave up employment after marriage and might wish to rejoin the work force. It would provide assistance to youngsters who have never experienced a working environment. Those groups require assistance.

The final and simplest way in which the Government can assist in the short term relates to housing. Hundreds of construction workers in south Tyneside do not have jobs. The council has 9,741 applicants on the housing waiting list and 4,600 on the housing transfer list. It has £22 million in the bank from the sale of council houses.

House building is the most labour-intensive industry. We have the need—thousands of people waiting for houses and thousands of people wanting to be transferred to other houses, £22 million in the bank, and hundreds of people unemployed. The simple solution is to allow the council to spend the money, let construction workers go back to work, and let people go into the houses that they require. It does not take a mathematical genius to work that out. There are people in the Cabinet who can split an atom but cannot boil a kettle.

When I was chairman of South Tyneside housing committee, we were building 800 houses a year. This year, the council is building none. Council house building has been brought to a halt. The only houses that are being built are a couple of bungalows, and they are being built by apprentices. When I was chairman of the housing committee in 1979, the housing investment programme allocation was £30 million in 1992 values. This year it is £5 million, which is one sixth of what was allocated for building and modernising council houses in 1979.

I shall conclude now, because I want to give the Minister the opportunity to answer the points that I and my hon. Friends made. My hon. Friends the Members for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), for Easington (Mr. Cummings), for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) and for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) have been present for the debate, and it is good to see them here. I hope that the Minister will be as constructive as I have been in the points that I have made in this Adjournment debate.

10.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I congratulate the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) on securing this debate. He rightly pointed out that six years ago to the very night, 5 November 1986, he opened an Adjournment debate on the same subject and made the same points that he made tonight. I should like to remind him of a few points that he made in that debate. He looked forward to the possibility of a general election. Things do not change too much. On that occasion he said:

> "The first opportunity to go to the polls after the Jarrow crusade of 1936 was in 1945, when a Labour Government were swept in with an overwhelming majority. It is to be hoped that after the 1986 march, when we go to the polls next year or the year after, the people will do the same as in 1945."—*[Official Report*, 5 November 1986; Vol. 103, c. 1061.]

We have had two general elections since then. Tonight the hon. Gentleman looked forward to another general election. If there is another general election in the next few years the result will be the same as that of the previous two general elections. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will yet again receive the overwhelming endorsement of the British people.

Mr. Dixon: Not in Jarrow.

Mr McLoughlin: Perhaps not in Jarrow. I accept that that might be hoping for a little too much, but I assure the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends that we would put up a spirited fight.

I may not have time to respond to all the points that hon. Members made. The hon. Member for Jarrow obviously commanded the support of his colleagues in his speech. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman in due course about any points that I do not have a chance to cover tonight. As he rightly pointed out, there will be a meeting next week between my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy and representatives from the local community. Some of the points raised tonight will be addressed at that meeting.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the town of Jarrow has been associated with high levels of unemployment. The Government accept that unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and in the south Tyneside travel-to-work area is higher than any of us would wish. I am especially conscious that for too many years south Tyneside has been in the unenviable position of having the highest or near-highest unemployment rate in Great Britain.

However, without wishing to minimise the problem, I note that, despite the increases in unemployment that have occurred generally since the early 1990s, there are 3,000 fewer unemployed people in Jarrow constituency than there were six years ago to the night, when the hon. Gentleman last raised the issue on the Adjournment. It is also noteworthy that the northern region as a whole has shown remarkable resilience in the current recession, with

[Mr McLoughlin]

unemployment having risen by about 33 per cent. compared with 78 per cent. in the United Kingdom nationally.

Rises in unemployment are of course regrettable, but long-term job security depends on success in controlling inflation. Had interest rates not risen when they did, and had the Government allowed inflation to rip, that would have been far more damaging to jobs in the long run. Our success in controlling inflation and interest rates—both now at their lowest since 1988—is a prelude to a resumption of soundly based, non-inflationary growth and a revival of employment prospects.

We can all fully understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about the possible closure of Westoe pit and other collieries. I am sure that, like the other 20 pits subject to the full Government review, its future will be examined meticulously against the background of energy policy generally.

The hon. Member has referred to an action plan in response to the closure of Westoe colliery, which I understand has been drawn up by the South Tyneside Regeneration Group. I congratulate the group on reacting so quickly to the possible closures, which I stress again are subject to the review announced by the Government.

The plan contains some interesting proposals, including, as the hon. Gentleman outlined, some relating to training and involving Tyneside training and enterprise council, and I understand that Tyneside TEC is closely associated with the regeneration group. As the hon. Member may be aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has asked all the TECs covering areas that might experience pit closures, including Tyneside TEC, to draw up contingency plans. Those plans are to be based on a package of special measures and extra resources, which I shall outline later.

I am sure that the training proposals in the regeneration group's plan will be taken on board by the TEC in its contingency plan for the area, and will in due course be considered sympathetically by my Department, when all the contingency plans in other areas involved are considered.

The regeneration group's plan also contains some proposals outside the responsibility of my Department, including a possible business centre, an enterprise zone, and recommendations for clearing derelict land. All those seem to be very practical suggestions, and I know that such initiatives have played a valuable part in regenerating other areas of industrial decline. I am sure that the Departments of Trade and Industry and of the Environment will give the regeneration group's proposals careful consideration in the context of the measures announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

It would not be proper for me to speculate on the outcome of the energies review. However, in case at the end of the day Westoe colliery is scheduled for closure, the hon. Member will be interested to hear about the contingency measures that have been put in place by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

In the case of closure, all unemployed people in targeted areas, to be defined by the TECs, will be eligible for a full assessment of the options open to them and of the help they need; those assessments will be of up to five days per individual. Every unemployed person in the targeted areas will also be given immediate priority access to a range of help, including employment training; support in setting up their own business; temporary work; participation in voluntary activities; job clubs; travel-to-interview grants and, where appropriate, removal costs. For young people in the affected areas there will be a guarantee of the continuation of apprenticeships and of youth training programmes.

My right hon. Friend recently met the chairmen of the TECs covering the coal closure areas and, as I mentioned earlier, has asked them to prepare contingency plans for each of their areas, incorporating the employment and training measures I have just outlined. The TECs concerned, including Tyneside TEC, are drawing up such plans, in collaboration with British Coal Enterprise, the Employment Service, the local authorities and other local agencies and voluntary groups. Up to £75 million in this financial year and the next will be made available to the TECs for the implementation of these plans, should they be needed.

I thought it proper to outline in some detail the steps taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, but I must also mention, if only briefly, the important measures to help regenerate the coal closure areas announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. Those include enhanced assisted-area status for some areas, possible enterprise zones, and provision of premises and infrastructure. Some of those measures were outlined and requested by the hon. Gentleman. There is obviously a determination to consider those proposals.

I recognise that any closure would not have an impact simply on those losing their jobs, or even just on their families, but would affect the whole community. That is why both my right hon. Friends have laid great stress on the importance of all the agencies in the local areas concerned being actively involved and working together.

Despite the high level of unemployment in the area, and the possibility of the closure of Westoe, it would be wrong to assume that it is all doom and gloom in the south Tyneside area—far from it. As I am sure the hon. Member is well aware, there are many successful companies in the area, making a wide variety of products.

Inward investment has also been attracted from the far east. A substantial amount has ended up in the south Tyneside area.

Recent good news includes the winning of contracts by NEI for the construction of a network of 13 electricity substations in Malaysia, and for the complete design-and-build responsibility for a major sub-station in Cardiff. Over the past year this company has won orders in excess of £65 million.

Last month Press Offshore purchased the Mercantile docks in the hon. Member's constituency. The company intends to use the site to build units for the offshore industry and 100 local jobs should be created at about the turn of the year.

I should also like to highlight the work of the Tyne and Wear development corporation in bringing new investment to the area; and since its designation in 1987 it has invested some £31 million in south Tyneside. Two of the corporation's major projects are the Viking industrial park in Jarrow, which has long-term potential for 1,500 jobs.

The matters that I have outlined show movement in the right direction. I will not have time to cover the other points.

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 6 November 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BCCI (Bingham Report)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

[Relevant documents: The Second Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 26 of Session 1991-92) and the Fourth Report from the Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 177 of Session 1991-92) on Banking Supervision and BCCI, together with the responses of the Government and the Bank of England thereto (Third Special Report, House of Commons Paper No. 302 of Session 1991-92; First Special Report, House of Commons Paper No. 178 of Session 1992-93; Second Special Report, House of Commons Paper No. 248 of Session 1992-93) and the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee on 4th November (House of Commons Paper No. 250-i.]

9.34 am

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): This debate fulfils the pledge made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that there would be an early opportunity for the Bingham report to be debated in the House and for hon. Members to have the chance to express their views.

In introducing the debate, I intend to summarise the main themes of the report and to set out the proposals of the Government and the Bank of England in response to the main recommendations. I shall put those changes in the context of what is happening in Europe and internationally on banking supervision, and respond to the reports of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. I also intend to highlight the important issue of compensation, which is of concern to many hon. Members and their constituents.

Sir Thomas Bingham's report on the supervision of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International was published on 22 October. It represents the conclusion of an inquiry into the largest and most wide-ranging fraud in the history of banking. Billons of dollars were involved in a series of financial crimes, deceptions and malpractices that extended over many years and touched the lives of tens of thousands of depositors in more than 60 countries. Those frauds, and the calculating and cynical men who devised and directed them, were responsible for bringing hardship into the lives of many innocent and hard-working people who trusted BCCI with their savings. I know that many hon. Members have constituents who have suffered in that way, and I am sure that we all condemn the individuals whose greed and callousness has led to such widespread distress.

The report is the outcome of an inquiry into the supervision of BCCI, not into the bank itself. The inquiry lasted for just over a year and involved taking written and oral evidence from more than 200 witnesses. Among those witnesses were current and former Ministers, hon. Members, officials of Government Departments, including the Treasury, and representatives from the Bank of England and BCCI's auditors, Price Waterhouse. BCCI's majority shareholders from Abu Dhabi also gave evidence, as did former employees and directors of the bank; banking regulators from the United States, Luxembourg, the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere; and many others, all of whom had dealings with BCCI in one way or another.

The inquiry was thorough and painstaking; and the report is both comprehensive and clear. It makes some significant criticisms of the Bank of England's supervision of BCCI and draws attention to important lessons that the Bank and the Government are determined to learn.

I am sure that all hon. Members will join me in paying tribute to Sir Thomas Bingham for the thorough way in which he has produced an extremely readable report. We owe him a debt of gratitude for the assiduous and comprehensive inquiry that he conducted.

The narrative of events that makes up a large part of Sir Thomas Bingham's report has two main themes. The first is of a bank that was structured in such a way as to maximise its potential for concealing information from both its auditors and the supervisory boards around the world that sought to regulate its activities. The bank's guiding principle was divide and deceive. It almost seemed to be in search of a home.

Throughout much of the report, which hon. Members will have read, it is clear that the bank had a constant quest for a proper supervisory structure. However, the quest was impeded by a determination to procrastinate and obscure the command structure within the bank. The BCCI group was structured into myriad companies built around two major banking subsidiaries, one of which, BCCI SA, was incorporated in Luxembourg and the other, BCCI Overseas, in the Cayman Islands.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): My hon. Friend is aware that I have introduced the Transactions with Tax Havens (Sanctions) Bill. The purpose of the Bill is to concentrate not so much on the tax issues of tax havens, as on the fraud issues of the havens, which might better be called "fraud havens". Will my hon. Friend please touch on the issue of how we might take more and better regulatory action against such fraud havens?

Mr. Nelson: I will try to do so during my remarks. I take very seriously any recommendations and legislative proposals that my hon. Friend introduces. Much of the theme of European and international debate in Basle and in some of the Community directives have very much in mind the transparency and corridors of communication that underlie my hon. Friend's proposals.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Does the Minister recall his remarks to the House when the inquiry was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The right hon. Gentleman said:

> "Many of us are confident that it will show beyond any question of doubt that the Government and the Bank of England acted only in a timely and proper fashion."—[*Official Report,* 19 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 724.]

I accept that the Minister was a Back Bencher at that stage. Will he now accept that his statement was wrong?

Mr. Nelson: I will not. The one thing that is evident is that Treasury Ministers and other Ministers get a clean bill of health—a glorious phrase—in that regard. I do not retract my remarks.

It is true that the report makes some serious criticisms of the Bank of England in terms of time limits; I acknowledge that. However, the report stops well short of suggesting that things would necessarily have been different if the Bank of England had acted differently, and it does not make any accusations of negligence, for example. Nevertheless, there are serious criticisms, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and I have acknowledged on separate occasions.

In practice, BCCI did little business either in Luxembourg or in the Cayman Islands. It spread forth its tentacles into more than 60 countries. BCCI SA operated 47 branches in 13 countries, including the United Kingdom. BCCI Overseas had 63 branches in 28 countries, and subsidiaries and affiliates of the holding company operated 255 banking offices in 28 countries. The deliberate confusion that flowed from the structural complexity enabled BCCI to grow rapidly in the 1970s and the 1980s, when modern techniques and systems of banking supervision were only beginning to come into force, and in parts of the world where, to quote the report, "impenetrable secrecy" was a prominent feature of banking regulation.

It was only in the final years of BCCI's existence, when Price Waterhouse took over responsibility for auditing the bank worldwide and when regulators began to come together in a college of supervisors, that the full enormity of the fraud being practised started to come to light.

The other striking theme of the report is the sheer scale of the fraud. Many hon. Members may have felt, as I did on reading the report, that the deeply offensive point about it was that the scale and quantity of fraud dwarfed the earnings and savings of ordinary people. The fraud was wholly out of proportion to the lives, efforts and prudence of ordinary people. To that extent, the report, and the crimes and frauds revealed by it and by the collapse of the bank are shocking and arresting. The sums being siphoned off and misappropriated were enormous.

When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made his statement to the House, he thanked Sir Thomas Bingham for producing a masterly account of such a complex subject and for being so constructive in his recommendations for the future. I repeat today that the Government accept all the recommendations and have already begun to implement them.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): A few moments ago, the Minister implied that if the Bank had not made mistakes, it is unlikely that the outcome would have been different. I ask the Minister to note paragraph 2.484 in the report, in which Sir Thomas says:

> "How different the course of events would have been had these deficiences not existed, one can only speculate."

The Minister must recognise that, if action had been taken earlier, the many individuals involved at least would not have lost money.

Mr. Nelson: Yes. I have tried to make it clear, and I will do so again, that I have understood Sir Thomas Bingham to say that he could not speculate on what the outcome would have been if the Bank had acted differently.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) spoke of action being taken sooner. There has been a great deal of discussion about the exact timing, about when the whistle should have been blown and about when the bank should have been closed down. There has been discussion about when that point should have been—whether a month sooner, six months sooner or a few months later, which some people suggested at the time to protect depositors. It was suggested that the bank was closed down too soon and that another solution, such as the injection of further capital, could have been found. Whenever closure takes place, people lose.

When the bank was closed, the books amounted to $16 billion. Previously, the gross assets had been up to $23·5 billion. I know that that cannot be construed as an argument for not acting sooner. If something is a rotten apple to the core, one must take action whenever it is justified and when the evidence is clear. However, to suggest that fewer people would have lost raises a difficult question. It is arguable that many more people might have lost, because the deposit base would have been even larger.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I understand what my hon. Friend is saying. It is a question of how far back one takes the matter. Everyone now accepts that there should have been a single lead regulator. Instead, a special arrangement was set up for BCCI. Had such an arrangement been refused at that point, the scale of losses would be far smaller.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend makes an important point, which is covered in a complete analysis by Sir Thomas Bingham. Hindsight is a great thing, whereas foresight is far more difficult. There were cases in 1979, in 1985 and in the latter part of the 1980s, which are considered carefully by the Bingham report, when a different decision and a different approach could have been taken by the Bank of England, not only on the question of the revocation of authorisation, but on the question of the appropriate form of supervisory structure.

We must make it clear that we were dealing with, if not a unique, a complex and devious bank structure. The bank's deliberate intention was to play one regulatory system off against another to try to fall between all posts and to set itself up in the least regulated condition. It was difficult for any one authority to take on complete and consolidated supervision, which is why the college of regulators was established. However, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) makes a good point.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): The Minister's answer explains exactly why the Bank of England should have stepped in earlier to regulate more effectively. The structure of BCCI hid the fraud from the outset. In paragraph 2.484, Sir Thomas Bingham says that the problem of fraud did not occur only in the last 15 months, but had its roots deep in the past. He says that the fraud hidden by the structure

> "might have been in part prevented, or brought to a head much earlier, had strong and resolute action been taken to insist on structural change as a condition of continued authorisation and to impose on the group the supervisory regime it was known to require."

It was known not with hindsight, but at the time. Sir Thomas concludes:

> "The Bank did not pursue the truth of BCCI with the rigour that BCCI's market reputation justified"—

at the time.

Mr. Nelson: To be fair to the Bank, it insisted on a number of changes, not only in the structure, but in the management of BCCI. The hon. Gentleman referred to the various points at which BCCI'S reputation might have been brought into question. It is important for all of us to recognise that the prime responsibility of the Bank of England under successive legislation has been to protect depositors. Bearing that responsibility uppermost in mind leads not necessarily to pre-emptive foreclosure but to an attempt to find ways to protect deposits. In 1979 the bank was profitable, the Luxembourg Banking Commission was not complaining and the auditors were not qualifying the reports.

In 1985 an alternative structure of incorporation in the United Kingdom under SA was decided upon. It was also decided that treasury operations would be moved to Abu Dhabi—a structural change insisted upon by the Bank of England. Efforts in the later part of the 1980s were to protect depositors. The improved standing of the principal shareholder, the injection of further resources and management changes were carried out deliberately to try to safeguard the interests of depositors. With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to make a different judgment about what should have happened, and with the benefit of hindsight that may well be right. But at the time, the main interest was the protection of depositors, and on the information available to the Bank of England at the time, its decisions can be defended.

Mr. Macdonald: The Minister mentioned 1979. Bingham says that, in 1979, the bank was structured in such a way that effective regulation was impossible. Paragraph 2.30 of the report says:

> "if a group was so structured that the Bank was unable to ascertain how the business was done, and so to satisfy itself that the business was conducted prudently, then the Bank was not only entitled but obliged to refuse a licence",

to take deposits. The Minister says that it is a matter of judgment as to whether the bank should have acted differently but Bingham's judgment is that the bank should have acted differently by refusing to issue a licence.

Mr. Nelson: Bingham speaks for himself on the matter but also says in paragraph 2.21 that no concrete evidence of malpractice had been established in 1979. The Banking Act 1979, which was Labour legislation, introduced two tiers of full banking authorisation and deposit-licensed status. The key part of that legislation was section 3(5) which effectively allowed foreign authorisation of a bank as a satisfactory means of "grandfathering" into the new regime an authorised bank.

The fact that BCCI was not given full banking status at that time reflected the Bank of England's concern about it. The bank became a licensed deposit taker. The report's criticisms of the Bank's actions at that time acknowledge that there were arguments on both sides, and paragraph 2.21 sets out grounds for the Bank of England believing that its action at that time was proper. *[Interruption.]* I should like to make some progress, because there are important issues to be addressed and many hon. Members want to take part in the debate.

The Bank has responded to one of the important recommendations by establishing a special investigations unit under Mr. Ian Watt. It will have specific responsibility for pursuing evidence of malpractice or illegality which the Bank receives, and for seeing that the issues which may be raised are followed up. As part of this process, the Bank is also strengthening its existing capacity for on-site examination of banks. Before taking up this appointment, Mr. Watt was a partner at KPMG Peat Marwick. He has considerable experience of liquidation and has acted as a DTI inspector on a number of occasions, most notably into the Guinness inquiry. He acted as the accountancy assessor to the Bingham inquiry. In his new role, he will have direct access to the governors and will attend meetings of the Board of Banking Supervision.

Similar access and status will be accorded to Mr. Peter Peddie, a former partner in Freshfields, who has been appointed to head a new, specialised legal unit within the Bank. His role will be to ensure that, in carrying out its supervisory tasks, the Bank takes full account of the powers available to it under the law—an area where Sir Thomas Bingham felt that the Bank may have been too cautious in the past. The Bank will itself be taking steps to implement his recommendation that more use should be made of the Board of Banking Supervision—a body created by the 1987 Act largely to provide a vehicle for outside experts to advise the Bank on how it carries out its supervisory duties. The Bank is reviewing its guidance on involving the Board and in future its views will be sought at an earlier stage in problem cases. Outside members will be encouraged to have more contact with Bank officials at working level to discuss issues that cause them concern. They will continue to have free access to staff and papers.

On the Bank's approach to supervision, Sir Thomas concluded that, while its traditional techniques, had, on the whole, served the community well, a different approach was needed in cases such as BCCI where trust and frankness were lacking. With such institutions, the Bank's staff need to develop a higher degree of alertness to signs of fraud and they need to be more inquisitive. The Bank has begun to extend and improve the training that it provides to supervisors in order to achieve these objectives.

Sir Thomas regards

> "the most important single lesson"

of the BCCI affair as being that

> "banking group structures which deny supervisors a clear view of how business is conducted should be outlawed."

While not persuaded that the Bank currently lacks the powers needed to deal with such cases, if there is felt to be any doubt on the point, he would support explicit provisions being introduced. The Government accept this conclusion and will introduce legislation, as soon as the parliamentary timetable allows, to put the Bank's powers beyond doubt. In particular, the legislation will need to deal with banking groups whose structure has changed significantly after authorisation or who have developed an active presence in secretive or poorly supervised jurisdictions.

On the European level, Sir Thomas finds nothing in the history of BCCI that requires substantial revision to the emerging Community regime for supervision. But he proposes that two recitals to EC directives—one discouraging supervisory "forum shopping" and the other requiring banks' place of incorporation and head office to be in the same member state—should become express requirements of Community law. He also proposes that all member states should confer powers on their regulators to refuse or withdraw authorisation where a bank cannot be effectively supervised, and he supports the proposed Community deposit guarantee directive being adopted as soon as possible.

[Mr. Nelson]

As my right hon. Friend made clear at the time of publication, we shall be pursuing all of these points with the Commission and our European partners. Sir Leon Brittan has already issued a statement responding to the Bingham report and acknowledging the force of these recommendations. His officials have been asked to report quickly on all the Bingham points that bear on Community legislation so that Sir Leon can make a more detailed statement at the ECOFIN Council on 23 November. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be in the chair on that occasion and will use the opportunity to seek to take matters forward.

The Government have already made clear the importance that we attach to making progress with the deposit guarantee directive. Our officials are seeking to finalise the draft currently before the Council working group and we continue to hope for political agreement to a final text before the end of this year.

On the wider international front, the Government agree with all that Sir Thomas says about the need to press for further improvements in banking supervision and to facilitate better communications between supervisors. The new standards promulgated by the Basle committee—the key requirement of which is that all banks that branch abroad must have a home supervisor ready and able to conduct effective consolidated supervision—represent an important advance in international action to deal with countries offering impenetrable secrecy. The Government and the bank also support his call for independent monitoring of supervisory standards and will be proposing the establishment of peer group reviews, to both the G10 supervisors' committee and the EC banking advisory committee, as the best way of taking this forward.

The Government accept that the effective supervision of international groups requires clear and legally robust channels of communication between supervisors and other authorities and agencies engaged in combating financial crime and fraud. We shall be focusing our further action on four main areas.

First, we shall urge within the European Community that the provisions on information flow in the second banking co-ordination directive, and in other financial services directives, should be looked at again to ensure that the necessary channels of communication are being kept open. Next we shall raise the issue of exchanging information with non-EC countries, so that the practical difficulties in maintaining supervisory confidentiality are not allowed to constrain necessary communications with third countries. An international consensus is needed on the common interest in effective supervision of banking groups world wide, and on the level of confidentiality required to underpin it.

Thirdly, all those concerned in regulating international banks should be clear about what information should be shared and how it is to be channelled between those who need it.

Fourthly, as my right hon. Friend announced last month, new machinery is being established between the supervisory, investigation and prosecuting authorities within the United Kingdom, to strengthen their exchange of information, so as to enable us better to detect and deal with financial and company faud.

Finally, on auditors, Sir Thomas Bingham's main proposal is that they should be put under a statutory duty to report relevant information to the Bank. This reflects a similar recommendation in the fourth report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

The Government strongly support this approach, which, I am pleased to say, has also been welcomed by the professional bodies. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has already made it clear that a similar duty should be introduced for the auditors of building societies and financial services companies. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has said that he would want this approach also to be extended to the auditors in insurance companies.

A process of consultation is now getting under way, involving both the professional bodies and representatives of the sectors concerned. This will cover the formulation of such a duty, and its enforcement. Discussions will proceed as a matter of urgency with the aim of introducing measures in this House at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. David Shaw: My right hon. Friend will know of my interest in small businesses. Has he taken into account the fact that, if every single financial services company is to be regulated, that will be getting down to some very small companies and businesses that will have to fill out even more forms than they are already filling out? Will there be a levelling-off process, so that the very small are exempted?

Mr. Nelson: I understand full well the important point that my hon. Friend raises, and I have considered a de minimis rule. So far, I am not inclined to introduce one. These matters will be the subject of consultation, but there is an existing professional responsibility that extends to auditors to flag up concerns when they arise, Secondly, it is intended that this will apply to all authorised firms in the financial services sector. To include some and exclude others would require a line that it would be extremely difficult to draw.

Thirdly, while I understand the concerns of some small firms, it is sometimes in those small firms that problems arise, and depositors and investors need to be protected. Finally, I want to ensure that the way that the legislation is introduced and then conducted in practice will not involve the flagging up of too much information, because that can impose an impossible burden on regulators and supervisors, and extra costs on small businesses. Overall, the objective is to bolster the ability of auditors to say to a firm or its directors, "Look, unless you bring this to the attention of the authorities, I am required to do so by law." For those reasons, the change is justified.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Does my hon. Friend agree that the picture that he is painting of what is required in terms of auditors' disclosure is mirrored largely in what already exists in the regulation of insurance brokers, through the Insurance Brokers (Registration) Act 1977, on which I shall talk later if I manage to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Nelson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is indeed the case, and that is one reason why it has been welcomed by the profession.

I hope that it will be clear to the House from what I have said that the Government attach the highest importance to implementing in full all the recommendations that Sir Thomas Bingham has made. Perhaps I should now say something about the work that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has undertaken since the collapse of BCCI. It has produced two thoughtful reports, one on the role of local authorities and money brokers, and another looking into international and national regulation. The Government and the Bank of England have already responded to both reports. On behalf of the Government, I should like to say how much we appreciate the careful consideration and the compelling analysis and recommendations of these reports. I am sure that hon. Members will wish to pay tribute to the work of the Committee.

Both the Government and the Bank accept, and are grateful for, a sizeable number of the Committee's recommendations and conclusions, and we have already announced our intention to implement them. These include the need to deal effectively with banking groups that have an inadequate structure, the need to impose a statutory duty on auditors to report their suspicions to the Bank and the desirability of establishing an international mechanism for monitoring supervisory standards.

Despite all that we sometimes hear about the superiority of Senate committees over our Select Committees that operate here, the work that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has done on BCCI compares favourably with the much less-considered report of Senator Kerry.

Another subject discussed in the Bingham report is the extent and nature of the Bank's powers to deal with recalcitrant institutions.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Why did Senator Kerry have to conclude that a number of significant documents were withheld, presumably on the instructions of the British Government? These related to information, of which the Bank of England must have been aware, from the security services on the doubts that existed in those quarters about BCCI many years ago. Readers of *Private Eye* have had a glimpse of these documents, but apparently Senator Kerry, and perhaps even Bingham, did not. In an age of supposedly open government, how can those documents be kept private and not be put in the public domain?

Mr. Nelson: The Governor and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer established the Bingham inquiry for exactly that purpose. Nothing was withheld from Lord Justice Bingham while he was making his inquiries, and the Government regarded this report, as they do now, as the authoritative report on the supervision of BCCI.

Senator Kerry may complain that he did not get some information, but we may complain, with justification, that he did not seek evidence, and did not enable people to question some of his conclusions and findings. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept, as many of his hon. Friends do, that this is the authoritative version, this is the one that was justified by the calling for any papers and this is the one that we should consider today.

Sir Thomas Bingham has, quite rightly, drawn attention at a number of points in his report to the nature and extent of the powers conferred on the Bank by the 1979 and 1987 Acts. He has also pointed, on a number of occasions, to situations where they could have been exercised. But, in all those cases, the Bank has always a second test that it must apply. It must ask itself not only whether its powers are exercisable but, if it decides that they are, whether would it be in the interest of depositors to exercise them. Deciding to revoke a bank's licence and to bring its operations to an end may sometimes be the right or only course to follow.

Often, the interest of depositors are better served by taking less drastic, remedial action so that an institution in difficulties can be restructured or, perhaps, wound down over a period, so minimising the risks for depositors or even, with good management, eliminating them altogether.

Over the past six years or so, there have been 35 occasions on which banks have been persuaded to undertake remedial action without fuss and with no loss to depositors; 17 occasions on which authorisations have been revoked; 28 examples of authorisations being restricted under the Act; and 18 more in which an institution has been persuaded to surrender its authorisation under pressure from the Bank. On all these occasions, the Bank has acted in good faith with the need to protect depositors very much at the forefront of its concerns.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Nelson: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will not, as I wish to make progress. I shall deal now with compensation, and if need be, I shall give way on that issue.

At the time of closure, BCCI had 25 branches in the United Kingdom with deposits totalling £1·85 billion, of which one third were sterling retail deposits. Deposits by United Kingdom residents totalled £240 million, of which three quarters were in sterling. I understand that BCCI had more than 53,000 sterling accounts. The Deposit Protection Board has sent out claims forms to some 42,000 depositors. So far, more than 16,500 claims have been lodged with the board, and more than 9,000 of them have already been paid. A total of more than £54 million has been paid out so far, and we expect the final figure to be a good deal higher—perhaps as much as £85 million.

I can understand, of course, why a number of hon. Members—especially those who have had experience of hardship among their own constituents—should want to suggest that additional compensation should be paid to help those who have lost some or all of their savings as a result of the fraud.

The Government have made it clear that responsibility for the collapse of BCCI rests with those who devised, directed and implemented the frauds and that there is no justification for public money being used to provide recompense to those who have lost as a result. There are also other compelling reasons for this, which I invite the House to consider.

First, no system of banking supervision is fail-safe. When a fraud like this is led and organised by those at the very heart of an institution's management, and where so much time and effort was devoted to concealing its existence both from supervisors and from their auditors, it is particularly difficult to detect in its early stages.

It was because Parliament acknowledged that no system of banking supervision could ever guarantee banks against failure that the Banking Act 1987 established the Deposit Protection Board to provide a degree of compensation for depositors.

What these arrangements were designed to achieve—and what in my view they do achieve—is a proper balance

[Mr. Nelson]

between the need to offer some protection, particularly to smaller depositors, on the one hand; and the equally important need, on the other, to maintain the principle that depositors themselves have to be aware of the risks associated with different institutions and to bear them in mind when deciding where to put their money.

If that were not so, and depositors were compensated for any failure of a financial institution, those banks that acted irresponsibly—by, for example, offering unrealistically high levels of interest—would prosper at the expense of the more prudent. That would lead to increasingly risky approaches being adopted towards the running of deposit-taking businesses, which, over the long term, would have damaging implications for the entire banking system. Recent experience of the United States thrift banks makes it clear that this is a real practical concern, and not simply the construct of theoretical economists.

Supervisors' behaviour would change too. They would become much more cautious in the way in which they carried out their task, tending towards the setting of higher capital and liquidity requirements and moving to close down banks at the earliest sign of difficulty. Their primary motivation would soon become to protect themselves from the risk of litigation, at the expense of almost everything else. That would not be in the long-term interests of depositors or of the economy more generally.

Mr. Vaz: I would have been astonished if the Minister had arrived in the Chamber this morning with a cheque for £6 billion to pay out compensation. If he accepts from the local authorities' point of view the argument of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, which is set out in paragraph 76—the Minister has lavished praise on the Select Committee—there was a breach of supervisory duty on the part of the Bank of England. He must accept also, as I think he has done—he has accepted all the recommendations—the savage criticism of the Bank of England that appears in the report.

Surely there is no difference between the case of the BCCI victims, be they creditors, depositors, ex-members of staff or local authorities, and the people who lost money in Barlow Clowes. In that case, as the Minister knows, Lord Young refused compensation, but eventually compensation was paid. Surely the Minister must consider the issue of compensation. He must listen to the representations of those affected before he makes a decision.

Mr. Nelson: It would be wrong for me to lead the hon. Gentleman on. The Government have carefully considered the representations. We have considered the report fully, in accordance with our undertaking. My right hon. Friend made it clear that it was our intention not to grant additional compensation over and above that provided by the deposit protection scheme. The BCCI case is different from that of Barlow Clowes. The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration recommended that compensation should be paid to those involved in the Barlow Clowes case. For the reasons that my right hon. Friend has already——

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Nelson: I have given way on several occasions. There will be opportunities for the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Macdonald *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The Minister is not giving way. I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) would resume his seat.

Mr. Nelson: I hope that hon. Members will understand that I shall not give way. I wish to deal——

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. He must not keep getting up and challenging the Minister.

Mr. Nelson: I am obliged, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I move on to the Abu Dhabi scheme, which is of great importance in this matter. As many hon. Members will be aware, there is a further source of funds that will be potentially available to depositors. This is the separate package that is being negotiated by the liquidators of BCCI SA, BCCI Overseas, and the majority shareholders in Abu Dhabi. It has now been approved by the courts in Luxembourg, following earlier approval by courts both here and in the Cayman Islands. The package contains two main elements. The first is a pooling arrangement, by which the proceeds realised from assets by liquidators all around the world—whether from BCCI SA or the Caymans-registered BCCI Overseas—will be put into a central pool, from which all creditors, not just those in the United Kingdom, will receive a payment in proportion to their admitted claims.

I understand that the intention behind that arrangement is to ensure a co-ordinated approach to all BCCI creditors wherever they may be, and to prevent competition between different liquidators for the same assets. That is clearly a sensible objective, although it does have the consequence—about which several hon. Members have expressed understandable concern—that no payments have yet been made by liquidators, either in the United Kingdom or anywhere else. It is far from clear, given the complexity of BCCI's affairs, that any payments would yet have been made even if the package had never been proposed.

The second element, which I know has also aroused a good deal of interest, involves the setting up of a contribution fund by the majority shareholders, which—together with the estimated proceeds from the liquidation—should lead to creditors recovering some 30 to 40 per cent. of their money. I understand that, under the terms of that arrangement, majority shareholders would, over the next 20 months or so, put up between $1·2 billion and $1·7 billion to be paid to creditors. In return for payment from the fund, creditors would be required to waive any legal claims against the majority shareholders.

In order to be put into effect, the arrangement requires that creditors to the value of $7 billion grant waivers of legal claims—although that target figure may be reduced at the discretion of the majority shareholders. Once that level has been reached, the scheme can go ahead, and a first "distribution", which I believe will equate to about 10 per cent. of creditors' claims, will be paid, some time during 1993, with further payments following later.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Nelson: I shall give way for the last time.

Mr. Vaz: Is the Minister aware that an appeal has been lodged in the past 24 hours in the Luxembourg court against the proposal? That means that it is unlikely that the case will be dealt with for several months. As the hon. Gentleman has raised the issue of the Abu Dhabi scheme —I know that he visited Abu Dhabi last year—does he think that the pause will give the Government an opportunity of making approaches to a friendly Gulf state to ascertain whether the contribution that has been made can be raised, bearing it in mind that the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi will get back $4 million-worth of promissory notes as a result of the deal? The Government have been given an opportunity; will the Minister seize it?

Mr. Nelson: No, I do not think that the Government should or will. It is a matter for the shareholders and the liquidators. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the appeal, which has just been lodged. As I have already said, that is a matter for those involved. I must say that appeals against the scheme inevitably have the effect of delaying further recompense for others. The delays so far have had exactly that effect.

Of course people are entitled to make the judgment that they may get more. As far as Sheik Zayed is concerned —he is a man of enormous honour and integrity, and a great friend and ally of this country—the losses incurred in respect of $2 billion of investments, not deposits, placed with the group have been written off in addition to the funding requirement here. The Abu Dhabi authorities would argue, with some reason, that they are taking considerable losses on the nose.

As well as the distress caused to retail customers, much has also been made of the losses incurred by local authorities that deposited money in BCCI, and there have been the all-too-predictable calls for the Government to compensate them. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has already made it clear that no special compensation will be paid and, like him, I see no reason why local authorities should be treated differently from any other depositor who lost money.

The losses are a matter for the local authorities concerned, although those who wish to do so can apply to their relevant Environment Department for the losses to be capitalised and spread over a number of years, so as to phase the impact on local chargepayers. But that does not mean that the Government are giving local authorities special treatment. Quite properly in my view, the consequences of the loss have to be met from local resources.

Before I conclude, I want to restate something that, although perhaps obvious, is often overlooked. Whatever system of supervision we construct, whatever the law seeks to provide, a fail-safe system can never be devised. As a Government and a Parliament, we have a proper responsibility to remind individuals of several basic, commonsense rules of financial husbandry from which they must not depart. I call them the five golden rules, and I commend them to all investors and depositors. I hope that I will not sound too preachy if I reiterate them now, but they are worthy of repetition.

First, the buyer, investor, and depositor must always beware. Secondly, one should spread one's investments and not put all one's eggs in one basket. Thirdly, one should obtain good advice from independent or professional sources. Fourthly, one should always read the small print. Finally, one should never confuse authorisation with a guarantee.

The House has a proper interest in ensuring public confidence in the United Kingdom banking system. The Government and the Bank of England considered carefully, learned from, and implemented changes in line with the recommendations of not only the Select Committee but of Sir Thomas Bingham. In doing so, we have considerably improved the Bank's ability to spot at an earlier stage miscreants within our banking system; enhanced public confidence in the banking system; and met the real responsibilities that the Government accept in responding to a report such as that produced by Sir Thomas.

There were lessons to be learned and the Government have learnt them. This debate provides the House with an opportunity to express its views on Bingham's recommendations, and I hope that my right hon. Friend's response will be welcomed by all concerned.

10.22 am

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): When the Minister set out his five golden rules, I was reminded of an expression familiar to many of us—as safe as the Bank of England. In debating the Bingham report, we should bear it in mind that some members of the public in the United Kingdom and other countries are entitled to expect that certain standards can be relied upon in an institution regulated by the Bank of England.

The Bingham report is set in the context of the whole banking and financial services regulation system being called into question. The regulators can, of course, point to their successes, but we are entitled to assess and to judge their weaknesses by examining also the system's failures. The most damning conclusion that one can draw from the Bingham report is not that the Bank lacked sufficient powers—even in 1979—but that it lacked proper judgment.

The Minister invites the House to acquiesce in allowing the same Bank—and in many cases the same personnel who made bad errors of judgment throughout the 1980s —to continue to exercise the same functions that they have had for some years. The House is entitled to question whether that is appropriate in all the circumstances. Of course, one can reach judgments with the benefit of hindsight. In considering my contribution, I first thought of addressing the Bingham report briefly and concentrating on the future—but one cannot do that without drawing conclusions from Bingham's telling criticism, which, because it is so understated, is so powerful.

BCCI's problems arose long before it collapsed, but I shall not dwell on the final years before its closure. In many ways, the lessons to be learned for the future are to be drawn from the bank's early days. As my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) said, Lord Justice Bingham reached the conclusion that BCCI should not have been licensed in 1979—or that it should only have been permitted to operate under strict conditions.

The Minister seemed to suggest that the only option open to the Bank of England was to allow BCCI to trade or to shut it completely. Bingham makes the point that, even under the 1979 legislation, the Bank could have used available powers to bring pressure to bear on Mr. Abedi to comply with the Bank's understandable concern, or made

[Mr. Alistair Darling]

much greater use of the power of which it has always boasted, in bringing its influence to bear. That influence might have been far greater in the earlier stages than was the case as matters progressed.

Between 1980 and 1984, the Bank of England tried to exert pressure to put in place a structure that it could regulate. It found a solution, but was rebuffed by Mr. Abedi. Lord Justice Bingham is extremely critical of that aspect, commenting that the Bank simply walked away from the situation. At paragraph 246, he states:

> "I find it surprising that no effort was made to bring the Bank's traditional authority to bear on Abedi to secure his compliance . . . Abedi's truculence . . . would have made clear that the authority of the Deputy Governor, or even the Governor, would have had to be brought to bear."

The alarm was sounded even in the early 1980s that BCCI was no ordinary bank and that it could not be treated as a member of the gentlemen's club—which has been the Bank's traditional approach to regulation in this country. Instead, the Bank was rebuffed in 1984 and then seemed to change tack.

Throughout the 1980s, the Bank of England received, with increasing regularity, reports that should have given notice that something was very wrong. The Bank and the auditors made considerable efforts during that decade to put in place a structure with which they could cope, when all the time BCCI appeared to be leading the Bank on a merry dance.

The Minister said that BCCI was a bank in search of a home. I do not think so. It successfully avoided finding a home. It might be said that it was a role model for latter-day poll tax evasion. It was obvious that BCCI did not want to be regulated and regarded the Bank of England as a soft touch—which it was.

In 1985, the Bank was alerted to substantial trading losses in BCCI's central treasury. Lord Justice Bingham is especially critical of the Bank's response in that regard. Although it is clear that it sent in inspectors, they were taken in by BCCI and had no idea what it was doing at that time.

Between 1986 and 1988, the Bank of England heard of more and more problems—of fraud in London and—from MI6—of fraud in the Gulf. There was evidence also of doubtful loans. It is clear that although individuals in the Bank and Price Waterhouse, latterly the auditors, had that information, that intelligence was not brought together at an early stage and channelled ultimately, I suppose, to the Governor—who must, as the individual in charge of the Bank, accept responsibility for regulation.

Instead, lines of communication left much to be desired. At no time did anyone stand back and ask, "What on earth is going on at BCCI? Why have we made no progress? Why are we allowing months and years to elapse before taking firm action?"

Mr. David Shaw: I attended a meeting in the Grand Committee Room at which many members of BCCI's staff were represented. They argued that the closure had been a CIA plot against the Muslim world. They seemed to think that it had taken place far too early, and that the bank should have been given a longer chance to stay in business. How does the hon. Gentleman reconcile the early warnings with the considerable political pressure that was exerted world wide, to the effect that the bank was looking after the interests of the third world and should be allowed to continue in existence?

Mr. Darling: I do not accept the argument that, according to the hon. Gentleman, was put to him and others in the Grand Committee Room, but that is neither here nor there. It would appear that the Bank of England considered the possible consequences of closing BCCI throughout the 1980s. It might more profitably have considered the consequences that would be visited on it if it took no action.

Let me repeat that the sole option was not always closure. If the Bank of England had told BCCI earlier that it was not prepared to allow it to continue in business without the imposition of conditions, matters might have been different. I do not disagree with the Economic Secretary's assertion that, whenever the bank was closed, some losses, somewhere, were inevitable. We must ask, however, whether it might have been better to take firmer action at the outset, rather than letting matters build up.

The Bank of England was in a difficult position. It was trying to arrange the restructuring of BCCI, and latterly, when the new majority shareholders appeared on the scene, it was trying to take advantage of that. Throughout that time, however, it should have focused on the main problem—that BCCI was not being regulated because its structure made regulation impossible. The Bank did not address itself to that problem; indeed, as 1991 approached, it became so confused that, in my view, it lost sight of what it was supposed to be doing. To that extent, its judgment was severely wanting.

Mr. Vaz: My hon. Friend is giving an excellent account of the Bingham report. Does he agree that it is very odd that, in a 45-minute speech, the Economic Secretary did not once defend the role of the Governor of the Bank of England? Is it not extraordinary that, following the savage criticism directed at him, the Governor has not resigned —or, at least, tendered his resignation and left Ministers to decide whether it should be accepted?

Mr. Darling: I shall deal with that point shortly.

Let us consider Bingham's criticism of the way in which the Bank of England handled reports that came to it from the fraud squad in England, from MI6 and from other sources. According to chapter 2, paragraph 14,

> "it was in my view incumbent on the Bank to see that serious and apparently credible allegations capable of investigation . . . were fully investigated. As it was, the police complaint petered out and the report from the Gulf was neither investigated"

nor pursued.

Alarm bells should also have rung in respect of the Tampa indictment. According to paragraph 2.166, the auditors felt it necessary to enter the Bank of England separately in case they were seen by their clients. Yet, after they had spoken to an official of the Bank about the matter and acted accordingly, nothing was done. As Bingham points out, the Bank showed a "marked lack of curiosity". In paragraph 2.162, he observes:

> "The likelihood of involvement in handling the proceeds of drug-trafficking could scarcely have eluded a competent and diligent banker contemplating such an investment, particularly if he had branches in Panama and agencies in Florida . . . it was a pertinent enquiry, to which a rigorous supervisor would have wished to know the answer."

I have cited those passages because they are relevant to what is to happen in the future. Bingham has made a damning criticism of the judgment of junior, middle-ranking and senior officials in the Bank of England, and at the end of the day the Governor must accept responsibility.

We all know that the Bank of England is immune from prosecution or suit because of the terms of the Banking Act 1987. Surely, if those who rely on the Bank have no normal legal remedy, the counterbalance must be that those who accept responsibility—and all that goes with the governorship of the Bank of England—should accept the other side of the coin. When things go wrong and the organisation for which they are responsible fails to live up to the expectations to which we are entitled, they should accept the logical consequences and resign.

It is never pleasant to put someone in such a position; ultimately, however, responsibility for one's actions is a crucial part of accountability. I think that, after receiving the Bingham report, the Chancellor himself should have said to the Governor, "This is a damning criticism of the stewardship of the Bank, and you cannot do other than accept responsibility." There is a problem with that, however: I can imagine the Governor turning around and replying, "Well, Chancellor, I will go, but what about you? What about your conduct of matters for which we were both responsible?"

That has been one of our difficulties with the Government over the past few weeks. No one is prepared to accept responsibility for his actions. That debases public life, because the public are entitled to expect someone to accept responsibility when something goes wrong. Surely, when no legal remedy is available—I shall say more about that when I deal with the question of compensation—and no one is prepared to carry the can, the Chancellor is duty bound to insist that standards are upheld.

I find it extraordinary that the Governor seems to be maintaining the line that the Bank is blameless. I understand that he continued to take that stance when he was invited back to give evidence to the Select Committee earlier this week. According to him, no one was at fault; it was all a mistake; perhaps it should not have happened, but no one was to blame. I cannot accept that. Is the Economic Secretary asking us to accept that the Bank of England, in its present form—with many of its officials still occupying the desks that they occupied during the BCCI affair—is to continue to be responsible for regulation? If so, many people are bound to ask when the same thing will happen again.

This is not the first time that such a problem has arisen. The affair involving the Johnson Matthey bank—which, of course, entailed different circumstances—illustrates the problem. The Bank of England may enjoy many successes, but it has yet to get on top of affairs such as those involving Johnson Matthey and BCCI. Warning signs were there, but the Bank of England did nothing.

Mr. Beith: I believe that I am the only Select Committee member who took part in the questioning on Wednesday and who is present today. For many years, the Governor of the Bank of England has proved a courteous, frank, helpful and honest witness before the Committee. Like other Committee members, I was appalled by such a defensive approach to such a catalogue of failures as that listed in the Bingham report. I was genuinely amazed that neither the Governor nor his colleagues seemed willing to accept responsibility for what had happened.

Mr. Darling: I have not met the Governor; I believe that I am to meet him in the next couple of weeks, which makes matters rather difficult. I dare say that he will be delighted to meet me after what I have said! I think, however, that I should be failing in my duty on behalf of my party, and on behalf of many other hon. Members, if I did not say what I believe ought to be said: that someone should accept responsibility.

This is the biggest banking failure that we have seen. Many depositors, in this country and abroad, have lost all their money and are in severe financial difficulties. No matter what the Economic Secretary may say, when a bank is regulated its depositors are entitled to expect the regulator to discharge the duties incumbent on it. I do not suggest for a minute that they should not use their own commercial judgment in many respects, but there is no point in regulation unless it means regulation.

I think that I have made the point strongly enough. I find it extraordinary that the attitude of the Bank's senior management is "business as usual." I suppose that all that can be said in their defence is that exactly the same attitude prevails in the Treasury. Its approach is, "Nothing has happened. The public may have lost out; tough luck . We are carrying on." That attitude needs to be corrected.

Does the Economic Secretary believe that the Bank of England is the appropriate body to continue regulation? I know that that point has been canvassed by the Select Committee, but I wish to raise it again. I was struck by many features of Lord Lawson's book, which was published yesterday, but one aspect struck me particularly. I would not normally seek an ally in Lord Lawson, and some of his criticisms are in what I would call typically Lawsonesque style: everyone seems to have been to blame except him. However, he points out that the Bank of England has two tasks. One is to implement monetary policy; the other is to supervise banking policy.

On page 406 of his book, Lord Lawson says:

> "despite the Bank's subordinate role in monetary policy and its leading role in bank supervision, the high fliers were all attracted to the former, much sexier side, while the humdrum but important"

task of regulation was

> "always in danger in becoming something of a backwater."

Two points arise. First, why did not Lord Lawson, during the six years that he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, do anything about it, if that is what he thought? Secondly, is he right? I understand that the Bank of England will say that that is not necessarily the case and that it has high-calibre people on the regulatory side. I wonder, however, whether an organisation whose sole job is regulation ought not to have focused on the problems that arose with BCCI at a much earlier stage. The Minister should look into that point.

To digress for a moment, if the treaty of Maastricht is concluded and a European central bank is established, the structure, composition and powers of the United Kingdom's own national Bank will have to be looked at. We ought, therefore, to consider whether the Bank of England should be responsible for regulation.

I say no more than that the situation might have been different had there been an organisation whose sole job was to look at these issues. Bingham makes the point that the Governor and deputy Governor were busy men, that they had many other matters to worry about in the 1980s and that it might have been better if someone had had sole responsibility for regulation.

[Mr. Darling]

I am glad that the Minister accepts the Bingham recommendations and also the Select Committee's recommendations, to which I shall return. I disagree with one of Lord Bingham's recommendations. He said:

> "the Board of Banking Supervision played a valuable role but must be alerted to any fact which even might cause their antennae to twitch".

There were a number of facts that would have made anybody's antennae twitch a trifle. Lord Bingham is a little complacent when he says that the Board of Banking Supervision had played a valuable role. I argue that it did not do so. It had the information, or had cause to ask for information to be put before it. I do not know the two gentleman to whom the Minister referred and I do not criticise them, but I wonder whether hon. Members can leave the House today feeling happy that the same people appear to be doing the same job that they were doing throughout this episode. Apart from that, I have no quarrel with the Bingham recommendations.

As for international co-operation, the House will be aware that under the European directive that comes into force in January 1993 we shall be faced with the curious fact that banks operating in the United Kingdom will be regulated by other European Community member states. The standards of regulation are not the same throughout the Community. The Treasury and the Bank of England will have to consider very carefully how that works out in practice so that we do not find that someone takes advantage of the fact that somewhere in the European Community there may be a regulatory regime that is less strong than the United Kingdom's regime.

The other important point is that the statutory duty of auditors ought to be clear so that if whistles are to be blown they are blown without doubt. It should never be necessary for auditors to have to go to the Bank of England and use separate entrances in such a clandestine manner as happened in the case of BCCI.

On the question of compensation, I have to remind the Minister that on the same day that he said that he was confident that the Bank of England would be exonerated, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said something different. The Minister may come to the Dispatch Box with a clean sheet, but the Treasury, for which he is now responsible, does not come to this matter with a clean sheet. The Chancellor is still the same Chancellor that we had in 1991. In reply to a question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) the Chancellor of the Exchequer said

> "I said that I would have to consider the position if the conclusion was that blame applied to the authorities or individuals, or there were findings of negligence."—[*Official Report*, 19 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 722.]

The Minister muttered the word "negligence". Negligence is a high test, but the Chancellor used the word "blame". I challenge anybody who has read the Bingham report to tell me that no blame attaches to the Bank of England. Ministers sometimes say things that they subsequently regret, but the tradition is that if they say things to the House they are stuck with them.

I know that the Chancellor will claim that he said that he would consider it and that he has now considered it. I dare say the minute he sat down he considered the matter and thought to himself, "I shouldn't have said that." However, he did lead people to believe that if there were blame, the matter might be different. The Government have some responsibility because, as I said, the Treasury is responsible for the Bank of England. That is the line of communication and the line of accountability.

From 1988 onwards the Treasury was well aware of the problems with BCCI. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer made his statement on 22 October I said that the Treasury had to ask itself whether it ought to have done more. It certainly briefed Ministers that all was well, but the Treasury, for which Ministers must accept responsibility, must have known that alarm bells were sounding. In my wanderings around the City in the last couple of months or so, anybody who mentions these things tells me, "Anyone could have told you about BCCI. It's just unfortunate that nobody appears to have told the Governor of the Bank of England that there were problems."

Mr. Vaz: My hon. Friend raises a very important point about what the Chancellor said on 19 January 1991. Will he take it from me that the Economic Secretary's predecessor, Mr. Maples, gave exactly the same commitment when he met an all-party delegation of Members just after the Bingham inquiry was set up? He told us that if there were any question of negligence or blame, he would look into the question of compensation.

Mr. Darling: I must accept what my hon. Friend tells me. I dare say that someone on the Treasury Bench will have made a note of that point, though I suppose that in this era of open government we shall not see it.

The Chancellor certainly led the House to believe that if blame were to be attached to anybody he would have to consider the position. Most hon. Members took the view at the time that this looked like another Barlow Clowes. It could be, though, that the Chancellor had been briefed by the Governor of the Bank of England and that the Chancellor was clear in his own mind at that time that no blame was going to be attached to the Bank of England. It is possible that the Bingham report came as much of a surprise to the Chancellor as the section 41 report by Price Waterhouse came to the Bank of England in 1991.

The local authorities make one point that seems to me to have some force. Under the Banking Act 1987, the Bank of England has immunity. Local authorities cannot go to the ombudsman. It was the ombudsman's report that led to the recommendation that compensation should be paid to Barlow Clowes investors. The local authorities are in a difficult position.

The second report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee deals with the local authorities. It makes useful comments about the Bank of England's approved list. Even those who criticise the local authorities—I am critical of one or two of them—accept that there is some ambiguity about the approved list that is published by the Bank of England. There was no point in having an approved list if the Bank of England knew, as one member of the Bank of England's staff said, that BCCI was a cesspool but then stuck it on the approved list, in the knowledge that people were likely to do business with it. Although he did not mention it specifically, I hope that the Minister accepts the Select Committee's recommendation.

I return to the point that I made earlier: there are two possibilities. Either the Bank of England is to be made available for prosecution or legal redress, in the event of negligence, or we are entitled to expect, when things go wrong, that somebody carries the can. We cannot have it both ways. We cannot have the Bank of England being unable to be sued and, no matter what happens, nobody accepting responsibility for what goes wrong. It is unfortunate that poll tax payers in some local authorities will have to shoulder a very heavy burden.

Criticism has been levelled at the conduct of officials in the Western Isles council. When one looks at the catastrophic consequences for the economy of the Western Isles and for the poll tax payers—or for council tax payers next year—the Government's attitude appears to be high handed. Therefore, they ought to look into that question.

Individual depositors pose a difficult problem. Under the Banking Act, the maximum amount payable under the deposit protection scheme is £15,000. Under the Finance Act 1987—a different regime—the maximum sum payable is £48,000. Does the Minister intend to review the working of both schemes? There appears to be an anomaly. In the United States, the equivalent of about £68,000 can be paid to individual depositors.

If the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee returns to the question of compensation and recommends that compensation ought to be paid to investors over and above what is provided for under the deposit protection scheme, I hope that the lavish praise that the Minister heaped upon the Select Committee will not cease and that he will accept such a recommendation. The Chancellor gave an undertaking, from which Ministers cannot lightly depart. I would not go so far as to say that the statement was misleading. It would be improper of me to do so. If, however, Ministers say something to the House and, therefore, to the country, people are entitled to rely upon it.

I accept the difficulties that the Government would have concerning the relationship between depositors, major shareholders and the compensation scheme. Nevertheless, if the Government can do anything to bring pressure to bear, as Governments can, I ask them to do so. There is no doubt that many people in this country feel that they have had a raw deal, and that they are not being given the same consideration as were the more articulate investors in other schemes. They feel badly done by, and they are beginning to wonder whether the Government regard them as less important than other investors.

As the bank is now in liquidation, there is the problem that the liquidators are responsible for all the creditors throughout the world, not just the United Kingdom creditors. I understand that, as ever, rapacious accountants and lawyers are having a field day with what funds remain in the bank. That matter must be investigated.

Finally, there are some relevant questions about which I had hoped the Minister would speak. For example, the whole subject of regulation has a direct bearing on the report, whose publication coincided with increasing problems in the regulation of financial services. There have been many problems, and the Government will have to get a grip on the situation.

Next year the European directive will introduce a new area to consider. The Securities and Investments Board and its subsidiaries, if I may use that word, are relevant. The Minister will be aware that over the past few months there has been controversy, to put it mildly, over the amalgamation of the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation—LAUTRO—and the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Organisation—FIMBRA. Mr. Newmarch of the Prudential Assurance company made a speech on Tuesday night which brought to a head a simmering row. It is difficult to see how the PIA—the new amalgamated body, the Personal Investment Authority—will be able to get off the ground if an organisation as large as the Prudential will have nothing to do with it. The Government must get a grip on the situation. They cannot allow the debate to become dominated by producer interests. There is a large public interest.

I believe that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) complained that small firms might be regulated. May I tell him that many of the problems arise from small firms—the kind that are set up in January and are gone by November, leaving a trail of devastation and hardship in their wake. The Government must consider that aspect, although it is extremely difficult. In some ways banks are easy, because one is dealing with one or two large players, whereas financial services involve many very small firms trading with hundreds of thousands of people. Nevertheless, the Government cannot allow the industry to carry on in its present state.

I know that Andrew Large of the SIB is due to present a report to Ministers in March, but I am not sure that the Government can wait until then before making preparatory plans. Even after the report is presented in March there will have to be consultation, and it may be 1995 or 1996 before new legislation is passed. The Government will have to legislate next year and, if they are to do so, some of the more difficult problems, such as the lack of compulsion available to the SIB for knocking heads together, could be tackled.

It is depressing to speak to people in banks and insurance companies and hear them say, "We know that we shall have to co-operate, but we shall not do so until we are forced to." The Government cannot allow that to continue, because every day somewhere in this country someone is selling duff policies to vulnerable members of the public. The public are entitled to expect that the Government regulatory regime will protect them. I hope that the Government will take that on board.

The Government must deal with the problem of the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation—IMRO—and the blot that the Maxwell affair has left on its record. And they really must resolve the problem of LAUTRO and FIMBRA.

The term "self regulation." is not only inappropriate but perhaps symbolic of an atmosphere that prevailed in the mid-1980s, and which is not relevant to the mid-1990s. Mr. Newmarch is right that the climate must change. That term is inappropriate—but, equally, statutory regulation should not mean a United States style civil service regulator, with the taxpayer picking up the tab when anything goes wrong. Industry should be allowed to regulate its constituent parts, provided that the interests of depositors and investors are looked after.

Parliament is entitled to lay down the framework of what it expects from the regulators—to ensure that companies are regulated, that interests are protected and that regulation means efficient and adequate policing of a regime, so that someone will knock on the door and say, "Where are your accounts? What policies are you selling? Are you deceiving people?" Yes, that will cost money, but in the long term it is a lot cheaper to have a proper regulatory regime in force than to allow the present situation to continue, claiming more victims every week.

The Government cannot avoid blame for what has happened, either with BCCI or in the financial services

[Mr. Darling]

regime. They created the culture of the 1980s, when a nod and a wink were given in the direction of regulation, but they made it clear that they did not want to know about it. That has changed. Indeed, some of the utterances of the Economic Secretary to the Treasury have contrasted favourably with some of those of his predecessors. That is why I am so disappointed that today he seems to be returning to the bad old days, saying, "This is a bit unfortunate; let us walk away and hope that it never happens again." We cannot do that; the culture must change. The Bingham report clearly illustrates what goes wrong when we have a culture of the soft touch. People will take us for a ride, and the Government must remember that.

I know that compensation is a difficult problem, but I strongly believe that, with proper regulation, it will be solved. I believe, too, that the fact that the industry will regulate itself makes abuses less likely. People will hear about things going wrong, so they will be more alert than they might otherwise be. I do not see why people who buy policies should have to pay for compensation in advance, by having it loaded onto the price of the product. That is equally wrong. The Government must get a grip on the situation, and show that they are prepared to regulate. At present, the industry is simply not doing the job.

Regulation is important for two reasons. First, the public, the depositors and the investors expect that when they do business with a regulatory body they are entitled to certain standards, which will be actively policed. Secondly, we must consider the reputation and standing not only of the industry but of the City and of United Kingdom financial services. The United Kingdom is still a world centre, partly because of that reputation, so it is important in terms of this country's income, GDP and employment prospects. If the Government accept that, they must accept that we need a regulatory regime that works. Those two aspects—the protection of the public, and the integrity and reputation of the industry in the United Kingdom—go together.

The Government must show that they are prepared to act quickly. Bingham and the Financial Services Act experience show that the Government and the House have been warned. We should take the opportunity that now arises. We cannot walk away from this. If we do, sooner or later we shall be back discussing the next catastrophe. I ask the Minister to bear in mind the fact that he has been warned. He may be the Minister responsible for such matters for a short time or for a long time, but he and the Government have been warned that there are problems, and that they must be tackled immediately.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will be aware that yesterday the President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made a statement on the GATT, which finished at 5.40 pm or thereabouts. Since then there have been considerable developments—the resignation of Mr. MacSharry and other matters concerning the President of the European Commission, who is responsible for the discharge of £25 billion of public money in connection with exports and agricultural support.

In answer to a question from me yesterday, as reported in columns 443-44 of the *Official Report*, the President of the Board of Trade did not dissent from the proposition that he was the prime political person in this country, and throughout the Community, in his capacity as President of the Trade Council, responsible to the public here and in the Community.

The Government have said that they wish to bring the proceedings of national Parliaments closer to the people, so I expected that it would be their duty to arrange for a statement to be made. Looking at the clock, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I gather that you have received no such application. I should be grateful if you would tell me whether that is so and, if it is, how the House can express its concern at the Government's lack of action on behalf of the people of this country and of the rest of the Community in this crucial matter.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will be aware that I have no vested interest in interrupting this debate, because I hope to catch your eye later. However, in the light of all the developments that have taken place in the House and the fact that the United Kingdom has held the presidency in Europe for the past six months, it is important that we should be given some information about what measures may be taken urgently to restrict the destructive tendencies of Mr. Delors, who has already done a great deal of damage to relations between the European Community and the countries across the Atlantic.

Mr. John Greenway: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Given the thin attendance that we normally see in the House on a Friday when we have an Adjournment debate of this nature, would it not be more satisfactory to the House for the President of the Board of Trade to make a further statement on Monday rather than today, when he should spend his time negotiating the GATT settlement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us not have a debate on this matter. I have had no request for a statement on any issue, but I am sure that those on the Government Front Bench heard what the right hon. and hon. Members said and obviously took note of it.

11 am

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): The disastrous collapse of BCCI has set a number of records, which stem from the sheer scale of the fraud. It is probably also on the way to setting a record for the number of inquiries and reports that have been made into it. We have had two reports from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, together with the responses of the Government and the Bank of England. We have also had the reports of Senator Kerry's inquiry and that of Sir Thomas Bingham.

I am grateful to the Economic Secretary for his kind remarks about the report of the Treasury Select Committee, since, in one sense, it was my swansong as Chairman. I believe that it is a good report. I also noted with interest what he said about Senator Kerry's report. From reports in the press, I came to the conclusion that it was long on rhetoric but not very long on evidence or analysis.

The reports of the Select Committee and that of Sir Thomas Bingham provide the House with a sound basis for a debate on the relevant issues—which, if I may presume to say so, has been apparent from the two speeches that we have already heard. There is a difference between the two reports, because the Committee's was based on evidence taken in public, which was an important contribution to the general debate on the issue, whereas Sir Thomas took evidence in private.

It is also true to say that, excellent though Sir Thomas's report undoubtedly is, it does not greatly add to the conclusions or recommendations that were made by the Treasury Select Committee. I am glad that the Government have been prepared to accept not only all of Sir Thomas's recommendations, but virtually all of those made by the Treasury Select Committee. It is vital that we should look forward in our consideration of this matter.

I should like to declare an interest; I am a consultant to a firm of accountants, and obviously the role of auditors was pretty important in this matter.

My first main point is a simple one. It is clear from the evidence that we have received that responsibility for bank supervision by statute rests with the Bank of England and not with the Government. Also apparent from the evidence we received was the extent to which the Governor of the Bank of England did—or, more accurately, did not—keep Ministers informed of what was going on.

There is no doubt that there has been a serious failure in the regulatory mechanism, so it is important that we analyse exactly what happened. I am aware that the Treasury Select Committee is now considering the issue of compensation, and I would not wish to comment further on that, except to note the rather extraordinary statistic that the Economic Secretary has already mentioned. About 42,000 claim forms have been sent out to depositors, but only 16,000 claims have been made. It might be relevant to consider what has happened to the other 26,000 claim forms.

Mr. Vaz: The right hon. Gentleman has highlighted part of our argument about compensation. The amounts of compensation that will be paid eventually, if the Government pay out to all the depositors, creditors, local authorities and former employees, would be a good deal less than the £6 billion mentioned, simply because people who want that compensation will under-claim.

Mr. Higgins: I understand that very well, but I am merely drawing attention to the large disparity between the two figures.

In the Treasury Select Committee report, we pointed out that IML—Institut Monetaire Luxembourgeois—and other regulators set up a unique system of supervision through a college of regulators, which was clearly a second-best solution with serious deficiencies. We said:

> "We simply do not understand why BCCI should have been the only bank in the world to be given such preferential treatment".

The response of the Bank of England to that point can best be described as pathetic. It said:

> "The BCCI was a unique problem and the college a unique response to it, as Lord Justice Bingham acknowledges, so it was not a case of preferential treatment."

I do not understand what the Bank is seeking to say. BCCI was the only bank in the world that was given a college of regulators, when all other banks were told that they should be dealt with on a normal basis by a single regulator. As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) have already said, BCCI was not looking for a home: it was trying to avoid having one. It singularly succeeded in that objective because of the special—and, I am bound to say, preferential—arrangement—the college of regulators.

I do not understand why the Bank of England followed that course of action. If it had taken a tough line at that time and had told the BCCI that if it could not find a proper home, it would not be authorised and it would have to close down, that would have been the crunch. I am bound to say that, if that had been done, the losses to depositors would have been far smaller.

The Treasury Select Committee also concluded that there should have been a single regulator. The Bank of England now accepts that, but it did not do so earlier. That reflects what we rightly criticised as the "climate of opinion" in the Bank, which caused a great deal of trouble. I noted with interest what the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said about the session that the Select Committee had with the Bank of England the other day. I still do not feel that there has been a significant change in that climate of opinion, despite the proposals that have now been made for improving the regulatory system. The lack of change is cause for concern.

The Select Committee also said of the Bank of England's response:

> "in our view the promise of additional funds from a major shareholder to make good any deficiencies does not exonerate a regulator from ensuring that the criteria for authorisation are met. We believe that it is important in future that a clear distinction should be made between solvency and probity, and that the 'minimum criteria for authorisation' should be strictly interpreted."

The Bank of England seemed to be convinced that, because more money was being put in and BCCI might therefore be regarded as solvent, that was the end of the matter, and it had no further cause for concern. If BCCI had been entirely run by the mafia, which was prepared to put endless quantities of money into it, it would have been perfectly solvent. That does not mean that it would have been an appropriate bank for the Bank of England to authorise. That attitude once again reflects the climate of opinion that existed in the Bank of England.

In the light of the reports of Sir Thomas Bingham and the Treasury Select Committee, the Bank of England and the Government have accepted the need for a body to regulate the regulators. The Treasury Committee considered this matter in considerable detail, and it is especially important against the broader issues of the EC banking directives and the GATT Uruguay round. One must consider whether, in order to have freedom of competition across international boundaries, bodies that are authorised in one country should be authorised in others. In the EC context, that goes to the idea that, if one EC country authorises a bank, that should be accepted as a sufficient criterion for authorisation in the United Kingdom.

It is suggested that some changes should be made—some legislation, for example—to deal with the legal status of banks that are thought not to be capable of adequate regulation. The Minister referred to the proposed forthcoming legislation. There are, in addition, proposed amendments to the Basle concordat.

I am not clear whether the legislation that we introduce would be adequate to enable the Bank of England to say that it is not prepared to give authorisation, even though it has been given in another EC country. Will the national legislation be capable of overriding what, on the face of it, seems to be an absolutely free passport across the EC?

[Mr. Higgins]

The Economic Secretary said that that would be discussed at the Edinburgh summit. It is extremely important for the point to be cleared up. It seems, for example, that a bank could be authorised by one of the successor states to the former Yugoslavia. If that were authorised there, we should be obliged to say, "That bank can operate here." If, under EC regulations, that law was supreme over the laws that we may make in the legislation which the Minister is contemplating, that would not be adequate protection for depositors in this country. We must be clear just what is the priority in one set of laws compared with another.

We must also consider, in relation to the Basle concordat, the question of peer pressure and so on. It is said that the concordat will cover the G10 and a wide range of countries. I suggest that it will not be adequate unless it is a universal set of rules and standards which can be applied. Otherwise, as happened in the BCCI case, a bank that wants to avoid effective regulation—forum shopping, as it is called—will go to a bank that is outside the Basle concordat.

Will there be some form of international blackball to enable signatories or parties to the Basle concordat to say that, in those circumstances, a regulatory authority will not be accepted as appropriate? That will be difficult, given that it may be located in a sovereign state. We must cover the point, because in many ways it reflects the problems exemplified by the tragic events that resulted in the collapse of BCCI and its aftermath.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central wondered whether the present structure in this country was appropriate, given that the Bank of England is responsible both for broad financial issues and the regulation of the banking system. I am coming increasingly to believe that that combined role is not necessarily appropriate.

I was interested to note the evidence that the Governor gave to the Select Committee a few days ago. The point was raised with him in the context of alleged remarks—I know not whether they were true—by Bundesbank officials about the situation in this country. One supposes that the Governor had given much thought to the subject. So, when he was asked whether he thought that the responsibilities should be split and whether some authority other than the Bank of England should deal with the regulatory side as well as the financial side, one would have expected him to give a considered view.

In the event, he made two particular points. He said that the great advantage of having the two combined was that the Bank was operating in financial markets as well as in a regulatory way, and added:

> "As a result of what we do in banking supervision, we have a very close picture of what is going on in the markets and the soundness of the financial institutions who are our counterparts, and as a result of what we do in the markets we get a very close picture of how things are going in the financial system itself."

If that were a valid argument, we would consider it in the context of BCCI and conclude that we had doubts about it. I suppose that the most active part of the financial market is the discount market, and at least one of the main participants in that market never accepted the BCCI situation. If so, one would suppose that the Bank of England, looking carefully at the discount market every week, might have taken some notice, in its role of regulator, of that fact. Indeed, if the Governor's argument is valid, it does not seem to have worked in that case.

The Governor's second point was that the Bank of England had close links with commercial banks and so on because it was a lender of last resort. That might be the case from the point of view of some of the clearing banks, but it blatantly was not the case in respect of BCCI.

Given that the Governor's term of office is coming to an end, this might be an appropriate time for the Economic Secretary to consider carefully whether the combined role is appropriate, whether the individual in charge of it can adequately give enough time to both roles, and, indeed, whether the same person should be in charge of both functions.

We are fortunate in having the Economic Secretary dealing with the issue. Many of the problems that have arisen in recent years have been due to the split between the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry. I hope that increasingly it will be concentrated in one Department, and the Economic Secretary's knowledge of these issues fits him well to consider the points that are being made today and, in a broader context, the points made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central, who expressed concern about the way in which the present financial regulatory legislation of a broader kind is operating.

The subsidiary legislation has been in a state of flux since the present framework was set up. The House did not do a particularly good job when it looked at these matters a few years ago, and the time has come for us to look at them more broadly and to learn the lessons that have been shown, not least by the report of the Select Committee and the Bingham report. We are learning those lessons, but I have thought it right to express some of the doubts that I still have about what more needs to be done.

11.16 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am glad to speak following the former Chairman of the Select Committee, partly because I can pay tribute to him for the work he has done on the two reports on this issue, and partly to urge the Economic Secretary to realise that the points made by the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) show how perturbed many of us are.

We are perturbed not on any party political basis but because of concern over the integrity and status of banking regulation and other relevant matters. We are perturbed that so little acceptance should have been shown by the Bank of England of the scale of failing that has been revealed. The calls that we make are not born of a party political desire in some way to injure the Government by getting at the Governor. There could be no clearer testimony of our concern than the remarks of the right hon. Member for Worthing.

We have before us a well-prepared report into a ruinous catastrophe for many individuals. Terrible hardship has been caused, life savings have been lost and small businesses have been destroyed among enterprising people, many of whom had come from another background and were building up their place in British society by hard work and effort.

Of course, BCCI was not confined in its work to the ethnic minority community. Its tentacles, and the hardship, were spread much wider, from one end of the country to the other, as is exemplified by the interest that is being shown in this debate by hon. Members from the southern tip of Britain to the Western Isles.

The involvement of local authorities was examined with care by the Treasury Select Committee, as was that of the brokers with whom they dealt. We found it significant that such a small number of brokers were involved in the BCCI business done with local authorities. By and large, the smaller local authorities, having less high-calibre professional advice, did that business.

As the Economic Secretary said, behind it all was massive fraud on a scale never seen in the banking system anywhere in the world before. The blame for what went wrong lies with that fraud and those who perpetrated it. However, it does not exonerate the regulatory authorities to say that they were simply regulators and not the evil men who planned the fraud, because a heavy responsibility rested on them.

The report contains a series of damaging criticisms of the Bank of England. They are stated modestly and carefully and set in context, but they are extremely serious. The fact that the report did not conclude with a recommendation that the Bank of England be abolished or its leading officials be sent to the stake is being adduced by the Governor and some of those officials as showing that those criticisms do not add up to much.

Nobody who goes through the pain of reading the whole report can come away from it without believing that the Bank has been the subject of fierce and wide-ranging criticism. I commend to anybody interested in the matter and who has not read the report in full to do so, because that is its impact. By failing to recognise the sheer extent of the criticism, one is in danger of not seeing the impact that runs from the beginning to the end of the story.

In the earlier stages, the report is telling when it looks at the report prepared by Brian Gent, deputy head of banking supervision, who argued strongly for the bank's location within the United Kingdom so that it could be dealt with properly by United Kingdom regulatory authorities, and dismisses the feasibility of any form of regulation not rooted in that. Paragraph 2.38 of the Bingham report says:

> "This paper provoked no action."

It was some time before it provoked real action, and there was much argument within the Bank. When other restructuring proposals based on a revised version of that paper were eventually put to BCCI with the authority of the Governor—by that time the present Governor had taken over—far from insisting that its wishes be carried out in the traditional way, the Bank

> "fell at the first fence".

As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) said, the Bank appeared to be a soft touch. The story is repeated time and again in the report:

> "Supervisors tended to lose sight of their primary duty to protect the bank's UK depositors. There was a lack of interest in establishing the truth."

Paragraph 2.120 says:

> "the Bank's response was so off-hand as to suggest a lack of interest".

Paragraph 2.161 says that, after the Tampa court case, "the Bank showed a very marked lack of curiosity."

Paragraph 162 says:

> "A rigorous supervisor would have wished to know the answer."

The report also says:

> "We find that in August 1990 Mr. Quinn and Mr. Barnes were unaware of the serious doubts thrown by Price Waterhouse on the integrity of the bank's most senior management."

They were unaware because they had not properly read documents in the Bank's possession at the time. Paragraph 2.257 says:

> "I find it hard to understand why the fitness and properness aspects of this report"—

Bingham was referring to the Price Waterhouse 1990 report—

> "made so little impact on the minds of those who read it in the Bank."

Paragraph 2.406 says:

> "I have much more difficulty . . . in understanding the Bank's failure even to try to explore whether the allegations were true or not."

Later in the report there appears the statement that some people in the Bank were reluctant to believe ill of BCCI —a banking institution which had, by that time, acquired a reputation, almost throughout the markets, as being at least questionable.

The total of criticism is massive. Why, then, do the Government seek to understate it? In the Economic Secretary's opening remarks today there seemed to be a deliberate understatement of the seriousness of the criticisms levelled against the Bank. The conclusion that people will draw from the understatement of the Bank's failings is that the Government are worried about the compensation aspect and do not want the failings to be stated too highly because that would strengthen the compensation case. The Government must dismiss that thought from their minds. The case for compensation will be argued on its merits. For the general good of our banking system, the Government must not ignore the scale of criticism in the report.

When the Economic Secretary talks, as the Governor did, about the duty to depositors, he seems to refer only to existing depositors. In all those circumstances there are potential depositors. Throughout the history of the BCCI case, those least protected were the people on the threshold of the bank, about to place deposits without the knowledge of what was known within the Bank of England and elsewhere. Banking regulators must have regard to the fact that on them rests the confidence and assurance of people who are about to place money with a bank that they assume has a supervisory or regulatory safeguard.

Reference has already been made to what the Chancellor said about blame being the basis for compensation and to what the Treasury Select Committee said about the case for compensation being dependent upon there being some failing in the exercise of supervisory duties. The Government must now consider that much more carefully than they have done so far. Legal action cannot be taken against the bank, as it could be taken against the financial advisers in the Barlow Clowes case for instance. There can be no recourse to the ombudsman. In the Barlow Clowes case, recourse to the ombudsman brought out a clear argument for compensation without regard to the possibility that legal redress might also produce compensation. The ombudsman was not deterred from recommending compensation by the possibility that investors could have got some of their money back by other means. The same applies to the bank deposit scheme. The fact that such a scheme exists does not remove the case for compensation.

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

I accept that 100 per cent. compensation has serious problems and I do not argue that case. However, failure to carry out supervisory duties generates a requirement for compensation and it is a matter of judgment what that level of compensation should be and how much regard should be had to what depositors will be able to obtain through other proceedings. If nothing is done, where is the discipline on the banking regulation system? Nobody resigns and nobody pays compensation, so what does it matter for those involved in it whether the banking regulation system works in the future? All that is at stake is that they do not lose their good name and are not subject to the criticisms contained in the Bingham report. If that is the only safeguard, it is clearly inadequate.

Mr. David Shaw: I understand the line that the hon. Gentleman has taken, but it is only fair that he should answer the question. The part of the report that he quoted refers to Price Waterhouse information that was available only on 3 October 1990. That was only seven or eight months before the closure took place. Surely that report led to the closure and, even if closure had taken place slightly earlier, most if not all of the money would still have been lost.

Mr. Beith: The failings that Bingham enumerates run through the whole history, from the earliest decision not to insist that the bank would not be authorised if it did not locate in the United Kingdom. That early key decision could have avoided far more of the losses. Failings exist at every stage and the case for compensation is therefore generated by failings that go back throughout the history of the matter.

If no one resigns when something goes as badly wrong as that, what discipline is there in the system? If no one takes responsibility to the extent of suffering the personal loss of resignation, where is the pressure, and where is the integrity of the system? There is a general feeling among the public that someone should go—whether it be the Governor or some of the senior officials most closely involved. When that does not happen, it weakens the system and the potential for future protection.

I do not wish to take up too much time or dwell on the many sensible and constructive changes made by the Bank following the recommendations of the Select Committee and the Bingham report, so I shall come to my final point. It relates to what the right hon. Member for Worthing said about the future responsibilty for banking supervision and the Bank of England's future position. I press the same point as he did for further consideration.

There is a strong case for separating the ultimate responsibility for bank regulation from the conduct of monetary policy. We have got it the wrong way round in this country. The central Bank exercises a largely independent responsibility for banking supervision, but is totally subservient to the Government on the matter of conducting monetary policy—the reverse of what should happen. There is a stronger case for closer accountability for banking supervision than for independence in monetary policy. There is a risk that the Bank's role in monetary policy, especially if it is more independent—as it must be under stage 2 of the European monetary system—could well be hampered by events such as that relating to BCCI and any that might occur in future.

A bank will occasionally slip through even the best-operated regulatory system, and its failure will cause problems. Even if all our best hopes for banking regulation are carried out, at some future time the central Bank may have another problem on its hands, which will cast doubt on its competence in the monetary sector, even if irrelevantly.

There is an argument for separating the two aspects. The Germans have an organisation located in Berlin—not even the banking centre—with responsibility for supervising the pursuit and prosecution of bank failings. That organisation draws heavily on the Bundesbank for guidance on what is happening in the banking sector, which would clearly have to be the case.

The Bank of England's day-to-day work involvement in the banking sector would always give it a role. In Germany, ultimate responsibility lies with the Bundesaufsichtsamt für das Kreditwesen. I hope that we can think of a more catchy title if we devise such an institution in this country. The Government should look at the case for the separation of responsibilities, just as they should consider the argument for a more independent central Bank. I know that the Economic Secretary has much sympathy with that argument.

The central Bank in this country—an institution which has served us well for many years—is presently deeply harmed by a series of well-founded and justified criticisms to which there has been no adequate response by those with responsibility who were in control at the time.

11.35 am

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): The debate seems to have been dominated by those who, with the benefit of hindsight, criticise those who were in the front line at a difficult time. We must draw back a little, stop and recall some of the actions taken by the Bank when it became conscious of some of the difficulties surrounding the organisation.

In October 1988, when the potential Tampa prosecutions came to light, involving people who were not from the bank operating in this country but from a sister organisation abroad, the Bank of England introduced clear scrutiny arrangements. Every week it held meetings with the management of the bank here, and considered its statistics, liquidity and balance sheet. That does not constitute the degree of negligence suggested by some hon. Members in today's debate.

Paragraph 2.3 of the Bingham report states:

> "The systematic frauds now thought to have been practised in BCCI were on a scale which had never been known before. It would, until the later stages of the story, have required considerable imagination to suppose that fraud was being practised on anything approaching the scale which has now been revealed."

Those remarks do not demonstrate negligence or a disregard for the interests of depositors and shareholders which some people have implied existed in the Bank.

I am following others when I refer to parts of the report that state, as at paragraph 2.283, that Bingham makes it clear that the Bank's conduct was skilful and professional in the period from January 1990 to the closure in July 1991. Therefore, there is also a story of the Bank operating properly and carefully.

Every crime is wicked, and the one that we are discussing constitutes a particularly vigorous series of attacks on the small as well as the larger investors and shareholders, and others. It is understandable that people wish to see compensation paid to those who have lost out.

Earlier contributions to the debate suggested that full compensation was not being sought. It appears that the conduct of the Governor of the Bank of England is being called into question. That is rather like someone expecting a policeman to stand on the corner of every street where mugging might occur and, when it does, complaining that a police constable was not present, and calling for the resignation of the Chief Constable.

Mr. Macdonald: Surely the whole point is not the effect of the fraud, which of course no one could imagine before, but the fact that the structure was such as to allow fraud to take place. As Bingham said, the Bank failed to regulate BCCI effectively and give it a different structure that would have made such fraud impossible. The hon. Gentleman referred to paragraph 2.283——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making long interventions this morning, and I believe that he is hoping to catch my eye.

Mr. Thomason: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Of course, we can all be wise now and criticise the opaque structure of the bank. We can say that the fact that it was operating here although registered in Luxembourg should have alerted us to take action. We could just as well say that there should be a police constable on the corner of the road where the old lady was attacked. After the event we can all speculate about what might have been, but we can rarely be so precise about the nature of the problems that we can take action to deal with them. That is what some hon. Members present today seem to want.

The closure of a bank or even the threat of an in-depth investigation of a bank is most serious action for the Bank of England to take. It is almost being suggested that the Bank of England officials get up in the morning, go to the office, decide whether to have tea or coffee, then decide whether to investigate a bank in depth. The system cannot work like that—there are serious issues to be addressed. The confidence required of any bank is such that to avoid a run on it officials cannot lightly take action that would prejudice its existence. They have a duty to the depositors and employees of the bank not to threaten their livelihoods, as well as not to threaten shareholders' investments. Any action by the Bank of England or any other regulatory authority with regard to other financial institutions must be exercised with the utmost sensitivity. Some hon. Members seem to be suggesting that the sensitivity of hobnailed boots is required.

It has been said that the number seeking compensation will be substantially fewer than the number of accounts. I must draw attention to an important distinction. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who gave an excellent appraisal of the position as one would expect of him, perhaps overlooked the fact that while there may be 42,000 accounts, groups of them will be in the name of one investor. Therefore, the total number of compensation claims might well be fewer than 42,000, or might be nearer to the total number of alleged losses. That is a minor point of correction. The key aspect is that the issue cannot be taken as lightly as some hon. Members appear to think appropriate.

11.39 am

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I welcome this debate and the publication of the excellent report. My only regret this morning is that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not present to open for the Government, although I am glad to see the Economic Secretary here.

There has never been a scandal like BCCI. If it had been a work of fiction, we should have thought it bizarre. However, I have never regarded BCCI as merely a financial scandal; I have always seen it as a human tragedy. The lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals, their families and their businesses throughout the world have been terribly affected by the closure of BCCI by the Bank of England. It has had catastrophic social and economic consequences. That is why a year and three months ago, when BCCI was closed, the House demanded an inquiry.

In welcoming the debate and the report, we must recall that the Government and the Governor of the Bank of England initially refused the inquiry. Some 12 hours before the Chancellor announced the inquiry to the House, the Governor told a group of Conservative Members that there was no need for any inquiry. He has been proved, yet again, to be hopelessly wrong.

The Bingham report is a horrifying indictment of the role of the Bank of England. For any regulator to be called "deficient" and for its operations to be called a "tragedy of errors" should be enough to prompt the head of the organisation in honour to resign. Wednesday's fumbling performance by the Governor of the Bank of England before the Treasury Select Committee should have been the final straw. Three members of the Committee either called for or invited his resignation.

Two weeks ago, even the *Evening Standard*, not known for its radical instincts, joined the chorus. Its headline was, "Go Governor". Someone must take the buck and the buck stops with the Governor. The report has made the Bank of England the laughing stock of all the financial institutions in the world.

A year ago, Ministers could not believe that the Bank could have done any wrong. The Chancellor said on 19 July:

> "I should like to make it plain that the establishment of the inquiry is not to be taken as a criticism of the Bank of England . . . I have repeatedly said that I am confident that the inquiry will find that the Bank of England discharged its duties in this matter competently and expeditiously."

The Economic Secretary, as I reminded him, said:

> "Many of us are confident that it will show beyond any question of doubt that the Government and the Bank of England acted wholly in a timely and proper fashion."—[*Official Report*, 19 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 715-25.]

On 22 July, even the Prime Minister said:

> "The moment that there was evidence of fraud, the Bank of England acted very promptly and so did the Government."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 759.]

The Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the Economic Secretary exonerated the Bank even before Lord Bingham had begun his deliberations.

The publication of the Bingham report marks a watershed in the campaign for compensation for the victims of BCCI. It has been an astonishing campaign. It is the human consequences, not the fabulous statistics, which have moved me and which would have moved any hon. Member if he had seen what I have seen.

I met a widow in Hong Kong who put her weekly income into BCCI. She lived in a tenement block with her

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

two young children. After the closure, she could not afford to pay the rent and she was forced out of her home. I met 400 pensioners living in Gibraltar who had put their life savings into BCCI. I also met a man who, the week before, had won the Spanish lottery and who had put all his winnings into BCCI. All was lost when the bank was closed.

I have met people in Manchester, Bradford, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Bristol, Glasgow and other towns and cities in Britain. I have had 1,567 letters from 70 countries from people who deposited money with BCCI. Every one of them was in a state of shock after the closure. Every one of them had relied on the good name of the Bank of England.

I went to the Western Isles at the invitation of my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), who is present today, and of the trades council. I saw the projects that may have to close if compensation is not paid. Some 30 local authorities lost £81·8 million in BCCI, ranging from the northernmost part of Scotland through to Lisburn in Northern Ireland and down to Tory Guildford in Surrey.

In its response yesterday to the Treasury Select Committee, the Bank of England agreed to produce a health warning on its list of authorised institutions—the report was put very late into the Vote Office—which is another sign that the Bank had got it wrong when the report was initially commissioned.

Throughout the year, the campaign has been sustained by the work of the ex-employees of BCCI, some of the finest people whom I have ever met and many of whom are here today. The ex-employees of BCCI want an apology from the Governor for his statement that they were somehow responsible for the fraud. They were not part of what the Governor described as the "criminal culture", but, because of what he said, they cannot find jobs. A survey of 1,200 ex-employees of BCCI shows that families have been torn apart. There have been heart attacks, illnesses, nervous breakdowns and even a suicide. The ex-employees have collectively made more than 20,000 applications for jobs.

The publication of the report makes the case for compensation for the victims of BCCI, for the depositors, for the creditors, for the local authorities and for the staff, unanswerable. I rely on just two statements, to which other hon. Members have referred.

The first statement, by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 19 July 1991, has been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). The Chancellor said that he would "consider the position" for compensation if any blame "applied to the authorities". He then said:

> "Plainly, we would then have to reconsider the matter, as happened with the case of Barlow Clowes."—*[Official Report,* 19 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 722.]

In its excellent report of 16 December 1991 at paragraph 76, the Treasury Select Committee made it clear that if there was a breach of statutory duty or supervisory duty, the losses incurred by local authorities should not be met by the local authorities or by their community charge payers.

Some 156 right hon. and hon. Members of all political parties have signed early-day motion 679 which calls for compensation. That is almost one third of all hon. Members who are eligible to sign such motions. The signatories include representatives of all the parties, such as the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), who represents the Scottish National party, the leader of the Ulster Unionist party, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the president of Plaid Cymru, the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), a former Conservative Minister who, as I am sure the Minister will recall, because I saw his joyous mood on Wednesday night, saved the Government, and the deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who also saved the Government on Wednesday. In view of the involvement of those two right hon. Members, I hope that the Chancellor and the Economic Secretary will look favourably on the campaign. I am not saying that those two votes were worth £6 billion, but I hope that the Economic Secretary will consider the case for compensation favourably because of the involvement of those two right hon. Members.

The Chancellor told me and the right hon. Member for Brent, North, when we went to see him last week—the Economic Secretary has repeated the point today—that he had considered the question of compensation and had concluded that he would not pay it, first, because Bingham did not recommend it and, secondly, because he did not conclude that things would definitely have been different if the Bank of England had not made mistakes.

I make several points in response to that. First, Lord Justice Bingham was not asked in his terms of reference to consider compensation. Secondly, there are many precedents that could be used. The Barlow Clowes case, to which the Chancellor referred, is a useful and acceptable precedent. The Chancellor should recall the statement made by his former colleague Lord Young, when he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in response to calls to the Government for compensation. Like the Bingham report, the Barlow Clowes report was silent on the question of compensation. In fact, that report was not as strong as the Bingham report because it did not apportion blame.

On 20 October 1988, Lord Young said:

> "The facts set out in Sir Godfray's report in the Government's view provide no grounds for concluding that my department's handling of the matter was unreasonable . . . and therefore provide no justification for using taxpayers' money to fund compensation."—*[Official Report,* House of Lords, 20 October 1988; Vol. 500, c. 1259.]

Using different language, that is precisely what the Chancellor said about compensation for BCCI. What happened? In agreeing to pay compensation after the second report, the next Secretary of State said:

> "The regulatory machinery was inadequate. It is also true that a large number of investors, many of them elderly, have suffered hardship. They were led to believe that their investment was safer than it was."

By the use of a discretionary payment, victims of Barlow Clowes who had lost less than £50,000 were compensated for up to 90 per cent. of their loss. Those who lost less than £100,000 got 80 per cent. back and those who lost more than £100,000 got 60 per cent. back.

The Minister will recall that this year Lord Young admitted that at the time of the Barlow Clowes collapse the Government were reluctant to admit responsibility because of their concern about setting a precedent. As with Barlow Clowes so with BCCI, because the cases are strikingly similar. In the Johnson Matthey case compensation was paid and, as the Governor of the Bank of England told the Treasury Committee on Wednesday, "every penny recovered".

In the Maxwell pension fund case the Government have used a discretionary payment to make grants of over £1 million to eight pension schemes and interest-free loans of £100 million. The campaign for more compensation goes on. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is involved in that case.

When the right hon. Member for Brent, North and I met the Chancellor and the Economic Secretary last week the right hon. Member told them that there was a perception that the Government were being unfair and discriminatory. I hope that in his winding-up speech the Economic Secretary will refute those allegations and show why there is to be a difference between the two cases. I am heartened by the statement by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), a senior and respected member of the Select Committee, that he believes that compensation should be paid. Will the Minister answer the question put to him earlier? If the Treasury Select Committee makes a recommendation for compensation will the Government pay it?

Compensation should mean full compensation for the depositors, creditors and ex-employees of BCCI. I put to the Economic Secretary a list of proposals that I think could help resolve these matters before the question of compensation is finally resolved by the Government. First, the Chancellor should examine representations for compensation from the affected groups. As I have said, I do not think that it will be as much as £6 billion, because the number of claimants will be considerably less than the current number of customers, which is about 285,000. As he said, there has already been a 50 per cent. under-claim on the deposit protection scheme.

Secondly, a committee should be established with representatives from the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to oversee the rapid conclusion of this problem and the co-ordination of Government activities.

Thirdly, the Department of Trade and Industry should be asked to act on the representations to it by creditors and staff about the way in which the liquidation is proceeding. I understand that the liquidators are currently claiming fees of between £1 million and £2 million a week. When creditors write to the liquidators asking how much money they are taking they are told virtually to get lost.

According to the liquidators' report, at the time of closure the total assets of the bank were $16 billion, including $3 billion in cash and due from other banks. According to Lord Justice Bingham, one of the reasons why the Bank of England did not tell Abu Dhabi about the closure was that it wanted the assets preserved and was concerned that, if given advance notice, Abu Dhabi might withdraw or disperse those assets. Where are those assets? In his evidence to the Select Committee last year when pressed on the position of United Kingdom branches, the Governor of the Bank of England said:

"We do believe that the branches may be asset surplus."

I ask again: where is the money, what has happened to it since the bank closed? Nothing has been realised and nothing has been paid out.

As the House knows, the liquidators were appointed by a fax sent by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the undertaking that a meeting of creditors would be held within three months. No such meeting has taken place. It is no good the liquidators chasing the small customers in Britain. They should chase the big borrowers whose loans are parked in the Grand Cayman islands, because they are the people who can give back the kind of money that the depositors need. Why are the liquidators not returning to the staff the $150 million taken by the the bank from the staff benefit fund?

Last week I asked the President of the Board of Trade to produce a list of the liquidators' costs and information about some written-off loans. I asked those questions because I had asked Mr. Desmond Flynn, one of the President's senior officials, to produce this information. In front of five other people Mr. Flynn produced a file and said that because of the powers conferred on him by the Insolvency Act 1986 and because there has not been a creditors meeting, the Secretary of State has to approve all the write-off of these loans. Why is that information not made available to all hon. Members?

The first scandal in BCCI was the fraudsters profiting from the misery of ordinary people because the Bank of England failed in its duty to protect them. The second scandal will be the liquidators becoming rich on the victims' money while the Government stand by and watch. I say to the Minister, as I said to the Chancellor last week, that in a year we shall be here again debating another inquiry into the way in which the liquidation has been conducted. That is why the DTI must hold an inquiry now into the liquidation.

Fourthly, the Prime Minister should approach the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi, because it is clear that the Sheikh owns the whole bank. There is no question of his being the majority shareholder. In the light of the Bingham report, the Government owe the Sheikh an apology. When that apology has been given he should be asked in the gentlest, kindest and politest way through diplomatic channels to see whether his contribution can be increased. As the owner of the bank, he has a moral obligation to increase the amount available for compensation.

The Minister said that the Sheikh was giving $1·7 billion, but what does he get back? He gets $4 billion in promissory notes and the right to chase the big borrowers in the Grand Cayman islands. That means that any money realised after the agreement will go to the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi. At the end of next year the depositors will receive only 10 per cent.—not 30 or 40 per cent.—of their money back and they have no timetable for payment of the rest of the money because the liquidators refuse to state the timetable.

An approach must be made to Abu Dhabi as quickly as possible, especially now that an appeal has been lodged. I suggested to the Economic Secretary the name of a person who would be a good go-between who has the confidence of both sides.

This morning I received a cheque in the post. Initially I thought that it was a payoff inviting me not to continue my campaign but it was a copy of a cheque for $2·5 million. It was drawn on a private Swiss bank account and signed by the founder of BCCI, Abu Hassan Abedi, and payable to his excellency Mr. Ghanzim Mazrui, chief of staff of the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi. I realise that Mr. Mazrui is an important man and that, with all the current important negotiations, we cannot offend him. However, it is plain that in his evidence to the Select Committee last year the Governor of the Bank of England realised that

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

members of the household who are close to the owner of the bank received some payment. It is important to clear that up and that is why the Sheikh should be approached.

Finally, the Serious Fraud Office should be allowed to interview those responsible. One of them who has been held in detention since last year died this week while in Abu Dhabi. These people are British citizens who could not only help in discovering the truth about what happened but could assist the liquidators by disclosing the location of the assets.

When I returned from Karachi in May I passed information to the Solicitor-General and invited him to ask the Serious Fraud Office to go to Karachi to interview people who wanted to give evidence but who, for a variety of reasons, were unable to come here. I hope that the Economic Secretary will pursue this matter to make sure that this information is made readily available, especially if the liquidators say that they cannot find some of the assets. If that is not done then, as in the case of the gentleman who unfortunately died this week, those people will be unable to help the SFO in its inquiries.

The solution to this terrible tragedy lies with the Government. The Prime Minister and the Chancellor were told what was to happen a week before the bank closed. Lord Justice Bingham, our most senior civil law judge, has found the Bank of England to be at fault. On Wednesday, the Governor, during one of his better moments, talked about the need for natural justice. Here is a case for natural justice.

Perhaps I am old-fashioned, but I believe that people and organisations should pay for their mistakes. The cost of the Bank of England's tragedy of errors is being paid every day and every hour by the victims of BCCI. When citizens place money in banks, they do so in good faith, believing that they are being properly supervised. BCCI was owned by one of the richest men in the world and supervised by one of its greatest financial institutions. Why on earth should people have doubted its integrity?

At the end of the Committee meeting on Wednesday, this exchange took place between my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North and the Governor. My hon. Friend asked:

> "Do you have any regret for what happened?"

The Governor replied:

> "I have great regret that enormous amounts of money like this have been lost, yes.
>
> But do you feel that you have any responsibility?
>
> I cannot accept absolute responsibility. Banking is a risky business."

In a democratic society, with power goes responsibility. There must be responsibility for both action and lack of action. With the failure of responsibility goes the duty to compensate those who have suffered. At paragraph 2.23 Bingham talks about the Bank's "duty to the depositors" overriding all other considerations. I agree.

Next week, one of the depositors of BCCI, a middle-aged woman who lives in Herne Hill, London, and who has lost everything she ever possessed in the closure of BCCI, will begin a hunger strike. I beg the Government not to draw out the suffering of these unfortunate victims in the way that they did over Barlow Clowes. I beg them not to push these people to the margins of their sanity. Repenting years later, as Lord Young did, cannot help victims now.

The Chancellor should accept his responsibility and stand by his commitments to the House. He must pay for the Bank's mistakes by paying compensation in full to those affected. If he refuses to do so, he will be impeaching the good name of this country, damaging the name of the City as a major financial centre and blighting a whole section of our community.

I can assure him that the campaign will go on and on until every penny is returned and every person, no matter how powerful or important, is brought to account, and justice is done.

12.2 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), because it gives me the opportunity to be the first to congratulate him on the role that he has played in following up the BCCI scandal. Those of us who have been here today to listen to his speech already knew how much work he had done, but the common touch that he demonstrated this morning as he showed the House how this scandal has affected the lives of many ordinary people speaks for itself. I compliment him on that.

I wish that I could support the hon. Gentleman's call for compensation, for which he made a compelling case. However, there is a fundamental difference between the Barlow Clowes and BCCI cases. In the former, the ombudsman found negligence on the part of officials of the Department of Trade and Industry, but there is no finding of negligence in the Bingham report. I accept that it is not an ombudsman's report, but, if anything, it is even more thorough than the report on Barlow Clowes. That is where the line needs to be drawn. However compelling the case made by the hon. Member for Leicester, East, and however much we all, in our hearts, would like to support that claim, if there is no finding of negligence, we are in some difficulty.

Equally, given that any compensation would come from the public purse, it is important to look at what Sir Thomas Bingham says about the role of officials and Ministers in the Treasury. He is specific on that, but he makes no criticism of them. There is some criticism of Price Waterhouse. Again, those criticisms are not sufficient to lead to calls for the resignation of the Governor of the Bank of England. Even if Sir Robin Leigh-Pemberton were to resign, those who might have been responsible for some of the events, perhaps for the lack of supervision to which Sir Thomas Bingham refers, would still be in place.

Mr. Beith: Perhaps they should go.

Mr. Greenway: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's point, but, if I remember correctly what I read in the report, Sir Thomas Bingham does not criticise or highlight individuals in such a way as to make it necessary for anyone to resign. I do not feel that the Governor should resign. The Bank has not been shown to be negligent. What the report demonstrates—this is what we have to conclude today—is that it was not the acts or omissions of the Bank of England that caused the loss: it was the unprecedented scale of the fraud carried out by those responsible for running BCCI. They must be called to account.

Mr. Wilson: Behind the guise of doubtless genuine concern, the hon. Gentleman is saying that nobody was responsible and that Sir Thomas Bingham has said that nobody was responsible. However, the report says:

"the Bank's supervisory approach to BCCI was in my opinion deficient."

Does that apply only to vague and intangible institutions and not to the efforts of the people involved, from the Governor of the Bank of England downwards?

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind the fact that Sir Thomas Bingham also says that these criticisms are being made with the benefit of hindsight, and that nobody could possibly have been expected to anticipate the scale of fraud that was perpetrated by those responsible for running BCCI.

We should accept Bingham's findings. There is no justification for questioning his judgment or his conclusions, or the facts revealed by the inquiry, which, in any event, are similar to the conclusions reached by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

The role for the House is to concentrate on the measures needed to strengthen the arrangements for supervision. I welcome the comments about that by the Minister. He is right to conclude that some of these changes, particularly in relation to the role, duties and responsibilities of auditors, should apply right across the financial services sector, including insurance, the subject on which I wish to concentrate.

In doing so, I declare some interests. I have been involved in the financial services industry for almost 23 years. I am a director of a firm of insurance brokers, and I am an elected member of the Insurance Brokers Registration Council. I advise the Institute of Insurance Brokers. All these bodies will be greatly affected by what the Minister said about putting the role of auditors on a statutory footing. That is the key recommendation of Bingham, and the key point of the Government's plans for change.

The key is to end the uncertainty about how far an auditor can and should go in taking action to the detriment of the client, which undermines the auditor-client relationship. I am not an accountant, but I can understand the difficulty that Price Waterhouse faced in dealing with its responsibilities. To clear the uncertainty once and for all by means of the Minister's proposal is undoubtedly the right way forward. I hope that the House will welcome that course, and will welcome statutory clarification.

I said to my hon. Friend the Minister in an intervention that the practical effect of his legislative proposal is to a large extent the basis on which the Insurance Brokers (Registration) Council regulates insurance brokers. I shall remind the House of the provisions of the Insurance Brokers (Registration) Act 1977. Effectively, all insurance brokers are required to submit their audited accounts for the year end within six months of that year end. Accompanying them must be a declaration from the auditor about the way in which policyholders' moneys have been looked after and the solvency margins of the firm. These requirements have statutory force. I know from my own experience how seriously auditors take their responsibility in ensuring that the registration council receives exactly right detail and advice in relation to the management of the firm.

I remind the Minister that if an insurance broker fails to discharge his responsibilities within the mechanism I have described, the registration council is required to take disciplinary action against the firm. That would almost certainly lead to the firm's being struck off the register of insurance brokers.

For many years, I have wanted these statutory requirements to be extended to cover the entire insurance and financial services sector. Intermediaries are affected, whether they are independent or dependent on or tied to one insurer. The far-reaching proposal that has been made as a result of the Bingham report should be set in the context of developments within the financial services sector to which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) referred.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer asked the Securities and Investments Board in July to undertake a review of the Financial Services Act 1986. An agenda has been set out, and one which is apposite to this debate. One of the regulatory responsibilities of SIB—Andrew Large, its chairman, has put it on the agenda—is whether the balance or interaction between investor protection and caveat emptor is understood or appropriate. That question goes to the heart of the BCCI difficulty and the difficulty of compensation.

When we were faced with the Barlow Clowes scandal, the feeling emerged that if the Government put in place a regulatory framework for financial services and that framework is deficient in some way and found wanting, that is the Government's fault, and compensation should be paid.

The other side of the argument—the Minister outlined it at the end of his speech—is that every individual must take proper advice and, more than that, ensure that the company, bank or institution in which he is investing his money is sound and properly managed. In the SIB review we need to examine the boundaries of the two conflicting arguments to ascertain whether the balance is right, and on that basis to see what needs to be done in terms of investor compensation.

The SIB regulatory responsibility review will be concluded in March or April 1993. There will have been responses from the entire financial services industry. I warn the Minister that he is likely to find some pretty negative answers to some of the questions. For example, are the objectives that lie behind the Financial Services Act 1986 understood and appropriate? I am sure that they are not understood by the majority of the British people. They may be understood by those who work in the financial services industry, but ordinary investors do not have an understanding of them.

Let us consider the likely changes in the regulatory structure. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central talked about the prospect of a new self-regulatory organisation, the Personal Investment Authority. That interacts with a further development, which is the European Community's recommendation that there should be regulation of insurance intermediaries.

If we are to have a statutory duty imposed on auditors and that is to apply to intermediaries, it must apply to those in the financial services sector as well as to those in the insurance sector. I have already said that those who are registered brokers already effectively have to comply with the statutory requirement to make available their accounts and show their solvency. Under the Financial Services Act, all intermediaries must be regulated.

[Mr. Greenway]

However, intermediaries who do not transact investment business are not properly regulated at present. The EC recommendation that genuine insurance intermediaries should be regulated provides us with an opportunity.

I accept that responsibility lies with the Department of Trade and Industry and not with the Minister. Nevertheless, I hope that he will recognise the logic of ensuring that insurance intermediaries are regulated. I can say from my experience as a member of the registration council that it fulfils its task with great professionalism and great thoroughness.

If that regulation were to apply to all intermediaries, I do not believe that there would be anything like as much concern that there are regulatory gaps that need to be closed. There are gaps, but scandals would not emerge, with policyholders and investors losing their funds, if there were the regulation that I am advocating. I ask for my hon. Friend's support. A consultation paper will be issued shortly that will seek responses to the general proposition that I have outlined.

These matters have a strong bearing on what should happen in financial service regulation as well. Under the Insurance Brokers (Registration) Act 1977, the council has responsibility for regulating insurance brokers when they mediate in insurance. If that function is extended to all intermediaries who mediate in insurance, those who mediate in investments, which include life assurance, must come within the scope of the registration council's responsibilities.

To put the matter simply, many independent financial advisers who transact insurance business as part of their day-to-day work would come within the scope of any compulsory registration of intermediaries on the registration council. That must follow.

Equally, it must follow that, as the registration council is carrying out supervision under the Financial Services Act entirely to the satisfaction of the SIB—it is currently authorised as a recognised professional body—we must question whether we need to adhere to the 49 per cent. threshold, or whether that can be removed on the basis that the registration council regulates all intermediaries —subject to one caveat to which I shall come.

That would apply to all intermediaries, be they insurance brokers or whatever else they call themselves. They would be regulated to the same high standard that applies to insurance brokers. The regulation would cover all insurance services, and would be carried out under the terms of the Financial Services Act.

That must make sense, but I will enter one caveat. Many intermediaries advise clients to make investments that are not insurance investments—unit trusts, PEPs, and so on—and such firms would have to be regulated by the new Personal Investment Authority. The Minister will find that the insurance broking profession will give general support to that overall concept, subject to some conditions.

One is that PIA membership should not automatically be granted to firms currently regulated by FIMBRA and LAUTRO, but that a fresh application should be made with a view to re-examining advisers. The Minister will not be surprised to learn that insurance intermediaries will also want polarisation maintained, and a single public register established and maintained by any new regulator such as the PIA, with sections for product providers and intermediaries.

A clear distinction should be drawn between intermediaries who are dependent and those who are independent. If the statutory basis of the declaration by auditors is to be made compulsory across the board, it is no use applying that practice only to independent advisers. Bad advice and the risk of investors losing life savings is more of a problem in the tied than in the independent sector. Authorised representatives often run firms independent of the product provider—but, because they have only one agency, they are tied agents and are regulated not by FIMBRA but by LAUTRO. They would have to be regulated by the PIA.

Any declaration by auditors relating to solvency and accounts must apply to such firms as well. It follows that the solvency margins imposed now on insurance brokers —and soon, we hope, on the entire independent sector —must apply to independent firms that are effectively dependent on one product provider. I am sure that the Minister acknowledges that important point. Unless that is done, there will be no proper polarisation or level playing field, as between the two sides of the industry.

It is crucial also that all advisers have professional indemnity insurance, because that is the best way initially of providing adequate protection for investors. That must be a requirement of the new PIA.

The Minister knows that there is much discussion in the financial services industry about those key points. He was absolutely right to outline the basic principles of best advice. I look forward to reading his five golden rules in *Hansard,* to see whether he missed anything out. If investors are not to put all their eggs in one basket but are to approach a number of different outlets and sources of advice, it is crucial that all are soundly based, secure, and fit and proper.

It was the fitness and properness of BCCI as a bank that gave rise to the problem—the Bank of England was examining BCCI's solvency, whereas we require fitness and properness. If the House genuinely wants to protect investors, nothing less will do.

12.24 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I wonder whether the Minister has the courage to visit the widow in Hong Kong described by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and tell her his five golden rules —particularly that about always being sure to hire an adviser. That kind of response is hardly adequate in dealing with the scale of disaster and failure represented by BCCI's collapse.

I add my congratulations to Lord Justice Bingham on producing an excellent, comprehensive, and clearly written report. It allows one to follow in detail the long, damning history of the Bank of England's errors and failures in supervising BCCI. The Bank repeatedly failed to understand the Banking Acts of 1987 and 1989 and the powers that were available to it. Time and again, the Bank ignored warning signals and failed to act in the way that a supervisory body should have done.

As to the Bank of England's Governor, BCCI was surely a bungle too far. He has participated in the most humiliating devaluation since the war, presided over the biggest banking scandal in financial history, and authorised the worst financial forecasts of any City institution. What more can he get wrong and still hang on to his position?

For a year, the ordinary people of the Western Isles and those throughout the country, who themselves carry no blame or responsibility for the BCCI, have had to bear the costs in cuts in services and extra local taxes—in effect, a Bank of England tax. The costs of the Bank's negligence should be carried by the Governor, who should resign, and by the Government, who should devise a scheme to provide fair and equal compensation for all who lost money or jobs.

The Government stick to the line that no negligence was shown in the Bingham report. When I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he replied:

> "my statements in July last year were about my willingness to reconsider the issue of compensation if evidence of negligence on the part of the supervisory authorities were to emerge. Lord Justice Bingham has found no such evidence."

That same argument has been used today by Conservative Members. In fact, the report plainly shows evidence of negligence. I wonder whether Lord Justice Bingham would agree with the Chancellor's interpretation, and that of the Minister. I therefore wrote to him, enclosing the Chancellor's letter. I wrote:

> "Mr. Lamont makes the bald statement that you found no evidence of negligence on the part of the Bank of England in respect of its supervision of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International . . . I would be very grateful if you could tell me whether you agree with the Chancellor's assertion."

Lord Bingham replied:

> "Thank you very much for your letter of 29 October 1992. Having been appointed to inquire and report by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England, and having delivered my report, I do not feel that it would be right for me to comment on the interpretation which either of them put on it.
>
> I appreciate that the report, even without the appendices, is quite lengthy, but I did my best to make it clear and intelligible. It is not for me to say whether or not I succeeded. But I am afraid that the answer to your question must be found in the report."

The sphinx has spoken.

The main point in that letter is that, at the very least, it is not possible for the Minister and other Conservative Members to state categorically that Lord Bingham found no evidence of negligence. At the very least, they must admit that we are forced to draw that conclusion, having read the evidence presented in the report.

I do not believe that any reasonable person could read the report without concluding that the Bank of England was negligent in the execution of its duties. According to Bingham, right from the beginning—in 1979, when the Bank of England authorised BCCI to accept deposits—the Bank

> "was not only entitled but obliged to refuse a licence".

That is in paragraph 2.30. The Bank was obliged to refuse a licence, but it went ahead and granted one. Surely that represents a gross failure to understand the powers available to it—and, indeed, required of it—under the Banking Act 1979. It also represents negligence.

Paragraph 2.46 of the report, and the paragraphs leading up to it, reveal what is perhaps one of the strangest episodes to feature in the whole affair. In 1982-83, the supervision department of the Bank of England concluded that BCCI must be incorporated in London if the Bank was to be able to regulate it effectively. A memorandum to that effect was sent to the Governor; he signed it, authorising the Bank's conclusion. The Bank then called in Mr. Abedi, who was interviewed by the director of banking supervision and told that the Bank wished him to incorporate in London so that BCCI could be regulated more effectively. Apparently, Mr. Abedi threw a tantrum and walked out of the office. That was the end of the affair.

With, as usual, mild understatement, Lord Bingham says in paragraph 2.46 that the Bank was "rather easily deterred". It is astonishing that the Bank of England, with its worldwide reputation for being able to bring other institutions into line simply by raising an eyebrow, could drop a course of action authorised by the Governor himself, merely because the person required to take that course had thrown a tantrum and declined at the very first interview. Has the Chancellor, the Economic Secretary or anyone else asked the Governor why he did not pursue more effectively the policy that he himself had authorised and approved?

That bizarre episode was followed by something equally strange: a complete change of policy. From 1985 onwards, the Bank of England shied away from any suggestion that BCCI should be incorporated in London. It declined all such offers, performing a complete flip-flop. The report does not explain why that happened. There is no explanation for the change of view by the Bank of England. One wonders whether that has anything to do with the information contained in appendix 8 relating to the intelligence services, and whether some of the blank pages—the black holes of logic or causality in this whole affair—could be explained if we had access to appendix 8.

A number of points have been made by the Minister and Conservative Members to explain why the Bank of England failed to carry out its regulatory role. Reference has been made to the last 15 months of BCCI's life. Whether the bank was closed down earlier or later is not the point: the structural problem was there from the very beginning, and the Bank of England had reason to act about that problem from the very beginning. It was too late by the last 15 months of BCCI's life.

Reference has been made to the unpredictable scale of the fraud. Again, that is not the point. Nobody could have predicted the exact scale of the fraud. Lord Bingham's point is that that fraud was made possible by the opacity, the vagueness of the structure of BCCI, which made it impossible to regulate the bank effectively. The Bank of England's failure was to allow such a structure to exist. By allowing it to exist, the Bank enabled fraud to be committed.

Revocation is another red herring that has been drawn across the path of this whole affair. It has been said that the Bank of England could not possibly pull the plug on BCCI because of the catastrophic consequences that would flow from its closure. But revocation is not the point, either. Lord Bingham pointed out time and again that the Bank of England has enormous powers to step in and exercise its influence, and that it clearly failed to do so in the case of the 1984 episode. One is therefore entitled to ask why the Bank of England did not exercise its influence.

Hon. Members have said that we see all this with the benefit of hindsight, but that is not what Lord Bingham says. Section 7 of his report covers the years from 1984 to 1986, well before BCCI's final collapse. In paragraph 2.57 of chapter 2, Lord Bingham describes the Bank's supervisory situation as highly unsatisfactory, adding:

> "as should have been obvious at the time."

That is not with the benefit of hindsight. According to Lord Bingham, it should have been obvious at the time that this was highly unsatisfactory.

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

Lord Bingham went on to describe some of the Bank of England's responses. In paragraph 2.62, he says:

"making, as I hope, appropriate allowance for the benefit of hindsight, I cannot regard this as an adequate supervisory response."

It was an inadequate response, not with the benefit of hindsight but because of what was known at the time.

Lord Bingham refers in paragraph 2.66 to the Bank of England's failure to exercise its powers in an appropriate way and to exercise some formal control over the way the business was run:

"it is hard to think that SA in the summer of 1986 was not such a case"

as to deserve some formal control over the way the business was run. Inadequacy of supervision should have been obvious at the time to the Bank of England.

Lord Bingham concludes paragraph 2.67 with what I believe to be one of the most damning sentences in the whole report:

"I think the supervisors tended to lose sight of their primary duty to protect the bank's UK depositors. I do not think that in this instance the Bank measured up to its task."

When the Bank of England loses sight of its primary duty to protect BCCI's United Kingdom depositors, the Bank of England is thereby negligent of its duties.

The case for compensation for local authorities is especially strong. The authorised list has been mentioned, but in order fully to understand its import, one must understand its origins. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 specifically restricted local authority investments to "authorised" investments. Investments would have to be made with authorised institutions, which included banks authorised by the Bank of England.

Why was that done? For no good reason? No, it was done for a specific purpose: the Government's express intention to end imprudent investments and so safeguard local authority funds. That was made clear in the consultative paper on capital expenditure and finance published by the Department of the Environment in July 1988, before the Act went through Parliament.

In paragraphs 37 and 38 of that paper, the Department of the Environment said:

"it is . . . a matter for concern that some authorities appear to have used their funds to undertake speculative investments . . . the new system will, therefore, specify a list of approved investments."

In other words, the new system—the list—was intended to distinguish between speculative investments and non-speculative, presumably safer, investments.

Acting in that context, and according to those guidelines, local authorities throughout the country placed money with BCCI, which featured on the list of authorised institutions. To me that context is inescapable, and it makes the local authorities' case for compensation especially compelling.

Local authority compensation need not mean extra overall taxation in the country as a whole. Local authorities are already having to pass on the cost of the losses to local taxpayers, by means of higher local taxes. Compensation from central Government would mean that, instead of the burden being loaded entirely onto the shoulders of local taxpayers—many of whom, in areas such as mine, are suffering high unemployment and severe economic distress—the load could be carried more broadly across the nation as a whole.

Finally, on the subject of redress and compensation, it has already been said that BCCI depositors have no means of redress other than through the Government. The Bank of England has legal immunity and cannot be sued, except in instances of bad faith. I do not say that there was bad faith; there was simply incompetence and negligence. The ombudsman is not empowered to investigate the matter either, because it affects the Bank of England, so depositors can look only to the Government for some kind of compensation.

It is clear from the Bingham report that what has happened has been primarily a failure of national regulation.

If the Select Committee returns to this problem in a future report, and if it recommends the payment of compensation, will the Government accept that recommendation? The Select Committee is the only independent body able to make such a recommendation. The ombudsman and the courts could not; nor could Lord Justice Bingham, because it was not in his remit. The only independent voice to decide the verdict in this matter is the Treasury Select Committee. If it recommends compensation, will the Government accept that?

BCCI represented a huge failure of regulation by the Bank of England, charged by the Government with the task of supervising the banking system and ensuring the basic security for people's deposits. I believe that it is now the responsibility and duty of the Government to come forward with a fair and reasonable scheme of compensation to lift the burden from tens of thousands of innocent depositors and local taxpayers who are now carrying all the costs through lost savings, lost jobs and lost services.

I echo the question by other hon. Members—what is the price of failure on the part of the Bank of England? So far, we have had no apologies, no resignations, no compensation—just excuses. If there is no price, what incentive is there to do the job effectively and properly in the future?

More than 123 hon. Members have already signed early-day motion 727, calling upon the Governor to accept his responsibility for this failure and to resign. The longer he declines to do so, the longer he remains a Governor not just without credibility, but I am afraid—I am reluctant to say it—without honour.

12.46 pm

Mr David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I apologise to the House because the issue I want to raise may result in my failure to be present for the conclusion of the debate. I should declare an interest because I was one of the people who actually owed money to BCCI when it closed down. I used its credit card, which gave a percentage of turnover to green issues, and when the bank closed down I owed it £5·50. I hasten to add that I paid that rather promptly.

Mr. David Shaw: With interest?

Mr. Wilshire: I do not believe that I had the debt long enough for interest to be added.

I must also explain to the House that I cannot possibly bring certain expertise to bear in this debate because I am neither a banker nor an accountant. I am also ready to admit to not having been closely involved as this awful saga unfolded. However, in the past few days, I have become horribly involved because of a family tragedy in my constituency caused by that saga.

As time has gone by, we have all heard about the traumatic cases of financial ruin caused by BCCI—we heard about some more this morning. We have heard of the loss of life savings and the destruction of businesses. However, as the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) said, this week death has been added to the grisly catalogue of things that have gone wrong because of BCCI.

One of my constituents who worked for BCCI had been held for 14 months in detention in Abu Dhabi. He was held without charge, without access to proper lawyers and without access to proper medical care. He died in detention on Monday. Up until now his family and I have kept quiet, because, quite properly, his family's priority throughout this week has been to get his body back to the United Kingdom. Earlier this morning his body finally reached Heathrow. This is the earliest opportunity the family or I have had to speak out and, if the House will allow, that is exactly what I intend to do.

My constituent was aged 45. He was married with three young children living in my constituency. They are all British subjects. He was a United Kingdom officer with BCCI, and when the bank moved its headquarters to Abu Dhabi, he originally told the bank that he did not wish to go. The bank subsequently persuaded him to go, and on 8 September of last year, with 17 others, he was detained by the Abu Dhabi authorities.

My constituent was among those who had offered to return to the United Kingdom to give evidence to the Serious Fraud Office to help with its inquiries. His detention made it impossible for that to happen. The hon. Member for Leicester, East was right to point out that there are people still willing to help but who are prevented from doing so.

My constituent's detention was extended on a monthly basis. At no time since last September was there any charge and at no time, to the best of our knowledge, were he or the others allowed any form of exercise. I understand that at no time was proper legal support given to those detained and, to the best of our knowledge, no proper medical assistance was available, even though my constituent was a known diabetic.

Because of the loss of earnings, that family, unlike some others, could not go to Abu Dhabi to see him. His application to make telephone calls to the United Kingdom to speak to his wife and children was refused by the authorities, and the only communication received by the family was by way of letters smuggled out of Abu Dhabi and brought to this country.

I am grateful for all that the Foreign Office has done since last September. I am told by the Foreign Office that all of what I have explained to the House is in accordance with Abu Dhabi law. It might be, but it is not within my definition of human rights. I am appalled and disgusted at the treatment that my constituent received. My heart goes out to his family for what has happened this week.

I call on the British Government—I appreciate that the Economic Secretary is not responsible in this context and will probably not be able to respond directly—to lodge the strongest possible protest with the Abu Dhabi authorities about what has happened. We should redouble our efforts to obtain the release, or at least the charging, of the other British subjects who are still held in Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Vaz: Everyone involved in the campaign will be delighted with what the hon. Gentleman has done for the family in question. When, with members of the campaign committee, I visited Abu Dhabi, we asked, through the ambassador, to see the people in detention. We were forbidden to see them. In appealing to the Minister, we urge him to remember that there are still 17 British citizens in detention. We appeal on behalf of them and their families.

Mr. Wilshire: I was seeking to make that point and I echo what the hon. Gentleman said. No form of compensation that we could discuss and no form of help could now assist my constituent or do any good for his family. But I agree that we must do all we can to assist the others.

Any comments that I make on the BCCI affair are general in character. I have not been as closely involved as perhaps some might say I should have been, and I am no expert. But as a lay person, I must ask what the public have a right to expect when doing business with banks. I suggest that they have a right to expect an adequate framework of control, and only the Government and the House can provide that. The public also have a right to expect an adequate standard of supervision. We as lay people, when dealing with such issues, cannot deliver that supervision. We must rely on the experts.

It is worth underlining the fact that the public have no right to expect that anybody, anywhere can guarantee that such a thing will never happen again. We must debate whether everything possible has been done to minimise the risk of its ever happening again. The question that should be answered is: did the Government, the Bank of England and the individual experts do everything possible to minimise the risk? Given the scale of the disaster, I well understand why many people say, "No, somebody, somewhere did not do everything possible to minimise the risk".

I do not feel qualified to answer that question, so I looked to the Bingham report to see what answers are given to that question of minimising risks. Much to many people's relief, the Bingham report appears to exonerate the Government and the Treasury from blame. I then notice from the report the suggestion that the general system of supervision seems to be all right. Finally, I note that the Bank of England does not seem to be quite all right. I, too, am relieved about the message that I receive on the role of the Government and the Treasury, but it is hard to accept that a system of supervision is basically all right when something so horrendous has gone wrong.

I note the point about split responsibility, but it does not need an expert to understand that the system of divide and rule applies here. If lots of different people or even two groups have joint responsibility, it is hardly surprising that sooner or later the responsibility falls—plop—between the two. That appears to be what has happened. I also note that, if the general system of supervision is national, the international dimension will never adequately be taken care of. I raise that matter to enter the caveat in the response that I see being put about: that we should now beef up the EC system of banking regulation. I cannot resist the temptation to point out that countries such as Switzerland are not members of the EC, so it is difficult to believe that asking the EC to resolve an international problem will get us far. Even if the EC could do something, I have no doubt that if the Council of Ministers came up

[Mr. Wilshire]

with a grand scheme, Mr. Delors, in his bid to be President of France, would say, if it suited his purpose, "Tough. I shall sabotage it." That is what he now does when he does not like what is going on within the EC.

Finally, I am forced to look at what the Bingham inquiry report says about the Bank of England. It makes serious criticisms—even a layman can understand that they are serious. Earlier in the debate, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) described the Bank of England's response as "pathetic", and the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) used the word "negligent". All that I have read and heard smacks of going through the motions, in the hope that one would get away with minimum effort.

That was bad enough for those who have suffered financial loss, but, now, going through the motions and not necessarily doing the job properly have reached the bottom line of at least one death. I hope that those concerned will think carefully about that consequence. In the past—and even recently in the case of the London ambulance service—shortcomings, even if they were not wilful, resulted in resignations. I deeply regret that resignations are no longer fashionable. I hope that those involved will once again consider the role that they played or did not play and consider their consciences again and again. They should then act in the honourable way.

The BCCI saga is about fraud on a scale which the world has not often seen before. It is about financial disaster for thousands of people. And now it is about death, for which we cannot sensibly talk about compensation. When we have such debates I hope that, as well as cataloguing what has happened and seeking to apportion blame, we shall spend most of our time ensuring that we minimise the chance of the disaster ever happening again.

1 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The House has listened with much sympathy to the account given by the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) of the tragedy that has befallen his constituent and family. On behalf of my right hon. Friend and hon. Friends who are not present today, I tender our sincere condolences.

The Economic Secretary will recall that the Chancellor reminded the House on 22 October of Lord Justice Bingham's terms of reference, which included the words:

"to consider whether the action taken by all the UK authorities was appropriate and timely".

I would be inclined to reverse those words to read, "timely and appropriate".

From my comparatively neutral position in the House —depending on the issue before us on any given day—I have noted that the sordid story began back in 1972. For 15 of those 20 years Conservative Governments were in charge, and for five years a Labour Government were in charge. At least there is some excuse for the Labour Government, as at one period they had no majority and during another they were in alliance with another party in the House. To some extent the wheel has turned full circle. If representatives of the allied party had been present I might have given them a few tips about how to do a deal: "Get all you want, without giving anything in return." I speak as an old hand in such matters.

Lord Justice Bingham concluded that the conduct of Treasury Ministers and officials was not, in his view,

"open to criticism in any respect."

I am not qualified to differ from that conclusion, even if I wanted to. It is unfortunate for the present Government that they are answerable and accountable, which is why —for constitutional reasons—we are having today's debate. I think that we feel grateful to the Treasury Ministers for co-operating and securing a debate so soon after the report's publication.

As hon. Members have said, section 1(4) of the Banking Act 1987 appears to grant the Bank of England immunity from liability for damages unless

"it is shown that the act or omission was in bad faith."

To my simple mind it would seem that as Parliament granted such immunity and produced defective laws, it must collectively accept some liability. In this case the agency of Parliament is the Treasury. It is my view—I think that it is shared by other Opposition Members—that the Treasury must make generous contributions to those organisations, institutions and, most of all, individuals who were not only unprotected by defective legislation, but encouraged to invest in a bank, which was known to be unstable for approximately two years—that is to put it mildly.

In the case of Lisburn borough council, the bulk of the £3 million investment was made in those last two years. That investment was recommended and fully approved to the council on the basis of the continued inclusion of BCCI in the quarterly bulletin, which is compiled by the Bank of England, but circulated by the Department of the Environment.

The Minister said that Her Majesty's Government and Ministers are exonerated, which is true. The report concludes that Treasury Ministers are blameless. But can the same be said of the Department of the Environment? I am convinced that at least a section of that Department —I am talking about two Departments, the big brother over here in Whitehall and the smaller brother in Northern Ireland—would have been aware of the doubts about BCCI.

Yet the bank remained on the approved list and its retention on the approved list undoubtedly misled local authorities, especially those in the more remote parts of the United Kingdom. It is no accident that local authorities in the Greater London area, which would independently have picked up the little whispers, the suspicions and the gossip, steered well clear of the trap. The Department of the Environment may claim that it was acting as postman by simply distributing the quarterly bulletin which contained the list, but that action conveyed to councils and to other institutions—to individuals as well, I suppose— the impression that BCCI continued to be officially approved.

The Economic Secretary rightly advised against confusing authorisation with guarantee, but the existence of the list suggests that the Department of the Environment had committed the error of making that confusion. Investments were made on the basis of what was a form of Government approval. I am especially mindful of private investors, but I realise that local authorities were more directly influenced by that information. Local authorities saw themselves as accepting the advice and guidance of their parent—the Department of the Environment.

In recent years, councillors have been compelled to regard themselves as creatures of the Department of the Environment. I have here a code of conduct which has just become effective in Northern Ireland. The same straitjacket has been applied to many local authorities in Britain. The code of conduct contains 31 directives to local councillors and they are all based on the theory that they must obey their superior authority without question.

I hope that the Government will devise an early warning system on the lines of the Minister's final words of advice and the words of the final passage in the Select Committee report.

The Bingham report refers to financial institutions in the Isle of Man and in Gibraltar. In addition to the activities of BCCI in those areas, there is a parallel scandal of the Gibraltar-based company International Investments Ltd., the subject of early-day motion 747. There is a United Kingdom angle to that about-to-burst scandal. The Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland is currently pursuing that connection and the Crown solicitor is considering extradition proceedings in regard to an Irish banker, Mr. George Finbar Ross, who has become the central figure in a book published last month entitled "Gibgate", about which we shall hear more in the near future.

There is some overlap between the two scandals. A family residing in Antrim, East had invested £200,000 in International Investments Ltd. and had made a smaller investment in BCCI. That family suffered a double blow and, as in the case quoted by the hon. Member for Spelthorne, a death has resulted. I do not suggest that the death was caused entirely by the double blow.

To be fair to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), he did not attach blame to the Government —nor do I. Responsibility rests with successive Parliaments and we must all face the consequences of the failure of responsibility. Whatever our views on the Bank of England, the House must hasten to ensure that such disasters are not repeated, in so far as that is possible in this computer age when currencies do not change hands, but become merely blips on a computer screen. As there has been no political point scoring in the debate, let us all combine to do all in our power to mitigate the resulting hardship on individuals and institutions who quite unwittingly become victims of a massive fraud.

1.9 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): As small financial services firms have been mentioned in the debate, I shall declare my interest as chairman of the Back-Bench smaller businesses committee and my association with a small financial services company. I am an ex-banker and a chartered accountant.

The BCCI fraud is not about small firms. The nature and the enormous size and scale of that fraud is totally unprecedented in the history of banking. It is clear that a small number of people, aided and abetted by some senior managers and possibly one or two people outside the company, are to blame for the fraud. The fraudsters have still not been brought to justice and I can understand the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) about the way in which his constituents are suffering. Perhaps some innocent members of BCCI staff are suffering because of the over-zealousness of some people to protect themselves. It would certainly be wrong for such suffering of British subjects to continue without the opportunity for a fair trial.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) for his assiduous work in the interests of many. I do not share all his views on the matter, but he has certainly worked hard, especially in his quest for information. On the Select Committee on Social Security I experienced the need for information to understand what is going on and what went on in the Maxwell affair. I totally support the hon. Gentleman in his quest to get to the bottom of what happened to the billions of pounds that were paid into BCCI.

We all agree, as Bingham clearly identifies, that the fraud did not suddenly happen at the last minute but went back many years into the 1970s. Billions of pounds went into BCCI. Where did it all go, because little of it was left at the end? Cheques for billions of pounds cannot be writen overnight at the end of a bank's life. Cheques taking money out of BCCI must have been written over many years and there must still be stories to be told. It is disgraceful that the hon. Member for Leicester, East has not had answers to his questions. The Government must do everything in their power to persuade the liquidators and others to answer those questions because it is important for the information to be brought into the open.

Part of the problem about the prevention of future frauds is that people can hide behind a veil of confidentiality. In the case of Polly Peck, Cyprus was the veil, and Liechtenstein and Switzerland hide people in the Maxwell affair. There must be a stronger effort to discover where the money went in all those frauds. I shall certainly support the hon. Member for Leicester, East in that quest.

People have a right to know and to have an answer to the question whether more could have been done to prevent the BCCI fraud. It could be said of every fraud that more could have been done to prevent it and there is always a legitimate claim that more should have been done. But such claims are always made with the benefit of hindsight and we have to examine them carefully to see what could have been done. In the case of BCCI, it is easy, and Bingham has done so, to say that more could have been done, but it is difficult to conclude that the outcome, even if more had been done at an earlier stage, would have been any different, because the fraud seems to go back so far.

The role of the auditors has been questioned. As I am a chartered accountant, the House will not be surprised to hear me say that I have some sympathy with the auditors. The House will know that I have been in the forefront of criticising my profession when I think that members of the profession or the profession itself stray further than is justified by the public interest. However, this case pushed at the limits of auditing.

The public must understand that an audit can never guarantee that there will be no fraud, particularly when such a sophisticated international fraud involving about 200 people in the know is being perpetrated. Frauds normally involve no more than one or two people, because to involve more puts the whole fraud at risk—someone makes a mistake or leaks some information or leaves a document lying around. That is why BCCI's fraud is so unusual and odd.

When I did my auditing courses, we always went through the procedures showing how frauds could be put in place. The frauds that we went on courses to investigate

[Mr. David Shaw]

usually involved a small number of people, either with one or two large transactions or with a large number of small transactions. Unusually, the BCCI fraud involved large numbers of large transactions. The auditor is a watchdog, not a bloodhound. It would have needed a rottweiler to cope with the BCCI fraud.

There have been criticisms of the Governor and the Bank of England. In particular, hon. Members have asked whether closure should have come earlier. However, many —depositors and employees alike—argued against closure. I heard their arguments in the Grand Committee Room at a meeting hosted by the hon. Member for Leicester, East. There is no doubt that many claimed that the closure was a political act, and even professionals questioned the closure. Paragraph 2.468 of the Bingham report shows that on 4 July—the day before closure was decided upon—Price Waterhouse thought that closure might have been precipitate.

We know that, a year before that, the authorities in Abu Dhabi and the majority shareholders invested some £4 billion in the bank to support it. They did not think that closure was appropriate, Ahmed Al Sayegh sent hon. Members a letter, dated 16 October, from Abu Dhabi and the majority shareholders. Even today, they are not happy with the closure. The letter says:

> "The Majority Shareholders continue to believe that, had their restructuring plans been allowed to succeed in July 1991, the grievous losses and hardship resulting from the closure would have been prevented."

Even today, people question whether closure was sensible. I am not one of them. The report and the evidence make it clear that the fraud was deep and widespread within the company, and there is no question but that the bank was unfit to continue in existence. Therefore, the Bank of England cannot be criticised either for being too late in closure or for not closing early enough.

The blame cannot be laid upon the Governor either, because most of the fraud was initiated, and the basis for it set up, before he became Governor. There was false book-keeping in the Cayman Islands, for example, and in other areas where the Governor is not responsible. I am sure that the Governor would never want to be responsible for fraud havens such as the Cayman Islands. To ask the Governor to resign over the BCCI fraud is about the same as asking the Leader of the Labour party to resign because Robert Maxwell was a member of the Labour party.

Mr. Vaz: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind comments about me. I thank him also for his involvement in the campaign over the past year. I do not want it to seem as if there is a mutual admiration society, but the hon. Gentleman has been extremely active in the Maxwell pensioners' campaign.

Leaving aside the resignation of the Governor—I know that the hon. Gentleman disagrees with that call—does he accept that there is a case for compensation that is similar to the one that he has advanced on behalf of the Maxwell pensioners? Where an authority has been criticised—even the Governor accepted on Wednesday that the report is highly critical, and the Economic Secretary has accepted that as well—there is surely a case for compensation, just as there was for the victims of Barlow Clowes, and just as there is a case—indeed, a strong and compassionate one —for the Maxwell pensioners, which the hon. Gentleman has been prosecuting.

Mr. Shaw: I shall be coming to that issue. I want, first, to make two small points about the Bank before talking about compensation.

We must recognise that the Bank of England was not the primary regulator. Other regulators were no better at regulating BCCI than the Bank of England was. As far as I can judge from the Bingham report, the Bank started to get a smell that something was seriously wrong on about 3 October 1990, which was less than a year before BCCI was closed. The criticism, if any can be levelled at the Bank in terms of the report that it received on 3 October 1990, is that it was not entirely streetwise in its reading of that report. The Bank, however, is not always there to be streetwise. Sometimes it has to be above the street and to assume that the banks in the City are basically honest institutions.

The report on 3 October 1990 highlighted some wrongdoing, but it was not a comprehensive report about every aspect of BCCI. It was not produced to meet the terms of section 41—the relevant section—of the Banking Act 1987. Therefore, it was not a basis for total closure. It was, however, a basis for the Bank proceeding in the way that it did. I am sure that there are many in the Bank who look back on the report and say to themselves, "Could we have done more? Perhaps we should have done more."

Surely that is not a fundamental basis on which to say that the Bank completely failed in its obligations. I do not believe that the report identifies enough to show that the Bank was negligent or wrong.

It was the Bank which finally closed down BCCI. It was the Bank which finally commissioned the report that closed it down. It is interesting that that report was never finalised. The Bank closed BCCI on the basis of a draft report. In other words, it was closed extremely quickly when real evidence was found to exist. As the Bingham report makes clear, BCCI was closed before the auditors had had enough time entirely to verify all the evidence that they had found. I do not think that the Bank can be blamed for taking the correct action on a timely and proper basis. Those who say that earlier action was possible have to say when that earlier action was possible. They must put themselves in the Governor's shoes and those of others in the Bank and ask, "What decision would we have made and when would we have made it?"

They must question also how much more money would have been saved for depositors. Because this country's deposit scheme is comprehensive, it is doubtful whether more would have been saved.

The Abu Dhabi authorities must carefully review their actions. Sheik al Nahyan Zayed is unquestionably an honest, respectable and respected man who was conned by a so-called friend—Mr. Abedi. However, there were failures on behalf of Sheik Zayed's staff, and it would be wrong if members of the British public and British citizens suffered as a consequence. I was particularly concerned by the story the House heard today from my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire). The Abu Dhabi authorities have put in billions of pounds, but they were too closely involved in some of the bank's decisions.

I believe that all who have spoken today accept that the Government played no role in BCCI's downfall, and that the Bingham report identified no failure on the Government's part. The previous Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), tried to pin something on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. That was a despicable and unjustified smear—made before the general election campaign, for electoral purposes. Bingham did not establish any justification for that smear. There was no substantive failure either on the part of the Bank of England.

Mr. Molyneaux: Whatever may have been said and done in the House in the past, there is a consensus that past and present Governments were not to blame. I hope that I did not offend any right hon. or hon. Member when I suggested, however, that all Members of Parliament must take some blame for defects in the law.

Mr. Shaw: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that parliamentarians must accept often a degree of responsibility when things go wrong because—despite our exhaustive legislative procedures in Committee and on the Floor of the House—the laws that we introduce are not always effective and efficient. If the Government had to pay compensation every time that Parliament failed to introduce effective laws, no one would ever be held responsible for financial losses, and the Government and taxpayers would for ever be paying compensation.

The question that must be asked in the case of BCCI—and of Maxwell, when Government compensation is considered in that case—is whether taxpayers should forgo the equivalent of a hospital or more in resource terms, in favour of paying compensation in this instance of wrongdoing. Sadly, for the employees and depositors concerned, I find no justification for doing that.

There is, however, every justification for the Government and others trying to ensure that certain persons are brought to justice, and that any resources they may have are taken from them. There is evidence that there are some very wealthy people out there guilty of significant wrongdoing. The Government should wind up the machine a crank or two and put on a bit of pressure. I pressed the Government hard to work on Liechtenstein, and now I press them to become involved, through diplomatic channels, with Abu Dhabi and others, so that the persons responsible for BCCI's collapse can be brought to justice and money can be squeezed out of those wrongdoers who still have it.

Nevertheless, I must point out to many of BCCI's depositors that this was a dangerous bank. The case is not like that of the Maxwell pensioners, who put their money into what everyone would have regarded as a safe haven. In the case of the companies, the pension funds were administered by IMRO, a self-regulatory body, in the City of London. In that instance, City banks—often based overseas—abused their responsibilities and the trust placed in them by engaging in transactions that were often illegal or fraudulent; if not that, they were at least questionable transactions which any sensible bank manager would have known to be wrong, and I hope that the banks involved will be brought to account.

As I have said, the case of BCCI is different. When people made deposits, they could see a set of accounts at the local branch. They would thus have seen the connection with the Cayman Islands and with fraud havens, and might then have been in a position to ask themselves whether they really wanted to invest large amounts of their money in a bank with such connections. The Maxwell pensioners had placed a good deal of faith and trust in the City, and in the banks that were involved in trading with Maxwell and looking after the pension fund moneys. BCCI, however, had a number of questionable features from day one.

Many of Bingham's suggestions for the future are potentially good news, in regard to ensuring that the banking industry is better regulated from now on. Unquestionably, the Bank of England needs explicit powers to close down banks, for it has not proved adequate in the past. It should not hesitate to close down banks that engage in substantial transactions with tax and fraud havens, because they are probably not fit and proper banks to be based in the City of London. We should ensure that the primary regulator of a bank is not only well known, but in a reliable country that has proper means of investigating banks.

I am pleased to see that Bingham's recommendation for a special investigations unit at the Bank of England is to be adopted, and that such a unit is to be active in investigating banks such as BCCI in the future.

Sadly, Government compensation cannot be justified in this instance. The problems of BCCI boil down to a single key issue: the question of timing. At what point was enough known for it to be proved that the whole bank was a fraud—not part of it, but all of it? I do not think that substantive evidence has been discovered—and none has been reported by Bingham—that an earlier closure would have been realistic. I therefore conclude that, although mistakes may have been made, on balance the authorities operated in the best way possible, given the complex and difficult circumstances. Considerable pressure was exerted for the bank to be kept open, not only by the auditors but by others in the banking and regulatory world—and in the political world. I believe that the Bank of England operated legally and properly, as soon as it could properly do so.

1.33 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I see Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry into the supervision of BCCI as yet another nail in the coffin of City self-regulation. As Bingham confirms, the self-regulatory framework for banking in Britain has failed abjectly. That view is not confined to City critics; just two days ago, Mick Newmarch—chief executive of Britain's biggest investor, the Prudential Corporation—called for the Government to take over regulation. He said:

> "It is time to face up to the fact that this approach has not worked, and to revert to the conventional, proven statutory basis for regulation."

If the man from the Pru is now saying such things, it is surely time for the Chancellor to ask the old lady of Threadneedle Street to hang up her dancing shoes and make way for a younger, more alert and more inquisitive partner.

The main charge against the Bank of England in the BCCI affair is that if the Bank knew for some years that BCCI was riddled with fraud, why did it wait for so long to act? More important, why did the Bank allow innocent customers to continue to make deposits when it knew that the end was near? The answer is partly, in my view, that the Bank is a venerable British institution and that, as such, it expects everybody else to follow its own officer's and gentleman's code when, in real life, City fraud, insider dealing, financial incompetence and so on are now endemic. The problem is that the Bank's Kiplingesque

[Mr. Peter Hain]

culture has made it an international laughing stock, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) so aptly remarked.

BCCI is at the end of an ever-lengthening list of scandals where the Bank and the other authorities either have turned a blind eye, have failed abysmally to discharge their responsibilities or, in some cases, have deliberately concealed matters of critical importance from public scrutiny. Although it is politely couched in Old Etonian code, Lord Justice Bingham's criticism of the Bank is devastating. The problem is that there is absolutely nothing in the Bingham report to suggest that another BCCI will not happen again. Therefore, can the Minister tell me what the Government intend to do? I found the Minister's introductory speech bland, smug and almost offensively complacent. There is absolutely no reason to believe that something on the scale of BCCI could not turn up yet again, given the Minister's suggested policies.

Bingham is being used by the Government to let the Bank of England off the hook. The only way to send a clear signal to the apprentice banking fraudsters and innocent depositors alike is for the Chancellor to demand the immediate resignation of Robin Leigh-Pemberton, the Governor of the Bank of England. I see from the Bank's charter that his five-year tenure runs out in June 1993 and that he cannot be sacked. He can vacate his office only if he becomes bankrupt—an unlikely eventuality, although the precedent set by the former Tory party treasurer, Lord Beaverbrook, is interesting in that respect—or if he is convicted of an offence, or if he is absent from meetings of the court—the Bank's board—for six months, or if he resigns

"if he be found lunatic or become of unsound mind."

There may be views about the latter part of that quotation.

It is important to recall when we analyse the Government's role in the BCCI scandal that the Governor of the Bank of England was only appointed in 1982 because he was an obedient member of the Thatcher mafia —the "thafia", if one likes. The Governor's early career mirrored Lady Thatcher's. They briefly overlapped at Oxford in the late 1950s. They were both called to the Bar in the same year, 1954. During the 1950s they were part of the inner circle of Conservative Kent politics. Lady Thatcher fought the parliamentary seat of Dartford. She married Denis, another Kent Conservative. The Governor still lives in Kent, on a 2,000 acre estate at Milstead, near Sittingbourne. While she went on to higher things, the Governor, as a Conservative councillor, worked his way up through the ranks to the dizzy height of chairman of Kent county council between 1972 and 1975. He and Denis Thatcher became golfing chums, playing regularly at Lamberhurst golf club in Kent.

Is it any surprise that Margaret Thatcher, in the face of fierce criticism in 1982 that it would be an entirely inappropriate appointment, thought that Robin Leigh-Pemberton was the obvious choice for Governor? The Governor's incompetence, negligence and dishonesty over BCCI is testimony to the bankruptcy of the distasteful political patronage that disfigured the Thatcher era.

If, however, the Chancellor stands by his Governor and if the Minister does so again today, what about the failure of the Board of Banking Supervision over BCCI? My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) referred to that issue. This august body is directly responsible for uncovering and exposing illegal and dubious practice. That body consists of accountants, solicitors and leading business men, most of whom have alternative sources of income, and whose resignations would be widely received as a principled course following the BCCI scandal. Why did they not resign? Is it because, again, they are part of the umbilical cord between the City and Conservative party coffers? The right hon. Lord Swaythling, for example, as chairman of Rothmans International plc, donated £100,000 to the Conservative party election fund in 1991-92 alone.

Who chaired the Board of Banking Supervision? It was Mr. Brian Quinn—another Bank of England establishment man, who has been in post for more than 20 years. As early as 1986, blithely ignoring the mounting evidence of corruption in BCCI, he decided against withdrawing the bank's licence because

"the closure of the 45 UK branches would cause substantial political and diplomatic problems".

That was grossly negligent. But where is Mr. Quinn now? Has he left his job? No, he is exactly where he was five years ago. After Bingham, the Bank established a new investigation unit headed by an outsider, Ian Watt. That was a step to be welcomed. Mr. Quinn has been effectively sidelined—but why has he not been sacked? I believe that this is another shameless example of the Bank protecting itself, another example which suggests that if one is part of the Bank's inner charmed circle one can carry on regardless of how incompetent or negligent one is.

The whole sorry spectacle has lifted the curtain on a murky world in which the City closes ranks while ordinary citizens are bankrupted or destroyed, as they have been in their thousands as a result of the BCCI scandal.

Another aspect of the report is equally disturbing, if not more so. The report was filed with the Treasury in July, yet it was published only on 23 October—without appendix 8, which covered MI5's involvement in the scandal. We know of that not through our Government, but through the efforts of United States Senator John Kerry, whose 800-page report revealed that British intelligence was up to its neck in BCCI.

As Kerry's report reveals, MI5 took away sealed documents from BCCI's records. The House should ask what was in those documents? Did they show that MI5 or MI6, like the CIA, was laundering funds through BCCI to promote Saddam Hussein in Iraqgate, during the Iran-Iraq war? Did they show that MI5 was using BCCI in the Irangate scandal? We know that Colonel Oliver North used BCCI. Did British intelligence use it in the same way? If so we have not only a City scandal but a major political and security scandal with international implications.

As the Kerry report says:

"A British source has told the Bank of England and British investigators that BCCI was used by numerous intelligence agencies in the United Kingdom. The British intelligence service, the MI5, has sealed documents from BCCI's records in the United Kingdom which could shed light on this allegation."

Kerry also reports that documents sealed by MI5 concern the financing of terrorism—such as the activities of Abu Nidal, assisting the builders of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, financing Iranian arms deals, and other related matters. Those are important issues, because, as Kerry confirms, BCCI was a vehicle for dirty tricks and deniable operations in the middle east by various intelligence agencies, especially the CIA, and possibly MI6—with or without the involvement of MI5.

If the appointment of Stella Rimington as head of MI5 is to be more than a window-dressing operation for open government, the Minister must publish appendix 8 in full and place it in the public domain so that the information contained in the files which Stella Rimington has ordered to be sealed can be revealed. If the Minister is not willing to do that fully, openly and publicly, perhaps he will follow the precedent set by the Prime Minister earlier this week by placing that information in the Library.

Before I finish I shall quote another extract from the Kerry report, taken from page 462:

> "By agreement, the Bank of England had in effect entered into a plan with BCCI, Abu Dhabi and Price Waterhouse in which they would each keep the true state of affairs at BCCI secret in return for co-operation with one another . . . from April 1990 forward, the Bank of England had now inadvertently become partner to a cover-up of BCCI's criminality."

That is a devastating indictment of the Bank and one which Lord Justice Bingham confirms in rather more circumspect language. In its own way, Lord Justice Bingham's report carries just as strong an indictment, but he prefers to use more polite language.

If the Chancellor does not fire the Governor, if the chair of the Board of Banking Supervision does not go and if Ministers do not open the MI5 secret files, the Government will be guilty of complicity in a cover-up that could make even Watergate look like chicken-feed.

The Government must also take this opportunity to institute a thorough-going reform of City regulations to rid us once and for all of the spivs who openly ridicule the arcane, old-boy style of self-regulation, which means that the City has now become an international laughing stock. The prospects of the City attracting overseas finance and the European central bank, as well as other important future initiatives, are gravely jeopardised, if not irretrievably prejudiced by the Government's behaviour over the BCCI scandal.

1.46 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): The Opposition have chosen the wrong target by trying to suggest that the Government should pay compensation to the victims of BCCI. If one took that argument to its logical conclusion one could therefore say that the Labour party should compensate Maxwell pensioners because many of its leaders were spokesmen for and, indeed, in charge of the Maxwell pension fund. We should concentrate on the real cause of the problem and the fact that crimes were committed by those inside BCCI—that is where the blame lies.

Mr. Hain: Is the hon. Lady seriously suggesting that the relationship between Robert Maxwell and the Labour party was in any way comparable to the relationship between the Governor of the Bank of England—given his overall supervisory duties—and the BCCI? If so, she should spell that out explicitly. I believe that it is an absolute nonsense and that she should withdraw that shameful allegation.

Lady Olga Maitland: I certainly will not withdraw those remarks, because people in the Labour party were responsible for the Maxwell pension fund.

How was it that BCCI was able to continue as it did? We must accept that it was subject to poor banking supervision. Although the Bank of England was empowered by Parliament under the Banking Acts of 1979 and 1987 to supervise the banking system, it was rightly condemned for BCCI's conduct, which was described as the greatest fiasco in history. It is absolutely correct to describe BCCI as a tragedy of errors, misunderstandings and failure of communications. I would go even further and blame the Bank of England for weak handling and positive negligence.

What really angers me is that I have not seen a single sign of remorse from the Bank of England. We have witnessed an appalling catalogue of errors and delays when one considers that leaks about BCCI's standing began to creep into the public domain from 1976. The background of the bank's founders should have raised alarm here as it did in America.

It makes one wonder whether it is right for the Bank of England to continue to supervise the financial sector. Perhaps, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) suggested, that responsibility should be given to another, tougher, outside body, which would run it on a more stringent basis.

It is ironic that the Bank of England sanctioned a dodgy bank in 1980. It turned down BCCI's request for recognised status under the Banking Act 1979, but decided to give it licensed deposit-taker status. By 1986 the alarm bells were ringing loud and clear, but they were ignored.

Although the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) is not in the Chamber today, I supported her comments to the Select Committee when she said that the Bank of England had been passive, timid, amateurish and sloppy. I would add that it had been arrogant and complacent. The buck stops with the Bank of England and its Governor. But in the light of his evidence to Bingham, Mr. Robin Leigh-Pemberton has not ducked his responsibility, although I regarded his comments as reluctant and hesitant.

As we consider the scale of the anguish that has been caused to the victims of the BCCI affair, we must accept that those concerned are not always the most articulate. They are in many instances not powerful with great lobbies supporting them. They have been mugged—that is the only way I can describe their plight—and they are rightly angry because of the great abuse of trust that has occurred. In addition to the grave injustice that has been done to thousands of innocent people, 30 local authorities in Britain have suffered.

I object to the way in which it is suggested that it is not the responsibility of the Government or anyone else to warn local authorities when things are not right. That is a dog-in-the-manger attitude; they have the information, they are sitting on it but they do not have the guts to bring it into the open. They would rather let others suffer in consequence.

The victims of the BCCI affair comprise in large measure people who have built up a cornerstone in Britain. The Asian community has enjoyed the fruits of burning the midnight oil, opening corner newsagents and providing endless services, including round-the-clock shops and restaurants. Is it suggested that what happened was their fault or that they should have recognised that trouble was coming?

Let us not forget the 1,200 BCCI employees. They were not the perpetrators of the major crime. They were caught in a web, although innocent, and they, too, because they placed their faith in BCCI and in many instances put their savings in the bank, have lost all. I am told that many of

[Lady Olga Maitland]

them are finding it difficult to get other jobs because they are tarred with the brush of the comments made by the Bank of England.

Mr. Vaz: The hon. Lady is making a powerful and eloquent speech. I agree with everything she has said so far. May I tempt her a stage further and ask her to agree that, in view of the breach of supervisory duty that occurred and the passionate way in which she has put the case for the victims, the Government should consider the question of compensation? Does she further agree that people should be able to make representations so that the while matter may be examined, directly by the Government or in conjunction with Abu Dhabi?

Lady Olga Maitland: I do not regard it as the Government's responsibility to pay compensation, which would come out of the taxpayers' pockets. The real source for compensation must be the BCCI founders, ultimately Abu Dhabi. But we should make sure that the people who have suffered do not lose out.

I have a considerable Asian community in my constituency, including many former BCCI employees, depositors and a number of charities. It is cruel that charities, which invested in good faith, should be cheated. The Muslim Cultural and Welfare Association has many families on its books in Sutton. That association spent seven years raising £47,000 through jumble sales, fairs and so on, and at a stroke that money was swept away. I welcome the fact that, under the Government scheme, they received £15,000 compensation, but I hope that the Abu Dhabi Government will see them through further.

The irony is that nobody would have put money into BCCI, had the bank not been propped up by the Bank of England. When the closure was happening, the Bank of England was discussing with BCCI's British operation its restructuring in the light of a variety of international scandals. The Bank's presence and involvement had the misleading result of persuading potential customers, investors and depositors that their money would be safe with BCCI. So the bank's integrity was believed. It is typical of people to say that the British way of doing things must be right.

The anger also lies in the fact that no heads have rolled. It is unbelievable and astonishing that no one has taken personal responsibility. The Governor of the Bank of England amazed me by saying that the Bank could not afford to lose scarce talent. That was cant of the highest order. What about people's life savings? Tell that to a family that has been beggared by the Bank of England's incompetence.

Many lessons can be learned. I welcome the setting up of a new fraud probe clearing body, the special investigation unit, designed to co-ordinate, exchange and collate information of all potential fraud on a regular basis. Let us ensure that it really works and that it is tough, resolute and meets regularly. We want to know how often, where and when it will meet and to ensure that it reports. Otherwise, the best endeavours of producing this important Bingham report will simply come to naught.

1.56 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I wish to concentrate my remarks on the local authorities that got into difficulties with BCCI and to draw two conclusions from that.

In 1990, when I was leader of Sheffield city council, I was approached through members of the Asian community in Sheffield to suggest that BCCI was an appropriate institution for the council to invest money in, for two reasons. First, it was offering a good financial deal and, secondly, a significant part of Sheffield's population originates from the Asian sub-continent. Those people felt that, as the bank had strong links with and lent to that community, it was right that the city in which they lived should make some of its money available for investment in BCCI.

I approached the professional officers in the city council and a meeting was arranged between the chair of finance, the deputy city treasurer and myself. We went to Bradford to meet senior officials of BCCI to tell them that an approach had been made to us and that we felt it right at least to investigate the matter.

Sheffield city council has a large treasury department with well-qualified and professional officers for whom I have the highest regard. Following the meeting, the council carried out an investigation of its own to see whether that institution was a proper place for the city to invest its money. On the basis of that investigation, the deputy city treasurer wrote to me and the chair of finance in April 1990 giving us advice, based on the information that the city council had found.

It was found that, although the bank was incorporated in Luxembourg, it was based in London. It was the largest private bank in the world with no clear lender of last resort. In 1979, when licensing arrangements for banks had changed in this country, BCCI had not immediately obtained a licence because of certain worries about it. In 1980, the Bank of America—one of BCCI's major funders—had pulled out. In October 1988, the Bin Mahsouz family, who controlled the National Commercial Bank in Saudi Arabia and had also been big funders of BCCI, had also pulled out. In 1988, the bank has been indicted of laundering drugs money in Florida. It had eventually come to a deal and accepted guilt.

The council's investigation found that there were links with Noriega; it found that the state of Florida had revoked BCCI's banking licence; it found that Luxembourg, where the bank was incorporated, was currently investigating BCCI. If that investigation had resulted in the closure of the bank in Luxembourg, it would have had a consequence for its banking arrangements in Britain. It found that the bank had been guilty of currency regulation breaches in several countries and that in 1988 the bank had lost $48·7 million.

The deputy city treasurer told the chair of finance and me that he could not recommend BCCI as an appropriate institution in which to put public money from Sheffield city council. I draw two conclusions from that. First, some might ask why, if Sheffield city council could find out that information, other city councils that invested money could not discover that information. The reason is that the Sheffield city council is a large authority with a large treasury department; it employs specialists and it has contacts in the City. The council used those contacts to gather the information about BCCI.

Many of the authorities that ran into difficulty are small and do not have the same sort of in-house expertise as Sheffield city council. The authorities that got into difficulty looked at an authorised list from the Bank of England, which was circulated by the Department of the Environment. Whatever the Government say about it now, I believe that at the time many local authorities thought that the organisations on the list were approved and accepted as ones in which to place public money.

Even if that were not the case, the Bingham report accepts that the Department of the Environment was not approving the organisations on the list, but was circulating the list to assist in the progress so that the authorities could issue more accurate returns to the Government, showing the organisations from which they were borrowing and to which they were lending. The Department of the Environment and the Treasury must have been aware of which local authorities were investing in BCCI and the amounts that were invested.

If Sheffield city council's treasury department could discover that list of information about BCCI—which would have led any lay person to conclude that it was not a satisfactory institution in which to invest—why did our national Treasury not come to a similar conclusion? On the basis of its information about local authorities investing in BCCI, why did the Treasury not take steps to warn and advise the authorities of the potential risks that they were running? Why did it do nothing? If the advice was available to Sheffield city council treasury, why did not the national Treasury—which was far more able to obtain that advice—take steps to warn local authorities about what was happening? Instead, it sat back and watched. That is an indictment which gives all the local authorities involved the right to say that they should be compensated for investing in an institution about which they were not warned, but should have been.

My second conclusion is that the difference between Sheffield city council and the authorities that got into trouble was that Sheffield city council had its own in-house financial investment advice and did not rely on brokers. The Government are considering extending compulsory competitive tendering into white collar services in local government, including financial advice.

The Government should think carefully. Local authorities have a right to independent financial advice, which enables councils to carry out their fiduciary duty. It is important for that advice to be given by people who work for the authorities, not to them, and whose sole loyalty is to the council for which they work. If the Government push ahead, force competitive tendering in that sector, and force local authorities to look for the cheapest solution and use brokers when they believe that their in-house advice is better and more appropriate, they will begin to run the risk of encountering more difficulties involving local authority financial organisations and investments. The Government should think hard before abolishing the right of local authorities to take their in-house financial advice. Authorities such as Sheffield city council, which had that advice, did not make the same mistakes or encounter the same difficulties as those authorities that used private sector brokers.

2.4 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I will make a couple of brief points, including the issue of compensation. As I represent a constituency which is—at least in terms of postal area, if not administratively—in Kent, I was somewhat miffed that the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) did not include me in his far-reaching Kent political conspiracy theory.

I compliment the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on the effectiveness with which he has pursued the campaign, especially in defence of the victims of BCCI, with whom I have the most profound sympathy. The better the compensation deal that can be given to those victims, the more satisfactory will be the position in relation to this and any future banking or financial scandal. The victims must get the best protection that the law can give them.

I cannot support the idea of total compensation. In classic economic terms, interest is partly a payment for risk taken. If we remove the risk entirely, we take responsibility away from individual decisions, and we take out of the banking system the differentiation between the various forms of investment which drives the system. There must be an element of risk and responsibility left to individuals, although I agree that compensation schemes should be generous.

It is worth considering strengthening the existing compensation to give a greater percentage for the first £5,000. The figures could be 90 per cent. for the first £5,000, 85 per cent. for the next £5,000 and 75 per cent. for investments above that.

The closure of BCCI was a disaster for many, and it was essential to have a full inquiry. The report shows that that was carried out. The report is not complacent or weak, and it includes significant findings and important recommendations. The House should not play politics with this issue; to do so will not cause amusement for the people most affected. Instead, we should move swiftly to implement the recommendations of the report, and we should put into law adequate levels of protection and investigation.

2.6 pm

Mr. Darling: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I say that one feature of the debate is that it has been remarkably free of political bias.

First, does the Minister understand that almost every hon. Member who has contributed to the debate has stressed that the Bank of England was found to be at fault? Almost every hon. Member has made the point that the Governor should take responsibility for what has happened. Will the Minister convey that fact to the Governor? The Governor and the Government have not grasped the scale and nature of the problem.

Secondly, will the Minister tell us specifically whether the Government will consider the establishment of a separate regulatory organisation away from the Bank's other activities? Thirdly, although I appreciate that he is not here to answer for the Foreign Office or for the Department of Trade and Industry, will the Minister undertake, if he cannot answer the points made, that the appropriate Secretaries of State will communicate to those who attended the debate their views on two points?

No one in the Chamber can have failed to be moved by what the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) told us about the difficulties being faced by British citizens who

[Mr. Darling]

are now in gaol and about his constituent who died earlier this week. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), who deserved every plaudit he was given for his efforts, has made a powerful point about the fact that the Government, especially through the Department of Trade and Industry, have information which should be made available unless there are good reasons for not doing so. Will the Minister attend to that?

The hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) suggested that we cannot remove the element of risk. Of course we cannot. An individual always has to exercise judgment. However, the risk that people took in putting money into BCCI, whether individuals or local authorities, was a risk that they took in the light of the fact that BCCI was regulated by the Bank of England. The regulator has let them down. That must have some bearing on the question of compensation and we cannot walk away from that.

Will the Minister tell us when he expects that the Government will bring forward legislation or, if he has a White Paper in mind, when it will be produced? As I said earlier, we simply cannot wait much longer for a clear indication of the Government's intentions.

2.9 pm

Mr. Nelson: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to this most interesting debate. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) for his measured winding-up speech for the Opposition. I am also grateful to all hon. Members for their thoughtful contributions on this most important issue. Their words will be heard outside the House with interest, not just by those who were affected by the collapse of BCCI. For the most part, the quality of the speeches has been outstanding and, on behalf of the Government, I express my appreciation. The issues are wide ranging and complex, but I hope that I shall be able to answer most points. I am anxious to refer to all those hon. Members who spoke.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central said that the signs should have been read earlier and that options other than closure were available. I acknowledge that, because restrictions and measures short of revocation of authorisation can be imposed by the Bank of England. As I said in my opening speech, the Bank did that in other cases, to the advantage of employees and depositors alike. Like many hon. Members, the hon. Gentleman called for the resignation of the Government—*[Interruption.]* I mean the Governor. This must be the only day when there has not been a call for the Government's resignation. This place is getting rather like Turandot because it is the fashion to call for heads every day. It is also the fashion to resist such calls, and I do so now.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central asked who would accept responsibility. In his response to the Select Committee on the Treasury earlier this week and in other ways the Governor has behaved in a wholly proper manner in answering the criticisms in the Bingham report and in bringing forward measures of redress. The hon. Gentleman and many other hon. Members, including, in particular, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), spoke about the case for separating central banking responsibilities from authorisation and supervision. I acknowledge that a case can be made for that, but the Bingham report does not conclude that there is such a case on the basis of BCCI. Bingham does not say that such a case should not be considered more generally, but does not believe that it is justified on the findings of the supervision of BCCI. Many hon. Members have expressed that view from time to time and it is a matter of record that I did so perhaps as much as seven years ago and more recently in the House. However, it is not the Government's view at this time that such a separation is called for and it is not being considered.

As I said earlier, it is not my view that by changing structures we necessarily get better decisions. I would far rather have better human judgments with a defective structure than poor human judgments with an ideal structure. At the end of the day, it is people judgments that matter. I am sure that everyone agrees, although some hon. Members have said that people judgments have been brought into question.

Those who argue for a banking commission, a separation of powers, do so on the basis that it would perhaps provide a permanent core of expertise and professionalism in supervision. They argue that an independent supervisor would improve communication with other regulatory bodies such as the Securities and Investments Board which is also concerned about similar judgments on such matters as fit and proper persons. Often the same fit and proper persons are in banks and financial services companies. The SIB sees logic in a similarity of commission of supervision.

It is also argued that there is a conflict of interest between a central bank and the supervision of banks. That was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing. It is said that a banking comission would be more accountable to Parliament and might be able to detect a problem bank rather earlier. Some have said that even a strengthened Board of Banking Supervision is not the best way to spot the bad apples in the tray. It has also been pointed out that other countries in Europe, such as Germany, France and Switzerland, have banking commissions. I acknowledge also that there is an argument that, if and when the evolution towards a European central bank is completed, the responsibilities of such a central bank, as far as I am aware, would not encompass supervision of banks, so some changes might be necessary in the light of that.

It remains the Government's position that they do not favour, and do not believe that the report makes the case for, such a separation of powers. A separation would undoubtedly involve a great deal of administrative upheaval and loss of continuity. Bingham and the Government consider that the case for separation is not made by the report, that no system of banking supervision is perfect in detecting dodgy banks, and that there is already an established expertise and authority in the Bank of England that we would be reluctant to unsettle.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central spoke about the need for common standards of supervision in the European Community, and I agree about the importance of that. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing made a similar point when he spoke about the passporting of banking facilities both within the European Community and from without into this country and other EC states. The second banking co-ordination directive will enable such passporting. That is to say, other banks within EC countries will be able to passport their services into here, and our banks will be able to go to other EC countries. The foreign subsidiaries of banks in other EC states will be able to have branches in this country.

Given all that, it is important that we have common and high standards of banking supervision and prudential control. The second consolidated supervision directive, tied together with the solvency directive, the own funds directive and the deposit guarantee directive, all of which have either been agreed or are in the process of being negotiated, are directed to this end. They should ensure that the high standards that we insist on are more widely promulgated within the European Community and that we are able to withhold from the Community authorisation for banks that do not meet those standards. Outside the Community, one relies much more on the Basle concordat for high and common standards of supervision. The work that is being done and the recent improvement in minimum standards, which was agreed in July, will mark a major step forward in this direction.

Mr. Higgins: Will we be able to withhold authorisation if, in our view, another Community country does not impose standards that are sufficiently high?

Mr. Nelson: We shall not be able to withhold authorisation from a bank that has been authorised elsewhere in the Community. Where we are not satisfied with the system of authorisation and supervision in a country, we intend to address that through the system of peer group review, to which my right hon. Friend referred, by the system within the Community of observance of the directives and infraction proceedings and by the other challenges that can be made. The basis of the peer group review is checking on each other's systems to our own advantage to ensure that they comply with the high standards set by the directives and are common to all EC states.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central spoke, like others, about local authorities, and some have spoken about the list. The Select Committee on the Treasury and the Civil Service has made it clear that the existence, by itself, of a list of banks that have been authorised does not absolve local authorities of the responsibility to husband their resources and to be careful. It is not a guarantee of credit worthiness that an authorised bank appears on a list. It is a point which the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) also made. It is said that if a local authority, such as Sheffield city council, can learn that it is perhaps not the best-quality deposit to make, why should the Treasury not provide that information? I suggest that it is not the Treasury's job to draw up credit ratings of banks or other investment businesses. It can provide to the best of its ability, through an agency such as the Bank of England or others, an authorisation procedure, but individuals and local authorities still have to make their own decisions.

What is proper—it is the recommendation of the Select Committee—is that local authorities should perhaps get together for some central advice on these matters, either through the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy or the local authority associations. In the Government's response to the Select Committee's report there is an acceptance and endorsement of that proposal.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central spoke about the limit under the deposit protection scheme and whether it should be raised. The limit is rather more generous than that proposed in the European directive. I know that it is less under the compensation scheme in the investment sector, which is regarded as being a different area in which people put all their money into investments. We are talking, of course, about a compensation scheme that is paid for by the rest of the banking community.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central, with others, raised the wider issue of regulation. There is the prospect of a personal investment authority in the light of some recent remarks. The review that is being conducted by Mr. Andrew Large of SIB's supervision is not a wider review of the entire regulatory system. It is a follow-up to the IMRO investigation of Maxwell. It is an attempt to ascertain whether there is a proper implementation of responsibilities under the Financial Services Act 1986 and whether there are ways in which the SIB can sharpen up its act and improve communication. The review is not a re-look at the fundamentals of our statutory-based system of practitioners self-regulation. A separate case may be made for and against that, but Mr. Andrew Large is not engaged in that exercise.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing spoke about the quality of regulators and asked whether special treatment was being provided in the case of BCCI. Indeed, it was special treatment. The Government's response to my right hon. Friend's Select Committee's report concluded that the existence of the college of regulators was in the end responsible for unearthing——

Mr. Higgins *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Nelson: That was the Government's conclusion. In my view, a reading of the report suggests that it was only when the college got together and was able in consolidation to look into BCCI more adequately that the worms started coming out of the can and became rather more apparent.

My right hon. Friend asked whether there would be blackballing of certain states under the Basle concordat. The answer is no. There will not be blackballing, but there will be new minimum standards, which have been promulgated since 6 July by the Basle arrangements. My right hon. Friend talked also about the case for separation, on which I have already responded.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said that the Bank of England was undoubtedly at fault. He said that nobody resigns and nobody pays. We have heard that refrain recently. I hear what he says, but I believe that the conclusions of the Bingham report justify the view that while serious mistakes were made, they have been addressed. The report does not conclude that there was negligence. It is for others to assess the extent to which the mistakes, faults and criticisms are serious or less serious. The Government and the Bank have taken the findings of the report extremely seriously, as is reflected in the range of measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) said that there is a record of the Bank acting properly and carefully. I was grateful to him for saying that. On a day when there has been much criticism, understandably, cast about the Bank of England, it is important to recognise that it has an outstanding record of supervising our banking system. It is easy to criticise in a case where things may have gone wrong, but it is appropriate to remind the public that the Bank has a good

[Mr. Nelson]

record, over a long period, of fulfilling difficult responsibilities and statutory duties with great ability, sensitivity and confidentiality.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) has taken an active part in the BCCI affair for a long time, and I pay tribute to him for his interest. He felt that the Governor of the Bank of England should go, and drew attention to the human plight of those affected by the BCCI fraud. We were all moved by the cases that he recited, and we understand the difficulties confronted by those who lost out, as well as by those who cannot find jobs.

Most reasonable people accept that there are good and bad in any organisation. It is unusual for a company's employees to be wholly bad or wholly good. That being the case, it is unfair and disappointing that many BCCI employees who attended to their duties with great diligence and integrity should be besmirched by events.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East spoke also of compensation and cited Barlow Clowes. I explained in an intervention earlier why I thought that case was different. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the important issue of liquidation fees, as did other hon. Members. I will disclose a few facts, because I feel strongly about that issue. I have tried to do my homework, and the House and the public are entitled to more information.

I understand the restraints and difficulties that confront liquidators, and I must be careful about Government involvement in pressurising or leaning on them. That would be quite improper—but a request to know the facts is not unreasonable. The fees and expenses of the liquidators to date amount to some £69 million. Of that sum, some £28 million was incurred in respect of their role as provisional liquidators prior to the winding-up order on 14 January, and some £48 million since then. The court has approved the payment of fees up to 15 April 1992, since which time—with the authority of the court and the approval of the creditors' committee—they have drawn on account of fees yet to be formally approved.

Fees are currently running at approximately £1 million a week, not all of which is accounted for by the liquidators. Legal and other professional fees amount to some £22 million.

My information is that the cash book receipts of the liquidators in respect of BCCI SA England amounted to just over £325 million, and that cash book payments amounted to £124,684,000—leaving a balance at 15 July 1992 of £200,318,000.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Nelson: I am sorry, but I must insist on replying to other hon. Members.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said that the Bingham report found no evidence of negligence on the Government's part, and I am grateful for that. He welcomed the proposals on auditors and spoke with great knowledge about the PIA, the Insurance Brokers' Registration Council, and the 49 per cent. limit—to which he has drawn my attention before.

The hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) said that although the report did not find evidence of negligence, its findings pointed to that. He said that the Bank of England was too easily deterred by BCCI in 1984. The reasons, though not wholly accepted by Lord Justice Bingham, are given in paragraphs 244 and 245. The hon. Gentleman said that not all criticisms were made with the benefit of hindsight, and I believe that that is accepted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) spoke of the death of a constituent. He said that the treatment in Abu Dhabi was appalling and that he wanted a complaint lodged. There have been discussions at the highest level.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) said that as the legislation was defective, compensation should be paid. He also raised the case of Mr. George Finbar Ross. I shall take both his comments very seriously, and examine them carefully.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) made a thoughtful and realistic speech. I am most grateful to him for the way in which, in measured tones, he defended both the Bank of England and its Governor. In contrast, the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) attacked self-regulation and City ethics. He made wounding remarks to me personally, describing me as bland and complacent; and he called the Governor dishonest, a charge which he should certainly withdraw. I think that every other hon. Member will agree that, without doubt, the Governor is a man of total integrity. He needs to be defended, and I consider that what the hon. Gentleman said went way over the top. He was paranoid about the role of British security.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), to the hon. Member for Attercliffe——

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

MAINTENANCE ORDERS (RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT) BILL [LORDS]

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Bosworth.]*

LIAISON

Ordered,

That Mr. Robert Adley, Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Mr. Richard Caborn, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. Terence L. Higgins, Mr. David Howell, Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Robert B. Jones, Mr. Gerald Kaufman, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Sir Ivan Lawrence, Mr. William McKelvey, Mrs. Marion Roe, Sir Giles Shaw, Mr. Robert Sheldon, Sir Malcolm Thornton, Mr. Gareth Wardell, Mr. John Watts and Mr. Jerry Wiggin be members of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Bosworth.]*

Military Ceremonial Duties

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

2.31 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I declare an interest at the outset as a reserve officer in the Life Guards who has in the past served in both the service regiment and the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment. I am delighted that you are in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I know of your family connections with the Army.

I am grateful for the opportunity to address the subject of military ceremonial duties. It is important both in itself and as a case study of what I believe to be the ill-thought-out implications of "Options for Change". A Friday Adjournment debate, when most hon. Members are in their constituencies, is never a well-attended occasion, but I especially welcome my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) and others. Many more hon. Members have sent messages of support.

It was Harold Macmillan who once wisely advised that any Government took on the National Union of Mineworkers or the Brigade of Guards at their peril. Just over a fortnight ago, the Government succeeded in taking on not one but both, and—in defiance of all military principles—opened two fronts on the same day. The debate on the pit closures conveniently disguised the fact that dramatic reductions in the Household Division were being confirmed by means of a written answer. The House has thus had no opportunity until now to consider the matter.

For some 18 months, discussions on what I believe to have been a well-informed basis have been taking place with successive Secretaries of State for Defence, and with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. He will know that a group of us—I should like my remarks to be associated with our former colleagues, Robert Boscawen and Sir Charles Morrison—also took our case to our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The strength of our arguments was recognised, but I submit that no adequate answer—let alone any significant concession—has emerged. I make an exception for the welcome retention of the Ceremony of the Keys at the Tower of London.

In his typically generous way, my right hon. Friend —along with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence—has apologised to me and, by implication, to the whole House, for failing to give proper notice of the decision. I do not wish to dwell on the issue, but it was indeed curious that the military seems to know more about the proceedings of this House than hon. Members do, despite numerous inquiries to the Ministry of Defence and to business managers.

At the risk of sounding trite, let me say that the Government's decisions on the two issues ensured that the miners went on the march, but put in grave doubt the Household Division's ability to do so in a way that is compatible with its incomparable history, standards and reputation. I wish to sketch my grave reservations, the legitimacy of which can be supported by statistics in my possession. I shall try not to bog the House down in a mass of figures, however, as those might obscure fundamental arguments. I also wish to ensure that my right hon. Friend has an opportunity to reply.

The overriding aim of the Household Division is to produce first-class operational soldiers who also provide the finest ceremonial in the world—a unique dual role. The fact that they have been able to do so for centuries is a tribute to the skill and dedication of officers, NCOs, guardsmen and troopers to uphold standards that have long been forsaken elsewhere. Their ability to continue these commitments is, I submit, being severely undermined by the Government's proposals.

There are two component parts to the problem; the Foot Guards and the Household Cavalry, which I put in the context of the need to reduce the Army in this changed, but still highly unstable, world and the inevitable pressure of the public expenditure round. The Foot Guards are to be reduced from eight to five battalions—a cut substantially larger, in percentage terms, than those in the infantry as a whole. The House should not forget that the Household Division in London and elsewhere not only supports the monarchy but shows off this country to its best advantage in terms of prestige and excellence.

The ceremonial duties, with their colour and music, are carried out supremely well. The troops, in a brilliantly British way, act as a reserve force. They are financially self-supporting, by virtue of the tourist industry. They could be used at any time to give security to the capital and to maintain public order. No more efficient or cost-effective set-up is conceivable. What is that very special institution now being required to do? It is being required to accept duties which range from the Queen's birthday parade, through state visits, guards of honour, the Cenotaph parade, the State Opening, and so on, which may mean Foot Guard battalions being based in London district for eight to 10 years as against the present maximum of around five years, which is already considered unacceptable. That period of eight to 10 years will be interrupted only by six months of unaccompanied emergency tours to Northern Ireland.

What sort of future does that offer to soldiers and their families in terms of career progression and quality of life? I cannot see a great rush to take on or to maintain such daunting and demanding duties. Already officers and men of the Foot Guards and the Household Division generally —the very people whom they least want to lose—are applying for redundancy.

The Government tell us that nobody will notice that the birthday parade has been cut from eight to six guards. The precedent of the Falklands campaign is prayed in aid. I suggest that at that time the country's thoughts were concentrated at least as much on the Foot Guards fighting far afield, as on a reduced parade. It may suit the Government to settle on a six-guard parade, but it will soon become clear that that is the maximum.

Where shall we obtain extra fighting soldiers, if the Army is stripped to a skeleton? The Foot Guards are not up to strength now and rumours of imminent recruit capping abound. Initially what the Secretary of State describes as "discretionary commitments"—by this curious term I imagine that he meant the deployment of troops in the Gulf and Bosnia, let alone other unforeseen emergencies—will have implications for the Foot Guards, on top of the difficulties of fulfilling our commitments in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. The very existence of the birthday parade as a proper spectacle worthy of the monarch must be put in doubt.

As for the position of the Household Cavalry, historically it is made up of two regiments—the Life

[Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes]

Guards and the Blues and Royals. Powerful though the arguments are over the Foot Guards, the Household Cavalry's problems are much more acute. Nearly three weeks ago the Life Guards and the Blues and Royals underwent the most extraordinary process—a so-called "union", by which two service regiments were brought together but still wearing separate cap badges.

In addition to its duties as an armoured reconnaissance regiment, it will be expected to find the Mounted Regiment in London not from two service regiments but from one. In other words, there will be the same commitment but from a different base. It will also be expected to continue to carry out ceremonial duties of a highly sophisticated kind from that reduced base. No other formula would be so certain a guarantee of damaged career prospects, disillusion and overstretch.

Neither my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces nor I doubts the willingness of the Household Division as a whole to make the proposal work—that is its ethos. However, serving soldiers are in a peculiarly inhibited position from which to express their strong doubts as to the medium-term and long-term sustainability of the plan, especially as the initial reorganisation would mask the problem for a while. Soldiers cannot speak up for themselves if they consider the Government's plan unworkable. They will continue to struggle to make it work, but the mathematics prove that it will not.

The most infuriating aspect for the Household Cavalry is that the solution is instantly available. There is a perceived need for a third regular recce regiment for the rapid reaction corps. I suggest to my right hon. Friend that if "union" is to be more than clever semantics and there is a true distinction between it and "amalgamation" either the Life Guards or the Blues and Royals could take on that role.

I know that the Foot Guards are grateful for their increment, and the Household Cavalry for its training wing, albeit both look better on paper than in practice, but those are not enough.

My right hon. Friend has it in his power to rectify the situation, and I wish to give him time to reply specifically to what I have said rather than to regurgitate old and, I suggest, discredited arguments. I wish to press him on the following three points, which his long experience as Minister of State for the Armed Forces will enable him to answer.

First, will my right hon. Friend confirm that reservations and caveats have been expressed in many of the most experienced quarters both through the chain of command and through other channels?

Question number two is: will my right hon. Friend confirm that an undertaking has been given that no additional pressure will be brought to bear on the Household Division? As a rider to that question, will he further confirm that never again will there be more than two state visits a year?

The third and most important question is: will my right hon. Friend confirm on the record that a verbal undertaking has been given both by the Prime Minister and by the Secretary of State for Defence that the proposals for the Household Division are for a trial period only, and that if the reductions prove unworkable the whole situation will be reviewed?

Without those assurances I believe that what has been admitted to be a highly theoretical exercise will have to be rethought immediately, before it is too late to retrieve the situation. Only in that way can the country continue to maintain the military expertise and excellence for which it is so widely respected throughout the world.

2.42 pm

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) for allowing me a moment or two to take part in the debate. I agree with every word of his argument.

The House knows that we do not have to have ceremonial duties in London if the Government of the day think it a bad idea. Nevertheless, it would be foolish to abandon them, and if we are to have them we must ensure that those who carry them out are given the opportunity and the conditions in which to do so without appalling strain being put upon them. If they are not, the present state of affairs cannot survive long.

I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to give us two assurances when he replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon. The first is that if the situation that the Government have imposed on the Household Division does not work, it will be kept under careful review and changes will be made if that proves necessary. Secondly—again I echo what my hon. Friend has said—will my right hon. Friend ensure that no additional pressures are brought to bear upon soldiers who already face a very difficult and demanding task in London? If he cannot give those assurances, the new arrangements will remain extremely unsatisfactory and the Government should not countenance them.

Is it really the case that the Foot Guard battalions will be kept in London for up to eight years? If so, I cannot believe that that arrangement can last for long.

The public like ceremonial duties; they appreciate them. There is no doubt that the amount of tourism that is attracted by those ceremonial duties means that they represent one part of the armed forces that clearly pays for itself. Those duties are not, of course, essential to the defence of Britain, but I believe that if they are to be undertaken, they must be done well. My right hon. Friend owes it to those who undertake those duties now and those who will undertake them in the future to ensure that the new arrangements work. Everyone concerned wants to make them work, but I doubt whether they can—I hope that I am wrong.

If those arrangements do not work I urge the Government to give us an assurance that this matter will be kept under review. I also urge them to ensure that no undue strain is put on the Foot Guard battalions or on the Household Cavalry in undertaking the task that they have been given in the difficult conditions set by the Government.

2.45 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on securing this debate. I know that he takes a great interest in this matter. I also know that my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) have been to see my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to discuss their concerns at some length.

Hon. Members will be aware of the background to the Army restructuring, which is now under way and I do not wish to dwell unduly on that. As part of the restructuring it was decided that the Foot Guards should reduce, as my hon. Friend has already said, from eight battalions to five; and that the Life Guards and the Blues and Royals, who already work together in the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, should unite into a single regiment to be known as the Household Cavalry Regiment, while retaining their individual indentities.

Clearly, with the reductions, the dismounted public duties undertaken by the Foot Guards had to be tailored to the new situation. To this end, an interdepartmental working group was set up to consider how reductions in the public duties commitment could be achieved without adversely affecting the conduct of ceremonial or the security of the royal family. The royal household, the Home Office, the Metropolitan police, and the Department of the Environment—supported by the Historic Royal Palaces Agency—were all involved in the process. As I announced to the House in a written answer on 21 October, a number of measures were identified by the working group which will reduce requirements for the employment of Foot Guards on public duties while maintaining essential security and appropriate ceremonial duties. I reported that Her Majesty the Queen had graciously agreed to the measures and that they will be implemented between now and 1994. I also placed in the Library of the House a document providing full details of the changes.

These changes are sufficient to achieve the greater part of the target reduction in Foot Guards manpower effort. Bearing in mind, however, that one of the three battalions to be based in London in the future will often be deployed in Northern Ireland or on a short overseas tour, each of the three London-based battalions will, as I have announced, be supplemented by a public duties increment of about 100 guardsmen, who will remain in London when a battalion is temporarily deployed elsewhere.

I want the House to understand that the main objectives and features of dismounted public duties will be largely unaffected by these measures. In most cases, the changes will only be noticeable to the more expert onlooker. I certainly do not believe that there is cause for alarm, and if there was concern previously, it ought to have been allayed by the measures that have been announced.

I should like, if I may, to consider briefly mounted public duties, where, as I stated in a written answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West on 26 October, there is to be no change. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, as part of the new Household Cavalry Regiment, will continue to consist of one squadron from each cap badge, and its duties will continue as they are now.

I ought also to make mention of the Royal Horse Artillery who will continue, as now, to fire ceremonial salutes at state occasions, and to take over the Queen's Life Guard when the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment is on annual training camp.

It has been argued in some quarters that the Household Division should somehow have been exempt from the restructuring process. I think that most hon. Members will agree that that would have been wrong and unfair to the other arms and corps that were required to make changes. I fail to understand how it would have been possible for the Government to have amalgamated a number of different infantry regiments going back a long way while the Foot Guards kept its second battalion. The Grenadiers, Scots and Coldstream Guards have not.

That being so, the challenge was to come up with a package of measures that enabled the required reductions to be made with minimum impact, both on the level of public duties and on the careers of the individual soldiers and officers of the Household Division. I am confident that the measures I have announced meet that challenge.

A particular concern expressed by my hon. Friend relates to commitments and overstretch. It is clearly in no one's interests to place the Foot Guards in a position where they cannot meet their commitments without an unreasonable amount of disruption. I assure the House that it was our firm intention that the reorganisation would not impose undue strain on the Foot Guards, nor be too tight.

I do not deny that, with the reduced number of Foot Guards battalions, there will be some pressures. But I am confident that, with the reductions in the scale of dismounted public duties to which I have referred, together with the public duties increment of requisite size and the achievement of full manning, they will be able successfully to carry out their tasks.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): The Minister referred to the public duties increment. If someone is expected to spend many more years in public duties, there is no way for that person to become a good operational soldier at the same time. The Household Division has a history of providing elite soldiers who have done well in battle. They cannot do that if they do nothing but drill.

Mr. Hamilton: It is not a question of their doing nothing but drill. For those going on the Northern Ireland roulement, there is an extensive period of training before duties start. I accept that the Household Division has had extremely high standards in Northern Ireland and I am sure that that will continue to be the case. It is wrong to give the impression that they come straight from doing drill to carrying out tasks in Northern Ireland. That is not the case and, as I have explained, there is an extensive training programme first.

I assure the House that the Household Division has been thoroughly consulted throughout. That covers the point that was raised about reservations and caveats through the chain of command. The chain of command has been consulted extensively and some of the concerns that have been raised have been met, for instance with the increase in the increment, which was originally intended to be at a somewhat lower level.

We have been told by the chain of command that this will work and that it is more than prepared to ensure that it will. If my hon. Friend is telling me that the chain of command has other reservations, I must say that those reservations are not coming to me. In the circumstances, they should come to me; people should not be saying that the measures will not work when they are telling the chain of command that they will.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I imagine that my right hon. Friend is speaking from an entirely up-to-date position.

[Dr. Goodson-Wickes]

Will he undertake that if representations reach him following today's debate, he will fully consider them and discuss their implications with interested parties?

Mr. Hamilton: At this stage we are moving on—this bears on the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon about a trial period—and are not talking in terms of a trial period. I am also answering the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West when I say that we shall keep the matter under careful review. If at some stage it is found not to be working, we are not so inflexible as not to try to make it work better.

The Army is in a constant state of change and nothing that happens at any stage is necessarily set in concrete and perpetuity. Much consultation has gone into the matter and we are confident that the system will work. If at some stage we find that it is not working as we anticipated, we shall look at it again.

I mention full manning because I know that it is of interest to hon. Members and, clearly, it is an important factor in making the changes workable. On current manning forecasts for the Army as a whole, we are confident that full manning is achievable: fewer recruits being required for a smaller Army. There is no reason to suppose that the Foot Guards will not benefit from that as much as the other arms and corps. If, however, circumstances were to prove that we had been over-confident in our predictions, we would look again. But at the moment we judge that it is right to press ahead.

I wish to take up the point about manning levels and the Foot Guards. They will be affected by the capping of recruiting levels, which is only sensible if we are moving towards the amalgamation of battalions. We do not want them at full strength at the time when they are amalgamated. I therefore imagine that the numbers in those regiments that are being amalgamated are being reduced.

I know that the structure of the new Household Cavalry Regiment has caused some concern. It has even been suggested that its structure is extraordinary and suspect. While it is certainly true that the union is unlike any of the other amalgamations that are taking place, in that the two former regiments will retain their separate identities, that does not make it suspect or unworkable. The two regiments have shown that they can successfully work together in the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, and there is no reason why that same spirit cannot be carried through to the new combined Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment. Those who have the interests of the regiments at heart will, I am sure, seek to make the new arrangements work.

I should like to conclude by stating some general principles that underlie this whole debate.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Before my right hon. Friend concludes, will he assure those like me who fear that, having gone through that painful "Options for Change" exercise, we shall be rapidly overtaken by further defence cuts and reductions in manpower for the British Army?

Mr. Hamilton: I wish that I could give my hon. Friend all the undertakings that he wants. My hon. Friend will have to wait until we hear the announcement next week to see how it affects defence. Indeed, we shall have to see what the position is. I share many of his concerns. The Army is certainly under a lot of pressure at the moment and I have always made it clear that if the Army were involved in long-term commitments that were more than we could meet with our existing levels, we should have to look at the matter again. That position has not changed. So I accept that, if we are to have very long-term commitments in Yugoslavia and if the increased numbers in Northern Ireland become a permanent feature, we shall have to see how all that works out.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: My right hon. Friend has kindly dealt with two of the questions that I raised, but he has not answered the one about additional pressure on the Household Division; nor has he answered my question about the number of state visits a year.

Mr. Hamilton: I shall come to that. On additional pressures, it is difficult to give my hon. Friend carte blanche that nothing will be asked of the Foot Guards beyond what they are doing now. We do not intend to heap other long-term commitments on to them in terms of public duties and what they are doing at the moment.

On the question of two state visits a year, that is certainly our long-term plan, but there is a plan to have three next year. Beyond then, we are working on the assumption that there will be two.

The twin roles of the Household Division are to be first-class operational soldiers, and to provide the finest military ceremonial in the world. That is not in dispute. The exacting nature and demands of ceremonial are well appreciated by the Army. The quality of the Household Division's ceremonial in London derives from specific training, from tradition, and from those qualities that military discipline confer. Although resources are limited, and what we can achieve has to be a compromise with the best that is attainable in the circumstances, I am confident that our ceremonial will continue to be second to none.

I would caution the House against taking an overly pessimistic view of the consequences of the restructuring. There will undoubtedly be some difficulties arising from the reduced pool from which soldiers may be drawn for mounted training; and some loss of flexibility with the reduction from eight to five battalions of Foot Guards. We do not believe, however, that there are any insurmountable problems ahead.

It is true that the achievement of full manning is important to the success of the restructuring, both here and elsewhere. The suggestion, however, that if that is not absolutely achieved then the whole situation will unravel is unduly alarmist. We are, as I have explained, confident that something approaching full manning is achievable.

As far as the Household Cavalry is concerned, we do accept that some action is needed to increase proportionally the number of soldiers that are mounted trained, and to that end, we are establishing a training wing at Windsor.

As for the Foot Guards, we do not accept that the loss of three battalions will make it impossible to maintain a reasonable balance between ceremonial and operational duties. We are concerned that dismounted public duties should continue to be carried out in a fitting matter. We have therefore looked very carefully at the balance of tasking and the availability of manpower. We are satisfied that the numbers available to the Household Division should be sufficient and that the Army is intent on making

the new arrangements work. As Ministers have said on more than one occasion when faced with scepticism about the adequacy of Army resources, we are quite ready to look again at particular issues if practical experience demonstrates the need to do so. I do not believe that that is likely in the case of dismounted public duties.

I do not see a need to depart from the agreed restructuring arrangements that were announced to the House on 21 October. The situation will, however, be kept under review. If it became clear that remedial measures were required, I can assure the House that action would be taken.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 9 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SELECTION

Ordered,

That Sir Marcus Fox and Sir Giles Shaw be discharged from the Committee of Selection and Mr. Andrew Bowden and Mr. Richard Tracey be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

1. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what effect he estimates the introduction of the national lottery will have on charitable income.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): Charities will be one of the main beneficiaries of the national lottery.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that 85 per cent. of the money raised by the national lottery will go in taxes, administration and prize money and that only 15 per cent. will go not just to charities but to sports, the arts, heritage and so on? Given those figures, is it not right that charities should be alarmed that the introduction of a national lottery would mean a loss of £232 million which would not be compensated for by what they received from the lottery?

Mr. Brooke: I am conscious that statistics on the outcome have been bandied around, but, until we publish the Bill, people will not even be able to see the original indicative figures.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern. Representatives of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations will see me this coming week, when they can argue their case. I shall listen to them carefully.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In welcoming the Government's intention that charities should receive a fair share of the proceeds of the national lottery, may I ask my right hon. Friend to ensure that the system for distributing the funds takes careful account of the interests of charities that have been in the practice of running lotteries and whose income could be significantly hit by the advent of a national lottery?

Mr. Brooke: I give my hon. Friend the assurance that that is one of the considerations that we will take into account.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Will the Secretary of State publish the GAH Group report, commissioned by the Department to inquire into aspects and effects of the national lottery?

Mr. Brooke: If I were to do so, I should be going back on an answer that I have already given in the House. That was confidential advice to the Government, to inform our decision making on the lottery.

Mr. Jessel: Is my right hon. Friend aware that if the national lottery is to flourish as we all want it to do, people must want to buy tickets and they must know, therefore, that a large proportion of what they are paying will go to charities, the arts or sport? Is he further aware that many of us feel that it is essential to make certain that the Treasury is not allowed to kill the goose that lays the golden egg by taxing the lottery too heavily?

Mr. Brooke: I would not for the moment trespass on the preserves of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but if my hon. Friend felt inclined to make a representation to my right hon. Friend, I do not think that it would do any harm to the cause.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the Secretary of State accept that if the national lottery is a rip-roaring success, that will bring little joy to those of our constituents who work in the pools industry? What representations has he received from those who promote that industry? Will he give them a guarantee that when the national lottery is set up, those people will compete with it on equal terms when selling tickets?

Mr. Brooke: I totally understand the hon. Gentleman's question, not least because of the part of the country that he represents. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has already met some of those involved, and I expect to do so, too. We shall pay close attention to what they say, but I shall not give advance commitments about the outcome.

Mr. Nigel Evans: I welcome the introduction of the national lottery. Will my right hon. Friend pay some regard to community sporting facilities in rural areas, particularly swimming pools, which are expensive for such areas, and community youth soccer sites, many of which are supported by thousands of mums and dads who need support from something like a national lottery?

Mr. Brooke: I understand my hon. Friend's interest, but the distribution of the funds that emerge from the lottery will be in the hands of other than the Government's and I am confident that those involved will receive many representations when their identity is known.

Nonconformist Chapels

2. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent discussions he has had about the conservation of historic nonconformist chapels.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): Several, some with the right hon. Gentleman. I warmly welcome the creation of the Historic Chapels Trust.

Mr. Beith: I welcome the creation of the trust and hope that it will soon be able to save some very special examples of nonconformist architecture. Will the Minister look again at discussions about ecclesiastical exemption in the light of the fact that a fine Georgian Baptist chapel had its Georgian fittings removed and destroyed and the fact that, under the Government's proposals, there is nothing that would help to discourage that sort of thing?

Mr. Key: I think that the right hon. Gentleman is referring to Great Giddings. That was a tragedy, but it helped to inform consideration of the public consultation which took place in February on ecclesiastical exemption. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will, I hope, reach conclusions quite soon.

Mrs. Clwyd: When the Minister next speaks to Mr. Jocelyn Stevens about conservation, will he remind him that although Mr. Stevens may consider it macho to foster his image as an asset stripper and an axe man, that image does not fit in well with being custodian of our national heritage? As English Heritage appears to be reneging on its legal purpose, is the Minister convinced that it can continue to pursue its public functions as an agency of government?

Mr. Key: May I start by welcoming the hon. Lady to the Dispatch Box and congratulating her on her appointment. I know that she is eminently qualified and has many years of experience, not least as a member of the Arts Council of Great Britain. However, I have to be less soft in response to her question, because Mr. Jocelyn Stevens has a distinguished record in the management of the arts. That is beyond doubt. There has been a great deal of misunderstanding about English Heritage's long-term strategy. There is no question of its selling off anything and, of course, there would certainly be no question of its doing any such thing in the case of, for example, Crown property. I very much hope that more rational counsels will prevail in future.

Football Stadiums

3. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will relax the requirements for all-seater stadiums for football clubs in the first and second divisions of the Football League and clubs in the premier league.

Mr. Brooke: I stand by the decision of my predecessor that all clubs in the Football Association premier league and those in division one of the Football League will be required to be all-seater by August 1994 in accordance with the recommendations of Lord Justice Taylor's final report on the Hillsborough stadium disaster. Clubs in divisions two and three of the Football League will be allowed to retain some standing accommodation provided it is safe.

Mr. Illsley: I thank the Secretary of State for that reply. Is he aware that some first division clubs are finding difficulties in meeting the Taylor recommendations because of the cost of converting to all-seater stadiums? Will the Secretary of State consider the recommendations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs that clubs with an attendance of, say, under 10,000 should be allowed to retain some standing accommodation and that clubs should be judged on individual attendance, always bearing in mind, of course, the fact that safety is the paramount issue?

Mr. Brooke: When consultation on that issue took place, there was reasonable agreement on the advice that the cut should be on a divisional rather than an attendance basis. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Football Licensing Authority, most notably in a recent letter to Southampton, has stated the sort of circumstances at which it would look in considering a request to go beyond the present deadline.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the work of the Football Trust has been crucial in helping many soccer grounds to meet the requirements of the Taylor report? Does he recall that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced a 2·5 per cent. reduction in pool betting duty, which has been put to good use? Will the Secretary of State please do all that he can to support the Football Trust in getting that pool betting duty exemption extended?

Mr. Brooke: I suspect that it is just possible that my hon. Friend's question contained some supplementary agenda. I assure him that I shall be supportive of the Football Trust.

Countryside (Recreation)

4. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about access to the countryside for recreational use, with particular reference to fell running, orienteering and water sports.

Mr. Key: The Government's policy is to promote access to the countryside for recreational use of all kinds, while respecting property rights, conservation interests and the needs of rural development and agriculture.

Mr. Bennett: The Minister will recall that, just before the summer recess, I drew to the then Secretary of State's attention the problem that was being created by North West Water and the Forestry Commission threatening to charge orienteers and fell runners for access to their land. He said that, although he was not a runner, he would look into the matter. Is the Minister aware that, as a result of that and other questions and publicity, it looks as though North West Water and the Forestry Commission are backing off from imposing charges? Will the hon. Gentleman welcome that step and make it clear that he does not believe that sporting organisations should be charged for access, particularly to areas of outstanding natural beauty to which they go for fell running and orienteering?

Mr. Key: Fell walking and orienteering should be encouraged in the countryside. There has been movement, which I am delighted to endorse. However, I understand that the water companies and the Forestry Commission never intended to charge individuals for access to their property. They sought only to ensure that the substantial costs involved when that activity took place were covered where there were formal programmes of training or large events taking place.

Live Music

5. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy on promoting live music.

Mr. Key: The Government support the arts through the Arts Council and regional arts boards. Our common aim, for all art forms, is to encourage quality and innovation and to make the arts as widely available as possible. To that end, the Arts Council expects to spend more than £43 million this year on live music, ranging from opera and orchestras to jazz and reggae. The regional boards also fund a good deal of music making at a more local level.

Mr. Bayley: Does the Minister accept that the provision of small venues is particularly important as a seedbed for new musical talent? Is it not an absurd anomaly that section 182 of the Licensing Act 1964 requires a public entertainment licence where more than two live musicians gather at a venue such as a public house, but not when a discotheque is held there or, worse still, when muzak is played on the pub's loudspeakers? Will the Minister consider a change in the law, and will he meet a deputation from the all-party jazz group to discuss how the law can be changed to provide better opportunities for inspiring young musicians to get a live venue?

Mr. Key: I am always prepared to go to great lengths to encourage jazz, which is a particular enthusiasm of mine. Changes in the law on noise are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, but there are good reasons for having entertainment licences, as I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge. If he would like to acquaint me further with the nature of his problems, I should be happy to see him.

Sir Fergus Mongomery: Was not the first National Music Day a great success? Has my hon. Friend any plans to repeat that event?

Mr. Key: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It was indeed an outstanding success right across the country, with tens of thousands of amateur musicians and professionals taking part in a great national celebration. We are considering whether to repeat the exercise next year and are discussing the details with the organisers, although we have come to no conclusion yet.

Mr. Pendry: Is the Minister aware that besides himself, President-elect Clinton is with it, Nigel Kennedy is swinging towards it and, more importantly, millions of men and women are appreciating it in greater numbers? However, the Arts Council is cutting grants to the regional jazz boards. Grants have been withdrawn from Eastern Jazz and the Scottish Jazz Network. Jazz Central is under review and others could follow. That demonstrates that the Arts Council is ignorant of this kind of music. Therefore, will the Minister knock together the heads of those on the Arts Council to bring about a much more sensible jazz policy?

Mr. Key: I stand by the long-standing tradition of arm's-length management and funding, and I would not wish to interfere in the artistic judgments of the Arts Council. However, as I have discovered, genuine problems arise from time to time—for example, where jazz is played in clubs for profit or where an entry fee is charged—and there may be some scope for discussion there. I acknowledge the basic point that the hon. Gentleman is making—that there is tremendous enthusiasm for jazz, which young people are taking up in greater numbers in schools, including my eldest daughter, who is taking up the saxophone. I pay tribute to the teachers who seek to inculcate jazz.

BBC

6. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to publish his proposals for the future of the BBC.

Mr. Brooke: I intend to publish a discussion paper about the future of the BBC in the next few weeks. That will set out a range of questions as a framework for public debate.

Mr. Whittingdale: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in considering the future funding and structure of the BBC, no options will be excluded? Will he consider particularly whether the BBC should continue to enjoy a monopoly of public sector subsidy and whether it is right that the full range of output of the BBC should continue to be funded by the licence fee payer?

Mr. Brooke: If I answered every one of my hon. Friend's questions, I should be producing an early publication of the discussion document. I can give him the assurance that all the matters that he has raised are being considered during the preparation of the document.

Mr. Mandelson: In view of the complex and challenging future for the BBC, does the Secretary of State think that the present arrangements for the director-generalship of the BBC are sensible or satisfactory? Rather than persist with the rather unhappy situation in which two people, Sir Michael Checkland and Mr. John Birt, are effectively doing the same job, does the right hon. Gentleman think that it would be wise to cut through the knot and allow Mr. Birt to take over at a slightly earlier moment than presently planned?

Mr. Brooke: I understand the hon. Gentleman's question, but the arrangements were set in motion by the governors and the BBC as a specific plan. That is a matter for the BBC rather than for me.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: My right hon. Friend will be aware that I have worked for both systems of television and radio, commercial broadcasting as well as for the BBC. Does he agree that any steps that he takes to consider the future of the BBC should be structured on two important facts—that it is an institution of world renown and that it is one of the greatest patrons of the arts in this country?

Mr. Brooke: I well remember supporting my hon. Friend when he represented another constituency during the days when he was involved in the BBC. I entirely share the view that he has expressed about the BBC.

Mr. Corbett: May I underline the urgency of making the Green Paper public as soon as possible to assist what we all hope will be a widespread debate on the future of the BBC that involves viewers and listeners? Is the Secretary of State aware that we shall expect the document to reaffirm the Government's commitment to the independence of the BBC and its prime role in our broadcasting system? Meanwhile, will the right hon. Gentleman urge the BBC to stop its current round of job cutting, which threatens programme-making ability, ahead of any decisions on its role into and beyond the next century?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman's impatience is a little undue, considering that we are talking about a charter that runs until 1996. It is better that it were done well than done hastily. As for the hon. Gentleman's question about jobs at the BBC, under its present charter internal appointments and day-to-day management are matters for the BBC itself.

Mr. Fabricant: My right hon. Friend will be aware that, on the restructuring of the Independent Broadcasting Authority into the Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority, the engineering division was privatised and became National Transcommunications. Does my right hon. Friend have similar plans so to privatise BBC Engineering? Is he aware that, because the BBC produces its own programmes, the privatisation of BBC Engineering could well have an effect on its programme-making capacity?

Mr. Brooke: Seductive though the invitations are from my hon. Friends, it would be premature for me to say what will be in the document before we arrive at it.

Collections of Paintings

7. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures he has recently taken to preserve collections of paintings of national importance in Britain.

Mr. Brooke: In addition to the Waverley system of export controls, there are several tax concessions to encourage the retention of pre-eminent works. The Government also provide grants, including that to the national heritage memorial fund, to assist the purchase of items under threat of export.

Mrs. Campbell: What has the right hon. Gentleman done to prevent the sale by Royal Holloway and Bedford new college of the paintings by Gainsborough, Constable and Turner to fund building work? Does he approve of colleges raising money in that way to finance essential building work and repairs?

Mr. Brooke: I fully appreciate the concern about the possible sale of three paintings from the college's picture collection. Although I have not seen them in my present capacity, I saw them previously. The decision whether to sell is one for the college and the Charity Commissioners and it would not be appropriate for Ministers to intervene.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many owners of major collections of works of art are anxious to keep them together for the benefit of the nation? Does he accept that the national heritage memorial fund should have greater flexibility to acquire such collections for a brief period while deciding where they should ultimately reside?

Mr. Brooke: I am conscious of certain cases that might be in my hon. Friend's mind and I shall consider the matter. However, I am sure that those who have monitored the work of the national heritage memorial fund to date would say that it is working extremely well.

Mr. Sheldon: Is the Secretary of State aware that a number of national institutions are considering the sale of important works of art to provide funds for normal maintenance work? For example, Edinburgh university is considering the sale of some very important works of art. That widespread and serious problem has come to light recently because of the pressure on maintenance funds. Will the right hon. Gentleman think afresh on the matter, as it is becoming an urgent problem?

Mr. Brooke: The right hon. Gentleman tempts me on to territory that belongs to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Scotland. However, I recognise the basic issue raised by the right hon. Gentleman and it should secure the attention of all of us.

Mr. Wolfson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that often, when historic houses in private ownership come on to the market, that results in the breaking up of art collections? Is not the National Trust concerned that, because of recessionary pressures, there could be a large number of private sales? Is not the best way forward for those houses to remain in private hands, provided they are open to the public? Is my right hon. Friend taking any steps to ensure that that happens?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend has raised two separate questions, one of which relates to the recent annual general meeting of the National Trust—that is, the sale of the contents and of privately owned historic houses. A number of the issues relating to that matter come within the competence of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, so I shall draw my hon. Friend's questions to his attention.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Secretary of State recall that about two years ago, when Lady Thatcher was in power, I raised the question of silver that had disappeared from a National Trust house in Northampton? Apparently, it was found in the possession of the then Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing street. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that I asked a number of other questions and discovered that Lady Thatcher had paintings and all sorts of other art collections from museums and art galleries throughout the country? Have they been returned, or did she take them with her?

Mr. Brooke: I am unfamiliar with the precise detail of the hon. Gentleman's point, but I shall inquire into it. However, I am sure that all hon. Members would wish No. 10 Downing street to be an appropriate showpiece for the heritage of our nation.

Mr. Rowe: If, over the years, academic and other institutions have, through their own prudence or that of others, been endowed with works of art which they view as a form of capital assets, will my right hon. Friend take a balanced view of the desire of such institutions—at times when they want to continue doing what they do—to sell them?

Mr. Brooke: I am not absolutely confident that I followed every sub-clause of my hon. Friend's question, but I will read it with great care and if I can give my hon. Friend a specific answer, I shall do so.

Public Library Service

8. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the state of the public library service.

Mr. Key: The responsibility for providing public library services rests with local library authorities. The best of them offer sound management of resources and a service which is modern, friendly and appropriate to users' needs.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister recognise that there has been a steady decline in the standard of service throughout the country in the past 10 to 15 years? That is evident in reduced book funds and opening hours, and in library closures. Will that not grow worse as financial pressures on local authorities intensify? When will the Minister act to stop the rot so that local authorities can deliver a comprehensive and efficient service, as they are required to do under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964?

Mr. Key: Public libraries in England added 10·8 million, 11·1 million and 11 million books to their stocks in 1980-81, 1984-85 and 1990-91 respectively. Those figures include donations and free publications as well as purchases. Actual expenditure on books in those same years was £41 million, £56·8 million and £84·8 million—representing an increase in expenditure in real terms of almost 13 per cent.

Mrs. Angela Knight: My hon. Friend is aware that, despite continuing local protest and an independent review, Derbyshire county council has reopened only three of the 11 libraries that it closed. One that remains shut is the popular library in Breaston, in my constituency. Will my hon. Friend use all the powers at his disposal to ensure that my constituents enjoy the library services for which they consider that they pay in their community charge but do not receive from Derbyshire county council?

Mr. Key: I am well aware of the strong public feeling in Derbyshire about the county council's actions in recent years. I invited a delegation from the library authority to see me only last week. I took into consideration the independent panel's decision and recommendations and I have, as it were, put Derbyshire on probation: I shall not now hold a public inquiry because of the county council's good intentions, but it must hold to them if the council is to respond positively to the needs of the people whom it serves.

Mr. Barnes: Will the Minister ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to reconsider the formula used to calculate standard spending assessments so that Derbyshire and other authorities may have the resources to provide wide-ranging services—including public libraries, which need to be defended and expanded?

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman will recall that I know a thing or two about standard spending assessments. He and I have sparred over that issue for years. Derbyshire's standard spending assessment is calculated on exactly the same basis as that of every other local authority. If Derbyshire prioritises needs in a way which upsets the hon. Gentleman, he knows to whom he must speak.

Mr. Brandreth: Does my hon. Friend share my concern that, despite the greatly increased expenditure on public libraries that he enumerated, the number of books borrowed in the past decade has fallen some 15 per cent.? Does he have any initiatives to encourage greater use of public libraries?

Mr. Kay: Yes, I have many ideas—but so do the professionals who run the library service. I invite my hon. Friend and right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House to acknowledge that libraries are not what they were: no longer are they places where one just goes to read or borrow a book—today libraries serve as resource centres which lend many items other than books and offer on-line computer facilities. Libraries are responding positively to that new demand. They are issuing more books than they have done for some time, and the loaning of sound and video recordings is increasing rapidly.

International Festivals (Cost)

9. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities that host international festivals have the financial burden of doing so taken into account by the Government.

Mr. Key: It is for individual local authorities to determine the extent of their financial support for arts organisations and events, in the light of local circumstances and competing priorities. All major international arts festivals receive substantial financial support from central Government through the Arts Council and regional arts boards.

Mr. Jones: I thank the Minister for his reply. Does he accept, however, that many local authorities' spending is severely strapped at present? With the recession taking its toll on the box offices, many art providers are in serious financial difficulty, including the Everyman theatre in my constituency of Cheltenham. How does the Minister intend to protect the arts from the double whammy of local authority capping and the recession?

Mr. Key: I shall continue to encourage the large number of festivals which take place in this country. There are currently more than 500, excluding one-day local and community festivals. One answer to the problem is mixed funding. In that connection, I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the enormous success of business sponsorship for the arts, and the success of incentive schemes which have encouraged the funding which has allowed sponsorship levels to rise so dramatically in recent years.

Mr. Hawkins: As my hon. Friend will know, my constituency contains something that is by way of being a permanent international festival—the Blackpool pleasure beach, which is the biggest visitor attraction in Europe apart from the Vatican. May I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to welcome the beach's enterprise in planning the biggest rollercoaster in the world? I have here a schematic representation, which shows that it is higher than Nelson's column.

Mr. Key: Of course I welcome initiative of that kind. It is the sort of imaginative scheme which will no doubt appeal to the Leader of the Opposition when he considers his European policy.

I should be delighted to welcome my hon. Friend and any of his hon. Friends from Blackpool. Blackpool is the biggest holiday resort in Europe, and the best of that resort provides an example for many others in this country.

Millennium Fund

10. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about his current plans in connection with the millennium fund.

Mr. Brooke: I shall set out the Government's policy on the millennium fund during the passage of the National Lottery Bill.

Mr. Cohen: How will projects financed by the millennium fund differ from those financed by the national lottery? A good many grandiose projects featured in the Conservative party manifesto; why should we wait for the millennium fund to be financed by the lottery? Why do the Government not put some money into it now, and start spending it now?

Mr. Brooke: The millennium fund is associated with either the year 2000 or the year 2001—there is a degree of academic argument about that. There is plenty of time for the National Lottery Bill to afford the resources for the millennium fund.

Highcliffe Castle, Dorset

11. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on progress on the works on Highcliffe castle, Dorset.

Mr. Key: The Buildings at Risk Trust has been commissioned by Christchurch borough council to prepare a business plan for the restoration of Highcliffe castle. Holding works have been carried out, with English Heritage grant aid, to protect the damaged structure while its future is being considered.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer, of which I was, of course, aware. *[Interruption.]* I meant that I was aware of the information, not the answer.

Is my hon. Friend aware that Christchurch borough council is a very small authority, and that the financial burden of the work for which it is having to pay is substantial? Lord Montagu was very helpful when he was chairman of English Heritage, but for various reasons Christchurch did not adopt his proposals. What we need is a catalyst. Will my hon. Friend act as that catalyst and allow me to take a deputation to see him, consisting of members of the council and those whom he mentioned in his original answer? Perhaps we can then try to do something to save this grade 1 listed building in my constituency.

Mr. Key: I should be delighted to see my hon. Friend and a deputation from Christchurch. The problem has existed ever since the castle was destroyed by fire in the 1960s, and I think that 30 years is quite long enough to wait for a resolution of it. I understand that the business plan is likely to be available before the end of the month, and I look forward to seeing it. Perhaps my hon. Friend and I had better wait until we have examined the plan before discussing it; by all means let us do so after that.

Mr. Tony Banks: Has not the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) shown the significance of a problem which could well face many local authorities if English Heritage's proposals to transfer ancient monuments to those authorities were to proceed? Will the Minister not only bear in mind the point made by his hon. Friend but ensure that if any monuments are transferred to local authorities, sufficient funds will go with them?

Mr. Key: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to make it clear that English Heritage will not be handing over anything to local authorities, or others. Anything that it proposes to do will be by agreement and carefully planned. Resources would, of course, be ensured before any such transfer were made. The object of the operation is to ensure that many of the monuments, which are a long way from London, are better managed either by the local authority or by a trust, of which the local authority might be a part. Some local authorities are pursuing this policy because they wish to have more control over the day-to-day management of properties which will remain under the ownership or guardianship of English Heritage.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office

24. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission if he will make a statement on the recruitment of information technology specialists by the NAO.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): The recruitment of staff to meet the needs of the National Audit Office is a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Comptroller and Auditor General has, however, told me that he does not normally consider it the most efficient way of organising its resources to recruit information technology specialists for permanent retention on his staff.

Mr. Denham: Does the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission share my concern at the apparently endless string of computer purchase scandals in the national health service, including the £43 million recently wasted by the Wessex regional health authority, the Healthtrac computer system in the west midlands, and now the London ambulance service computer breakdown? Does he accept that all those computer scandals first came to light not by means of national health service internal audits or Government Department audits but by means of media attention? Will he therefore discuss with the National Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General the desirability of establishing a specialist team to examine national health service computer services until we can all be satisfied that the money is being used effectively and efficiently and not wasted, as it appears to be at the moment?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am not sure about the origin of the reports, but I know that in 1990 the National Audit Office carried out an examination of managing computer projects in the national health service and that the matter was followed up by the Public Accounts Committee. Furthermore, I know that the National Audit Office will examine the matter again if the PAC thinks it right. The

National Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General recruit specialist information technology experts as and when necessary.

25. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission if he will review the number of value-for-money audits undertaken annually by the National Audit Office.

Sir Peter Hordern: The Public Accounts Commission reviews annually the corporate plan of the National Audit Office, which shows the balance of activities and expenditure expected over the future five-year period. After considering the latest corporate plan in July, the commission endorsed the National Audit Office's proposal to undertake 50 value-for-money audits in 1993-94.

Dr. Wright: Why does the chairman of the Public Accounts Commission think that approximately 50 value-for-money audits per year by the National Audit Office is considered, in the NAO's words, "an appropriate level" when there are volumes and varieties of work available to be done which is not at present undertaken? The National Audit Office has no access to the Civil List or to the security services. It has done no work on opted-out schools or on NHS trusts. It has done very little work on the proliferation of executive agencies, and increasing volumes of its work are being privatised and contracted out. Given the volume of work that there is to be done, why are a mere 50 value-for-money audits per year thought to be sufficient?

Sir Peter Hordern: The number has increased from 33 five years ago to 50 now. The Public Accounts Commission, on the advice of the Public Accounts Committee, believes that that is the appropriate number. It is partly a question of staff and resources. The hon. Gentleman raised a number of matters that the Comptroller and Auditor General would not in any event investigate. It is a matter of balance, but the commission believes that the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office have it about right. If the hon. Gentleman believes that there are particular areas which the Comptroller and Auditor General should investigate, I have no doubt that he will let them know and I shall see to it that the Comptroller and Auditor General hears about the hon. Gentleman's request.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Has my hon. Friend's Committee dealt with Ministry of Defence relocation projects? It appears that much public money——

Madam Speaker: Order. I regret that the hon. Gentleman's question is not in order. If he can relate it more directly to Question 25, of course I shall hear him.

Mr. Bruce: I thank you, Madam Speaker, for your help. I was specifically asking my hon. Friend about value-for-money audits, because if a Department tries to make savings by relocating staff such audits must ensure that savings proposed in studies are achieved.

Sir Peter Hordern: The Comptroller and Auditor General frequently makes findings about the Ministry of Defence, especially on housing and relocation matters, but I will ensure that my hon. Friend's remarks are brought to the attention of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Refreshment Department

26. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make a statement on *(a)* the expenditure and *(b)* the staffing levels of the Refreshment Department for 1992-93.

Mr. A. J. Beith *(on behalf of the House of Commons Commission):* The expenditure figures for the current financial year are not yet available. I am advised that the total number of staff employed in the Refreshment Department is 311, of whom 25 are in non-industrial grades.

Mr. Flynn: Can the right hon. Gentleman tell me why, three years ago, I was given the political affiliations of Members booking the House of Commons Dining Rooms but now that information has become a state secret? As one would expect, the political affiliation of Members booking the Rooms is overwhelmingly Conservative. Is the reason for the new secrecy a sense of guilt because so many commercial companies are being royally entertained in our subsidised facilities while pensioners and disabled people who come to the House cannot enjoy the simple hospitality of a place to shelter or a cup of tea?

Madam Speaker: Order. I understand the passionate feelings of the hon. Member, but his question does not relate to the question on the Order Paper.

Mr. Beith: These are primarily matters for the Catering Committee, which I understand is reviewing banqueting arrangements. Responsibility rests with the Member who makes the booking.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the right hon. Gentleman join me in thanking the staff of the Refreshment Department for the jolly long hours of work that they put in and for the fact that they are always cheerful at whatever time of night they are asked to serve food?

Mr. Beith: Yes, with pleasure.

Day Nursery

27. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-on-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what progress is being made towards the establishment of a day nursery in the House.

Mr. Beith: The Commission has asked the Accommodation and Works Select Committee to establish whether accommodation can be found for a creche within the parliamentary estate. The Committee has passed a resolution to instruct the relevant officers of the House to continue their attempts to identify suitable accommodation. There is the further possibility that arrangements could be made in conjunction with Whitehall Departments which are also seeking accommodation in the Westminster area for the same purpose. I understand that some progress has been made in identifying suitable accommodation for such a creche. Their decisions are still at a preliminary stage. Should suitable proposals result from either initiative, they will be put to the relevant Committees and to the Commission.

Ms. Hoey: I thank the right hon. Member for that sympathetic response, but sympathy and scant progress are not enough. This has been going on for a long time. Does the hon. Member agree that the best solution might be for members of the all-party nursery sub-committee to walk around with some of the gentlemen who chair those Committees and look at the proposed accommodation? It does not seem plausible that we cannot find suitable accommodation in the Palace of Westminster to be adapted for this necessary purpose. Is the right hon. Member aware of the rumour that a betting shop would have higher priority than a nursery? If that rumour is true, will he confirm that he would not support that view?

Mr. Beith: There is no basis for that rumour. The one thing that is taking priority in accommodation in the parliamentary estate is accommodation for hon. Members and staff who do not have adequate accommodation at present. The hon. Lady's suggestion that hon. Members who have involved themselves in the issue might make suggestions and proposals to the Accommodation and Works Select Committee would be useful to follow up.

Buying British

28. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is his policy towards buying British products for use in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Beith: British products are extensively used in all Departments of the House. It is the practice to purchase British products when they offer good value for money, taking into account quality, delivery and price.

Mr. Steen: Although the right hon. Gentleman makes that reply, he must be aware that there is an EC directive that is applied completely unfairly and results in the House tending to buy foreign goods even though there are English goods—[HON. MEMBERS: "British".]—British goods which are as good if not better? Although the price may be a little higher, the quality is as good. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that until all the other European countries stop buying their own goods, as France and Germany always do, we should continue to buy British goods? We should set an example in Parliament until the enforcement procedures in Europe ensure that all European countries play by the rules.

Mr. Beith: I am not aware of any examples of British products that have been turned down on those grounds. Large contracts are subject to EC and GATT rules, which affect the placing of large contracts in a nationally discriminatory way, and the Commission must obey the law. If there are any particular cases, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bring them to the attention of the appropriate Department.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sittings of the House

35. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to introduce proposals to terminate House of Commons business not later than 10 pm on each sitting day; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I imagine that my hon. Friend has in mind one of the proposals in the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House. As I told my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who chaired the Committee, at last Thursday's business questions, I hope to identify a basis of agreement for discussion through the usual channels, with the aim of being in a position to bring forward substantive motions at an early stage.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that of all the proposals in the report by the Committee chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale, the proposal on sittings is perhaps one of the most important? Does he agree, from his long years in the House, that the House tends to diminish rather than increase in efficiency as the hour passes 10 pm and the sitting goes on into the small hours? That cannot be good for the nation or for anybody else.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that I can assent to a proposition about the diminishing efficiency of the House at particular times of the day, although I am aware of the widespread public sharing of my hon. Friend's view. It is worth noting, as a matter of practice, that since the House resumed on 19 October there have been only two occasions on which the House has not adjourned before 11.5 pm, which is a significant improvement on some previous experiences. On Thursday evenings, which I know are one of the points of concern to many hon. Members, the House has adjourned at 10.30 pm—standard time—on each occasion so far.

Mr. Maxton: Does the Leader of the House agree that the best way to ensure that the House rises by 10 pm on most evenings would be to reduce the business carried out in the House? Does he agree that the quickest and easiest way to do that would be to establish legislative assemblies in Scotland and in Wales to take on the business presently carried out in the House for those nations?

Mr. Newton: The first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is in one sense unanswerable. It must be emphasised that our constituents not only express the wish that we should sit reasonable hours, but want to see a reasonable amount of business carried through the House. It is always a question of striking the right balance. I am afraid that I cannot agree—I see from the pleased expression on the hon. Gentleman's face that he would not expect me to agree—to the second part of this proposition as to how we might seek to achieve that.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend accept that although many of us would like the House normally to stop at 10 pm, there are certain matters on which there is wide bipartisan agreement? If it is necessary for a Committee of the Whole House to sit beyond 10 pm on certain matters for which most of our people—Labour and Tory—worked at the previous election, would that not be acceptable?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend, with that characteristically mischievous expression on his face, is tempting me to make some very inflammatory remarks. I do not intend to be drawn on to that ground.

EC Legislation Committee (Visits)

36. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has to extend the ability of individual members of the European Legislation Committee to visit Brussels.

Mr. Newton: Individual members of the European Legislation Committee can benefit from the arrangements agreed in the resolution of the House of 6 December 1991 on travel by members to European Community institutions providing for one trip per member each year to visit one of the Community institutions. As those arrangements were introduced only last December, it would be premature to consider extending them.

Mr. Enright: Does the Lord President agree that that puts Members of this House at a considerable disadvantage, for example, in relation to our German counterparts? If we are to be enabled to fulfil subsidiarity properly, we should be able to travel appropriately in relation to the amount of legislation being considered by the Community at any particular time.

Mr. Newton: As I have said, it is still less than a year since, on a motion moved by my predecessor, the House agreed to the improved arrangements that I have just outlined in my reply. The European Legislation Committee collectively is free to apply, under the usual arrangements, for funding of overseas travel by Select Committees.

EC Legislation

38. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to modify the methods of parliamentary scrutiny of European Community legislation and of the Council's minutes of proceedings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Government have recently announced that they will expand their explanatory memoranda on EC documents to cover the question of subsidiarity. I have no present plans for any further changes, though I keep the procedures under review.

Dr. Godman: In the interests of greater openness of the deliberations of Council meetings, which the Prime Minister supported at the Birmingham Council, will the Lord President arrange for copies of the minutes of proceedings of Council meetings to be placed in the Library? Will he also impress on his colleagues the fact that the rules of the Council allow for such meetings to be public? In terms of more openness, would it not make good sense to have at least part of Council meetings conducted in public, as article 3 of the Council's rules allows for that decision to be made?

Mr. Newton: From his involvement in a Standing Committee and his known interest in these matters, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that under the Council's rules of procedure Council minutes are confidential and do not fall within the definition of depositable documents. That is clearly not something which I or any other member of the British Government can change at will. However, the hon. Gentleman will be aware of what was said at Birmingham about greater openness and the fact that that is to be discussed further at Edinburgh. The right course for me is to take delivery of the hon. Gentleman's suggestions as suggestions which clearly should be considered in that context.

Finance and Service Committee

39. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the work of the Finance and Services Committee.

40. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects the Finance and Services Committee to make progress on implementation of the Ibbs report.

Mr. Newton: The Finance and Services Committee has not yet been nominated.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is high time that the constitution and operation of that Committee was sorted out? Everyone outside the House has been expected to tighten their belts and operate more efficiently. Surely that should also apply to us in this place.

Mr. Newton: I certainly hope that it will be possible to complete the discussions associated with that matter in a way which will enable progress to be made before too long. However, I would not want my hon. Friend to think that the fact that the Committee has not yet been nominated in any way diminishes the drive by the House of Commons Commission and by the Select Committees on Accommodation and Works, on Administration and on Catering in pursuing vigorously their endeavours to improve the efficiency with which the resources available to the House are used.

Mr. John Greenway: I understand that it will be a duty of the Committee when it is established to consider the extent to which the parliamentary channel should be available around the Palace of Westminster. My right hon. Friend will know that many of us still occupy offices which are a good five or six minutes walk away from the Chamber. I appreciate the point that we keep fit by walking to and fro, particularly when there are many Divisions, but it would be helpful if the parliamentary channel were available, not necessarily in every hon. Member's office, but in certain selected rooms around this place.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that my hon. Friend is right in thinking that it is primarily a matter for the Finance and Services Committee. As Chairman of the Broadcasting Committee, and from my knowledge of the work being done both by the Accommodation and Works Committee and by the Information Committee, I can assure my hon. Friend that we are all aware of the desirability of reaching conclusions on matters of the kind that he has in mind.

Summer Adjournment

41. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has had from people and bodies outside the House about the length of this summer's Adjournment.

Mr. Newton: I have received several letters from members of the public commenting on the length of this summer's Adjournment. I understand that a number are received every year.

Mr. Mackinlay: Does the Leader of the House accept that many hon. Members feel acutely embarrassed about the inordinately excessive summer recess and consider that it makes a farce of our parliamentary role of checking the Executive? For instance, during the summer recess many things were sneaked through by the Government, which were referred to in the press but not on the Floor of the House. That is indefensible. Two examples are the unexplained dismissal by the Prime Minister of a senior civil servant, Peter Kemp, and the gross overspending by the Ministry of Defence on HMS Fort Victoria, commonly known as HMS De Lorean.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is a new colleague of mine in Essex, though I shall not call even him Essex man in this context. We have become familiar with the rather abrasive way in which he puts his questions and I do not wish to be taken to accept his suggestion, but he might perhaps have a word with his hon. Friends who have persistently pressed my predecessors over the years for Parliament to rise earlier in the summer so that they can have a reasonable holiday with their children.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you confirm that it is the right of hon. Members on both sides of the House to be able to go about their business, including voting, without being intimidated?

I wish to bring to your notice an article which has appeared in a newspaper in which the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) says that, during the debate and voting last Wednesday, she was described as a "Judas" and a "scab", and was verbally and sexually harassed. As I understand it, the newspaper in question has asked whether you will make an inquiry or investigation into the matter. Has a complaint, either from the hon. Member for Billericay or from any other hon. Member, come to your attention, officially or unofficially? What steps will you take to deal with the matter?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker——

Madam Speaker: Order. The question of intimidation may well be a matter of privilege. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, matters of privilege should not be raised across the Floor of the House. If the hon. Gentleman or any other hon. Members have matters of this nature to raise with me, they should do so in writing, and they will be dealt with.

Mr. Tony Banks: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be no further point of order on the matter of privilege. I have made it clear that, if there is any suggestion of intimidation, it could become a matter of privilege. Therefore, any hon. Member who has any concern whatever about it should write to me in the usual way.

Mr. MacKinlay: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you have been approached by the President of the Board of Trade about making a statement on the crisis at Ford. We read statements today that Ford is contemplating the compulsory dismissal of thousands of staff——

Madam Speaker: Order. The answer is no, I have not.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I simply wanted to know whether the revealing of sexual secrets on behalf of hon. Members is also considered a matter of privilege. Whose privilege was it?

Madam Speaker: I dealt fairly fully with that matter earlier.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You may have see in press reports that the court case at the Old Bailey against three executives from Matrix Churchill has now collapsed because the Department of Trade and Industry cannot sustain the case. The case has lifted the cloak of secrecy on the arms that went to Iraq. Will the President of the Board of Trade come along and make a full statment on the arms dealing between this country and Saddam Hussein?

Madam Speaker: I have not been informed by any Government Department that a Minister seeks to make a statement today on that or any other matter.

Orders of the Day

Education Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I welcome the fact that we have two days to debate the Bill. It reflects the importance that both sides of the House attach to the issues that we are addressing. I am sure that one thing that links both sides of the Chamber is the hope that we can provide the best possible education for all our children—even if we differ strongly on how that can be achieved. I hope that that, at least, will link both sides of the House.

I want to improve education for all children in state schools, building on the hard work of the hundreds of thousands of teachers and governors who labour so hard in the schools of England and Wales. In particular, I want for children in our schools what most parents want for their children: for knowledge to come first and for visible achievement to be there for all to see.

That approach builds on the equally visible achievements of the past 13 years. During that time, this Conservative Government have transformed the education system in England and Wales. We have successfully cast adrift the attachment to uniformity and conformity —that by-words of the left-wing education establishment that characterised our education system during the 1960s and 1970s and often did such damage to many in a generation of schoolchildren.

We have replaced those by-words with some of our own —choice, diversity and, above all, standards. Our commitment to the essential goals of standards, choice and diversity will be further enhanced through the provisions in this landmark Bill.

Our proposals—first set out in the White Paper which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I published in July—are far-reaching. They will set in place a new framework for primary and secondary schools that will endure well into the next century. I cannot emphasise enough the fact that they will give much greater freedom —the twin freedoms for schools to become self-governing and to specialise and vary their approach within a basic curriculum, common to all, opening the same doors for all our children.

The Opposition like to talk about equality in education, but they do not mean equality, they mean uniformity. They mean pushing children together, en masse, to be treated exactly the same.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): When the Secretary of State talks about uniformity, does he think that the organisation of the national curriculum in various subjects is moving towards uniformity or diversity?

Mr. Patten: I respect the hon. Gentleman, who I know speaks with authority as he was not only a deputy head of a school in the north-east but a classics teacher. However, the national curriculum has been one of the great achievements in education in this country since 1979. It is not imposing uniformity, as a range of different syllabuses are available in, for example, GCSEs. The national curriculum ensures that every child in the country is educated to the highest level possible, as measured at the ages of seven, 11, 14 and 16. The national curriculum should now be a matter of bipartisan agreement across the Chamber, even though the Labour party was once against it, and much as I respect the views of the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright).

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: Is the hon. Gentleman another deputy headmaster or classics teacher?

Dr. Wright: I have a question for the Secretary of State for Education about what he described as legislation that would set the scene for a generation—or did he say the next century? Does he think that the process as he described it, with a White Paper produced on 25 July——

Mr. Patten: 28 July.

Dr. Wright: That makes it worse. Does the right hon. Gentleman honestly believe that, if a White Paper is produced on 28 July to which replies are needed by 25 September, a Bill is published on 30 October and debated on Second Reading on 9 November, such a process is a foundation on which to build an education system that will work into the next century?

Mr. Patten: Yes—it shows how hard my hon. Friends in the ministerial team and those in the Department for Education have worked to address the task in front of them.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: Yes—I know that my hon. Friend is not a classics teacher.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware—I am sure that, with his background, he is—that the ideals that he has just enunciated are precisely those enunciated by Lord Boyle, who said that every child should go as far and as fast along the education road as possible? Lord Boyle's efforts were frustrated by the efforts of the Labour party, which put everything into a hotch-potch and destroyed the foundation that Lord Boyle sought to create.

Mr. Patten: I know that my hon. Friend, with her considerable scientific knowledge, speaks with authority. She is right to recall that the late Lord Boyle wanted every child to get on as well as he or she could. However, his vision was obstructed by what went on in the 1960s and the 1970s, which is what the Bill, like its predecessor Acts, tries to address.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): A few moments ago, my right hon. Friend referred to his hope for a bipartisan approach to be taken to the Bill. There are a number of grant-maintained schools in my Dartford constituency. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that all opposition parties are still opposed to the concept, as they were six months ago?

Mr. Patten: I confirm two matters: first, that my hon. Friend is lucky to have a number of excellent grant-maintained schools in his constituency; secondly, that the opposition parties are united in their opposition to grant-maintained schools. Needless to say, the Liberals have done a few U-turns along their journey, as they normally do. Shortly after the election, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) was quoted in the *Western Daily Press*—so it must be true—as saying:

> "We would return opt-out schools to a strategic framework provided by the local education authority."

That was on 2 April 1992, and the hon. Gentleman waited slightly more than one month before committing his first U-turn and stating in the *Bath Evening Chronicle* on 6 May 1992:

> "We would be very keen to see the benefits of grant-maintained status passed to all schools . . . Maybe what we should do is to have all the schools opt-out instantly."

[HON. MEMBERS: "Do you want him?"] We do not want him, but at the time I thought that I would. In his Liberal Democrat statement on education, published in September 1992, he did a U-turn on his U-turn and said:

> "Liberal Democrats remain opposed to the creation of grant-maintained schools and we recommend continued opposition to applications for grant-maintained status."

There is consistency of purpose on the part of the Liberal party.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): My right hon. Friend is being most unkind to the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster). The latter will not leap to his own feet, but surely he is the gentleman who in his professional life was bidding to run the accounting system of a grant-maintained school? It seems that the Liberal Democrat Whips have got to work on him since.

Mr. Patten: There is something lurking in the woodwork here. It is absolutely true that the hon. Member for Bath, like his party, is committed to opposing grant-maintained schools. It is also absolutely true—if I am wrong, doubtless he will get up and make his position clear—that he has a consultancy with a firm of accountants which recently approached one of the two grant-maintained schools in his constituency—Beechen Cliff—and offered the school its professional services, claiming as one of the great advantages for those services the fact that the hon. Member for Bath was working for the firm.

It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman will not want to go down in history as Mr. "facing both ways in Bath". He has two choices: to drop his opposition to grant-maintained schools, or to drop his consultancy with the accountancy firm in question.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Patten: Certainly not. I shall, however, give way to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), who seems to want to intervene——

Madam Speaker: Order. I think also it is about time we got on with the Second Reading.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): While we are on the subject of U-turns will the right hon. Gentleman explain how he finds it possible to close rural schools with high standards in isolated areas in my constituency when I have asked him not to, and yet keeps them open, also in my constituency, when asked to do so by a neighbouring Member of Parliament?

Mr. Patten: I am not aware of that, but if the hon. Lady gives me the details, I will look into them and reply. I have always stressed the need to maintain rural schools because of their importance to local communities.

Perhaps I have already given way too much; in any event, I should like to return to my speech. I believe in providing children with an equal opportunity to excel and to reach their full potential. That is why I want an education system geared to the needs and aptitudes of every child, a system that can meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and those of gifted children at the same time. To achieve that goal we need an education system built on foundations of choice and diversity.

We have already put in place many of the reforms necessary to achieve our goals. I should like to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), whom I see in his place, who piloted through the Education Reform Act 1988, which I believe history will judge to be as important a measure as anything Lord Butler produced in his time.

I pay tribute also to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), whose Education (Schools) Act 1992 set in place the vital independent inspection regime for all schools. I am building on what they and my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) have achieved since 1987. The House should be pleased to have before it the evidence of what has been achieved in that time.

I come now to grant-maintained schools and choice. More and more schools are choosing——

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, whom, if it would not get him into trouble, I would call my hon. Friend.

Mr. Field: Has the right hon. Gentleman seen the briefing that the Barnardos Society has produced for Members, in which it expresses pleasure at the Government's continued commitment to children with special education needs, but goes on:

> "However, it is unacceptable that, as provided by the Bill, mainstream schools, whether under the local education authority or of grant-maintained status are able to exclude children with special education needs on the grounds of 'efficient use of resources'".

Does the Secretary of State accept that many of our constituents are worried by the Bill because they fear that the schools that they choose for their children will refuse entry on the basis that there may be additional costs? The Bill legally allows schools to do that under the catch-all category "the efficient use of resources". What special measures will the right hon. Gentleman take to protect the most vulnerable children?

Mr. Patten: I welcome the Barnardo's briefing. I have not seen it, but I shall look at it tonight and address that issue. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are setting up a tribunal to which aggrieved parents can turn if they think that their child has not been placed in the proper mainstream education school in which they wish their child to be educated. I shall deal with that matter later.

The issue of resources arises where I approve the admissions policy of a particular school, and involves a clear statement of the number and sorts of pupils that the school can take. I certainly intend that all schools,

[Mr. Patten]

grant-maintained as much as local authority schools, should take as many grant-maintained pupils as possible. It is good to see some LEA schools and grant-maintained schools increasingly specialising in special needs

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): I am pleased to hear my right hon. Friend's assurance, because there was some misapprehension about the provision for special needs in the grant-maintained system. I say that following a meeting with the British Dyslexia Association, which was also attended by an hon. Friend. The Secretary of State will know that that concern has been expressed, especially in my county of Kent. I hope that my right hon. Friend will continue to make clear what he has said about special needs, because there is a great demand for such teaching, and parents, especially those of dyslexic children, are looking to the system to provide it.

Mr. Patten: I recognise what my hon. Friend says about children with special needs. I am glad to report to the House that, in its examination of special needs assessments, the Audit Commission recently found that all the grand-maintained schools it had examined took special needs very seriously, and provided a high standard of education. A leader in *The Times* last week stated that a number of grant-maintained schools were beginning to specialise in the issue of children with special needs.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way. I have given way a great deal.

I can announce that today we have approved the 340th school for grant-maintained status. A further 150 are in the pipeline, having voted yes. That enables me to say that I think that we shall have at least 500 grant-maintained schools by 1 April next year and will probably have getting on for 1,500 by 1 April 1994, in direct accord with the White Paper projection.

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that excellent news, and hope we shall soon achieve the total he mentioned. Will he take steps under the Bill to try to prevent or to persuade Labour-controlled authorities, such as the one in the London borough of Merton in my constituency, to stop using tactics against schools that would like to become grant-maintained? Some authorities are bombarding parents on their doorsteps and at school gates with anti-grant-maintained literature.

Mr. Patten: I could not agree more with my right hon. Friend. The approach of a few authorities, although not most, is totally wrong. Parents should be allowed to make up their own minds about a serious issue in an atmosphere of peace and quiet. The evidence available to me from the London borough of Merton suggests that the literature from the local authority, paid for from community charge payers' funds, is—I must pick my words carefully—falling short in its adherence to normal standards of accuracy——

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: —in other words, what the hon. Gentleman who is asking me to give way would call a porky.

We have seen a lot of porkies from the Merton education department. What worries me is that these are attached not to politicians who, it is alleged, use these tactics form time to time, but to the names of education authority officers—the civil servants of local government, who should know better. I pledge that I will unhesitatingly move to tighten up the Bill further during its passage through the House.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): While the Minister is dealing with the issue of political interference in applications for grant-maintained status, would he care to comment on the situation in Fulham, where a school that is vastly over-subscribed is seeking to become a three-form entry school? The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) has told that school that the best way to enhance its chances of getting permission to become a three-form entry school is to become a grant-maintained school. In a letter to the school, the hon. Gentleman says:

> "The Government's policy is to encourage schools to go grant maintained and if there were two applications on the table, one from a grant-maintained school and one from a maintained school, and their priority was equal in educational terms, then the likelihood is that the grant-maintained school would be successful."

He goes on to say:

> "I think that is a long way from being blackmail."

I do not. I wonder whether the Secretary of State does.

Mr. Patten: I have to consider every application for grant-maintained status or change of character on its merits. I must not fetter my discretion by commenting on any individual school. However, it would not be fettering my discretion to say how lucky the people of Fulham are to have my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) representing them.

Mrs. Taylor: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: I will not give way, because I must make progress. I have a speech that is 40 pages long, and I am only on page 7. I will never get to the end at this rate, and I have given way as much as any Secretary of State has ever given way.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: However, simply because he is so nice and charming, I will give way once more—to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I will then make progress with my speech.

Mr. Banks: What a nice fellow the Secretary of State really is, when he is not being his usual obnoxious and smarmy self.

May I take him back to the points raised by the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) about Merton council? It will not have escaped the attention of the Secretary of State that Rutlish, the Prime Minister's old school, rejected grant-maintained status by 61 to 39 per cent. Is the Secretary of State saying that the local authority used unfair methods in that case, and that the parents were not rejecting Government policies and the Prime Minister?

Mr. Patten: The answer is yes, yes and yes again, to borrow a phrase from my right hon. Friend. Parents were told, in a leaflet shamefully distributed by the local education authority, that Rutlish school would lose

£80,000 a year. That was simply untrue. The allegation had no foundation in fact. It will not have escaped the notice of my hon. Friends that, last Friday, there were five ballots for schools on grant-maintained status and that, in the other four, the vote was yes. In those areas, the information put in front of parents was straightforward.

I had better get on with the Education Bill itself. My civil servants want me to say that it is quite a long measure. It is indeed. It contains 255 clauses and 17 schedules. However, I can offer some small consolation. Parts II and IV, containing 134 out of the total of 255 clauses, reflect, respectively, a re-enactment and consolidation, with modifications, of the 1988 proivisions on grant-maintained schools, and a consolidation of the schools attendance provisions in a great number of Education Acts stretching right back to 1944. All that is needed to be done. Much of that which is contained in these parts of the Bill is not new, I believe that the education world generally will be grateful to us for having adopted a neat narrative approach. It will make the relevant legislation much more accessible, much more user-friendly and much closer to the aims of the citizens charter.

I shall comment as briefly as possible on the major proposals that are contained in the Bill. First, I shall deal with grant-maintained schools and the funding agency. The unit of account in our proposals is the self-governing grant-maintained school. Local management of schools under local education authority control has gone a good way down the road of giving schools control over their own affairs. That is Government policy that goes back to the policy developed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker).

At the end of the road is self-governing grant-maintained status, which offers schools the opportunity to have control over their total budget, to employ their own staff and to manage their own affairs. Schools here and elsewhere—for example, in New Zealand, where under a Labour Government between 1987 and 1990 they went much further in terms of grant-maintained status than anything that I am proposing—have shown how well they can take advantage of the opportunity.

It has been suggested that allowing parents to take their schools out of local authority control is undemocratic. I find that a most paradoxical argument, to use a phrase of the right hon. Enoch Powell. A far higher proportion of parents vote in grant-maintained ballots than of electors in local authority elections. That is the truth about the democratic element. It is a simple fact that democracy prospers in direct proportion to the involvement of the relevant electorate. That is exactly what happens in grant-maintained ballots. More people vote in these ballots than in others and most of the ballots are successful —seven to eight out of 10 to date.

It is precisely the rapidly growing popularity of grant-maintained schools that necessitates that I put in place a supporting framework for funding them. Hence the proposal to establish a Funding Agency for Schools, and the parallel proposal to take a power to set up a Schools Funding Agency for Wales. My right hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts), the Minister of State, Welsh Office, will have more to say about that when he replies on behalf of the Government this evening.

I wish to make it absolutely clear that the funding agency will not manage grant-maintained schools. Management is the job of governors and head teachers, who are responsible to parents and the local community generally through regular ballots for governor places.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Patten: I shall not give way. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

Mr. Spearing: No, I shall not.

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman will not forgive me, he will have to learn how to do so.

I move on to grant-maintained school funding. The total resources available to the funding agency and grant-maintained schools will be determined annually by Government in the normal way. More than a few LEAs, however, are telling their schools that they will be better off financially by staying with local authorities. That is simply not true. I have made it clear time and again that grant-maintained schools will be given additional funds to reflect their additional responsibilities. Just as important, when a school opts out, it will receive in cash what LEAs hold back from their schools to spend centrally. There is no way in which the allegations can be true.

I have set out the advantages for grant-maintained schools now, and they will continue to be the arrangements for grant-maintained schools in future. By comparison, a much more uncertain future is in store for many LEAs. That is not because of the provisions of the Bill. There is uncertainty because of the work of the local government boundary commission, which is reviewing boundaries in county areas throughout the land. The review will lead to the end of many LEAs as we know them within four or five years. As I have said, there is a very uncertain future for many LEAs.

In any system of compulsory education there must be a clear duty to ensure that sufficient school places are available to meet the needs of all pupils. We must ensure that there is that availability. The duty currently lies exclusively with LEAs.

Mr. Spearing: Will the Secretary of State give way on that very point?

Mr. Patten: I shall give way when I have concluded what I have to say on the supply of places.

As the number of grant-maintained schools in any area grows, it cannot make sense for responsibility to continue exclusively to rest with LEAs.

One of the Bill's key proposals is that as the number of grant-maintained schools grows, the funding agency will take on a parallel duty to ensure an adequate number of school places, sometimes responding to local groups, local people or voluntary organisations that want to set up a new school. I shall look very much to such people and organisations to supply those schools. In all but the most Luddite of local education authorities, I expect collaboration between the LEA and the funding agency to ensure that there are sensible proposals to deal with the need for more school places.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in overcoming his earlier remarks. Does he agree that, ever since popular public education has been in vogue in this country—about 120 years—a duty has been laid upon boards of education and LEAs, which was continued under section 8 of the 1944

[Mr. Spearing]

Act, to ensure sufficient and adequate provision of schools in any one area? Does not the Bill destroy that principle, which has always been central to public education?

Mr. Patten: No, the Bill develops that principle. There will be two bodies—the LEA and the funding agency—with parallel but not shared responsibilities. A little healthy competition will be no bad thing for some LEAs.

We must also deal with the removal of surplus school places, of which there are up to 1·5 million in England alone. The money wasted on maintaining many of those places should be available to spend on children and their teachers, to whom I am most grateful. I guess that many of them would be glad if some of the money locked up in surplus school places was available in the classroom. I am advised that up to £300 million a year is lost in maintaining surplus school places. That is just the premises-related cost—it does not include the capital sums that would be available if the buildings and land could be sold and the proceeds ploughed back into education.

That is why I am proposing to take a power under the Bill to direct, if necessary, either the LEA or the funding agency to make rationalisation proposals. If I am not happy with them, I can make my own proposals, at which point all the proposals will go to a new public inquiry system. As it happens, that is much along the lines of one of the ideas put forward by the Opposition before the general election, when the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was their education spokesman.

I am aware of the particular reservation of the Churches about the proposal to widen the existing powers for LEAs to include voluntary schools in the drive to eliminate surplus places and so release money for education. We have listened carefully to what they have said. I shall continue to reflect equally carefully on the best way forward, as always in co-operation with the Churches.

The desire to increase parental choice is central to the Bill. Self-governing grant-maintained schools extend choice, but there may be some anxiety about the length of time that can be taken to sort out pupil admissions to schools where there are both grant-maintained and LEA schools in the locality and where parents can apply direct to the schools of their choice—the more so where the LEA is failing to co-operate with the grant-maintained schools.

I hope that that lack of co-operation will fast become a thing of the past. However, the Bill gives the holder of my office a power to impose collaborative admission arrangements if necessary. I hope that that power will be used only rarely.

I pay tribute to the way in which the grant-maintained schools and LEAs in boroughs such as Bromley, Hillingdon and those in Surrey have worked together to ensure that school admissions go smoothly where parents have a choice between grant-maintained and LEA schools.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Does my right hon. Friend agree that difficult situations can arise when excessive applications are made to a particular school? Does he agree that the spread of grant-maintained status will give schools that adopt it greater scope to meet more quickly the desire of parents to have their children admitted to those popular schools?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) is right to say that grant-maintained as well as LEA schools stand out as beacons of excellence. They are schools whose rolls bulge and at which parents queue to gain entry for their children. One of the Bill's aims is to improve the status and standing of our schools, so that queues will be spread more widely across the educational landscape.

Selection is an issue that Opposition Members are prone to raise whenever Government education policy is debated. They would have looked in vain for evidence in the Bill that our proposals for increasing diversity really mean selection by the back door. I stress, however, that I am always happy to consider applications for changes of character from any schools in this country on their merits—as has been done since 1944.

The Bill provides for business or other sponsors to nominate sponsor governors for voluntary-aided or grant-maintained schools. We hope that will support the efforts of an increasing number of schools to specialise in particular curricular areas, such as technology, and serve as a supplement to the delivery of the national curriculum.

It is not our intention to force any particular pattern of schooling on any area. We want schools to reflect the requirements of local people. Too many people in the education world, and perhaps among Labour Members, suffer a kind of dyslexia when they see the word "specialisation", and read it as "selection". They are behind the times, once again. The S word of which Labour should be frightened is specialisation—as I pointed out when the *New Statesman*, in a remarkably broad-minded way, recently invited me to contribute to its pages on exactly that issue. I look forward to receiving a similar invitation from *Tribune*—and I shall be happy to write for that publication too, free of charge.

Mr. Tony Banks: We all have to do that.

Mr. Patten: I make a pledge to the hon. Member that I shall make such a contribution for no fee, when the invitation comes.

There has been much talk of the White Paper, and presumably the Bill, bringing the reign of local education authorities to an untimely end. They protest too much. The reign of some LEAs has been far from glorious but, even so, I pay tribute to the performance of many of them. I am happy to reassure all LEAs that I see them having a continuing role in the new structure, in the way that the White Paper and the Bill set out.

Part III of the Bill makes provision for children with special educational needs. The Education Act 1981, following the Warnock report, was a landmark in education legislation. The Bill embodies the principle enshrined in that Act but reflects a fundamental review of its operation, on which we consulted widely. Much credit is due to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), for all the work that he contributed to that review. Our suggestions take much the same course as the joint report recently published by the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's chief inspector, which was generally welcomed.

The Bill makes provision for the Department to provide a code of practice to which LEAs must have regard in performing their duties. It will contain clear guidance to help LEAs to decide when to assess a child's needs and when to make a statement. Regulations made under the

Bill will also set out rigorous procedures—including statutory time limits—that authorities must observe when assessing and statementing a child. Too many LEAs take too long to perform that essential responsibility—those are not my words, but the words of the independent Audit Commission. That delay causes anxiety to parents and can often hold back the education and development of their children. It must stop.

The Bill extends the parents charter to pupils who have special educational needs in the way described in the White Paper and in the Bill itself. Those measures represent a major advance, and I hope that they will command a wide measure of support from all parts of the House. Much as right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber my differ on other aspects of the Bill, I trust that special educational needs can largely be the subject of non-partisan scrutiny.

Mr. Steinberg: Will the Secretary of State ensure that the Bill confers on grant-maintained schools a legal responsibility to admit children with special educational needs? According to my reading of the Bill in its present form, grant-maintained schools will be expected to take such children only if they have been statemented; it makes no provision for the 18 per cent. who have not been statemented.

Mr. Patten: The Bill makes it clear that any school—whether LEA-run or grant-maintained—must accept a statemented boy or girl when a direction has been given to that effect, subject only to an overriding right of appeal to the Secretary of State. I am afraid that councils of all political colours must bear the blame for the shameful queues of people who wait three years or more for statementing in many parts of the country. I hope that those queues will soon be cleared as a result of the Bill.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intervention. We discussed the matter a couple of weeks ago, when I appeared before the Select Committee.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Patten: I hope that the hon. Lady will forgive me if I do not. I have given way several times, and I must make progress.

A small proportion of schools, often in the inner cities, fail to equip their pupils with the basics that are required for them to lead a life containing any real satisfaction, and making any positive contribution to the rest of society. By any count, that small number of schools can be described as failing schools, and I have no doubt that the House will support the Government's determination to deal with them.

Since 1944, we have entrusted that task to local education authorities. I do not pretend that it is an easy task to deal with a failing school—which is normally the result of a failure of leadership on the part of governors and/or head teachers—but all too often, with a few notable exceptions, LEAs have preferred concealing the difficulties to facing up to them. The Bill provides a framework for effective action, involving both LEAs and—if necessary—education associations appointed by the holder of my office.

In one respect, the Bill goes beyond the proposals in the White Paper. Following constructive discussions with the Churches—for which my noble Friend the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I are very grateful—all voluntary schools will be brought within the scope of these measures. Education associations will be very important in ensuring that a child's only chance of a school career is not wasted in a failing school.

We thought that "education association" was a pretty good name. We imagined that we in the Department had dreamed it up, but I am afraid that there is little new under the sun. Little innovative matter exists. We need only flick through the pages of 19th-century educational writers such as Ruskin—let alone Thomas Carlyle: only today, I discovered that he was busily corresponding with John Stuart Mill in February 1835 about the need to set up education associations. Those are the exact words that he used.

I assure the House that, if a grant-maintained school fails its pupils in a similar way, I shall not hesitate to take equally effective action. That is provided for in part II of the Bill—in clause 111, I believe.

Let me deal briefly with the curriculum and with religion. The Bill promotes autonomy, accountability, choice and diversity—all in the pursuit of our principal objective of improving quality and raising standards. The establishment of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, and of the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, will provide a new focus for the pursuit of better quality and higher standards.

We discussed this matter earlier—during one of the many interventions on my speech—and I do not want to start any more hares of that kind. I believe, however, that the introduction of the national curriculum has been an astonishing success, thanks to the work of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley and his successors. Nobody now can imagine the country's schools without the national curriculum. I have never met a teacher, in the 57 school visits—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Patten: That was just to see whether the Opposition were awake, Madam Speaker.

I have never met a teacher, in the 57 school visits that my hon. Friends and I have made to schools throughout the land since April of this year, who told me that he or she wanted anything other than the national curriculum. The new School Curriculum and Assessment Authority will provide a new coherence to the process of keeping the curriculum up to the mark and maintaining its vitality and relevance.

Academic and intellectual standards are vital, but they are only one part of the ethos of a school. The new inspection arrangements now being launched will make it absolutely clear that a fresh impetus will be given to questions of spiritual and moral development—issues that the Archbishop of Canterbury addressed yesterday in his excellent article in *The Mail On Sunday*. He made some very telling points about the responsibilities of all of us here.

In that context, the Bill amends the law relating to religious education, first to take account of the special position of grant-maintained schools and, secondly, to build upon the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 as they affect all maintained schools, by ensuring that all religious education syllabuses will be brought into line

[Mr. Patten]

with the provisions of the Act. It is quite simply shameful that, following the 1988 Act, two thirds of local education authorities have yet to revise their religious syllabuses.

I have no doubt that the official Opposition will soon come round to supporting the provisions in this excellent Bill. They have done so on every other occasion during the past 13 years. We have had a new thought from them every time that we have considered an education Bill.

Look at their record. They opposed the national curriculum; now they embrace it—a U-turn. They opposed local management of schools; now they support it—another U-turn. They opposed grant-maintained schools. Then they had a change of heart. After the general election, there was a U-turn. Then they had another change of heart. They have begun to oppose grant-maintained schools. They have done a U-turn on their U-turn over grant-maintained schools. There has been, I repeat, no fresh thinking on education by the Labour party on any occasion during the past 13 years.

I hope that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor)—I look forward to the hon. Lady rising for the first time to make a speech on education at the Dispatch Box—will clarify one serious point. Parents have a right to know the answer to this question, as it goes right to the heart of the Bill.

The Labour party went into the last election with a firm commitment to abolish grant-maintained schools. All the hon. culprits on the Opposition Benches fought on that manifesto. Within two months of the election, however, the Labour party's education spokesman, who was then the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), reversed that policy. He issued advice on grant-maintained schools to Labour party members that read:

> "parents and governors may feel bound to make decisions about what they think is best for their schools. Labour must not appear to be placed in a hostile position of opposition to parents."

Perhaps the hon. Lady will be able to tell the House today how that advice squares with her own barely concealed contempt, expressed at the last Labour party conference, for those schools and their parents who wish to run their own affairs. At that conference in September, the hon. Lady accused parents of hijacking schools that wanted grant-maintained status.

If that is the hon. Lady's position, can she tell the House today whether it is still her party's policy to return grant-maintained schools to local authority control? In other words, is she prepared to back her principles with a firm commitment against the provisions of the Bill, or will those principles go the way of every other principle held by the Labour party, as we saw last week—the "here today, gone tomorrow" sort of principles?

Of course, it does not matter very much what the hon. Lady says about grant-maintained schools in the context of the Bill, because some Labour authorities—backed by Labour Members of Parliament and various trade unions and some professionals employed in education departments, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) pointed out in her important intervention—will in any event continue to fight applications for self-governing status. Those disgraceful tactics, which the hon. Member for Dewsbury has done nothing to reverse—in fact, quite the reverse—must stop. We shall ensure that the Bill offers no hiding place for those people.

I should like to take one case study of how the Bill might work on the ground in a named education authority. Why do not we look at what is going on in Birmingham, England's second city? Nowhere have some parents and some school staff who have wanted to opt out been subjected to more vilification than in Labour-controlled Birmingham. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Quite right."] "Quite right," I hear said from some part of the House.

In the context of the Bill, some Labour Members have been quick to rush to the defence of Birmingham's Labour-controlled local education authority. I have to say "some", because not all have displayed such political Pavlovian instincts. Some Labour Members, to whom I pay tribute, have taken a more intelligent view, such as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), who is not in her place this afternoon and whom I respect.

She commented on the grotesque underspending on education compared with Birminghaam's standard spending assessment and hijacking of money earmarked for education for other prestige projects. She told the "Today" programme only last week:

> "the lesson is pouring public money, poll tax payers' money, into big prestige projects does not deliver the goods for the people who are paying."

How right the hon. Lady is. I agree with that, and perhaps the hon. Member for Dewsbury will say whether she agrees with her hon. Friend and Front-Bench colleague.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is not it a convention that, if an hon. Member intends to name another Member in a debate, that Member should be informed? Did the Secretary of State tell my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham , Ladywood (Ms. Short) that he intended to refer to her in the debate?

Mr. Patten: I was quoting with approbation and admiration the hon. Lady's criticisms of her own local education authority. Further to that point of order, but carrying on my speech, if I may, the hon. Member for Dewsbury did not have the common courtesy to inform my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham that she would name him this afternoon.

Mrs. Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) has been passed the letters book, but if he has he will know that there is a letter for him on the Board, which he may not have collected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): It might be useful if the House settled down and got on with the debate.

Mr. Patten: I agree. The old excuse that it is in the post is never very good. My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham tells me that he was in the Members' Lobby at 2 o'clock, but I will obey your injunction, as always, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I have even more interesting things to say about Birmingham and its attitude to the Bill.

Ms. Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I have given way dozens of times, and I do not intend to do so further.

Does the hon. Member for Dewsbury agree with the sentiments expressed in a secret policy document on the White Paper that has fallen into my hands, which was prepared last month by Labour councillors and policy advisers in Birmingham? It states:

> "opting out will be even more attractive financially under the White Paper."

It goes on to ask about the post-Bill world:

> "Would we be better to reverse our policy of spending more on schools and concentrate more on re-allocating those resources to our political priorities of nursery, special needs and wider links with the community where there could be a greater political return for us?"

Ms. Morris: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Patten: I certainly will not.

It continues:

> "Our values of quality, access and equality could be much more enhanced in these areas than by ploughing more and more money into schools, where not only are we losing the political battle with the Tories"—

well done, colleagues in Birmingham—

> "but also continuing to pay more monies to other local authorities to educate Birmingham children."

Does the hon. Member for Dewsbury share those sentiments?

The hon. Lady had better be quick to tell us her answer, because the schools in Birmingham are voting with their feet. There are already four grant-maintained schools. Today, my noble Friend Baroness Blatch, the Minister of State in the other place, added five more to the list, so there are now nine grant-maintained schools in Birmingham. That means that more than 10 per cent. of secondary pupils in Birmingham will soon receive their education in self-governing schools, which will allow the Funding Agency for Schools to operate in Birmingham as soon as the Bill becomes law and to sort out the awful mess made by the local education authority there.

Ms. Estelle Morris: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Patten: No. I said that I was coming to the end of my speech, and I was cheered by Opposition Members. I now intend to come to the end of my speech.

As the hon. Member for Dewsbury ponders the facts and tries to fashion some semblance of a policy to put forward as an alternative to the Bill, she could do worse then reflect on——

Ms. Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State continually to refuse to accept a comment from an hon. Member who represents a Birmingham constituency when he continues to refer to the local education authority in Birmingham so disgracefully? He has talked this afternoon about democracy and openness. What sort of openness is it when he will not give way to an hon. Member who represents a Birmingham constituency?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is for the Secretary of State to decide whether to give way.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Member for Dewsbury could do worse than reflect on the advice of one of her party's former top education advisers, Ann Carlton, who is a one-time special adviser to Anthony Crosland. She wrote recently that the Labour party, in the face of the Bill, should now

> "draw up an alternative education policy based not, as in the past, on the self-interested pleadings of local education authorities and the teaching unions, but on the interests of children and parents and on the needs of Britain's economy."

That would be nice, but somehow the idea of Labour putting public interest before vested interest seems strangely remote.

The legislative proposals I have outlined today are ambitious. They are ambitious because we recognise that education is the essential lifeblood of our community. The children we educate in our schools today will be the parents of the new century. Education is a vital investment for the future. That is why it has been and will remain at the very heart of the Government's programme.

4.32 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I have no hesitation in opposing the Bill. Nothing that the Secretary of State said allayed my fears that the Bill will take Britain's education further in the wrong direction. It is wrong in principle to foster division, selection in schools and the centralisation of power in the hands of the Secretary of State.

It is significant that the Secretary of State had so little to say about the contents of the Bill. He seemed to spend more time knocking Birmingham than he did explaining any merits of his own legislation. I remind the Secretary of State that it was only in May that he wrote a glowing letter of recommendation to a school in Birmingham after his visit, apologising for his delay.

Mr. Patten: The school is thinking of going grant maintained now.

Mrs. Taylor: So the Secretary of State went to the school to persuade it. The Secretary of State now recognises that there are good schools—and more than just one. The Secretary of State said that he was very impressed by all that he saw of the hard work going on in Birmingham.

Perhaps the Secretary of State should remember what the Minister for the Environment and Countryside said when he went to visit the green show in Birmingham. He was so impressed by Yardley secondary school that he got the Nature Conservancy Council interested in its work, and the school is now on the list for foreign visits.

Perhaps the Secretary of State should recall Birmingham's record on nursery education. No Conservative authority in the country has as good a record on nursery education. Perhaps the Secretary of State should have a word with is right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir. N. Fowler) who, I understand, is chairman of the board of *The Birmingham Post* which stated recently that it was not surprised to see yet again the

> "usual knee-jerk reaction of the Department of Education that anything coming out of Birmingham local authority is, by definition, bad."

Birmingham is used to being knocked by the Secretary of State, and his attacks today will impress no one.

The Secretary of State's speech has proved that this is a pretty miserable, dreary and bureaucratic Bill with no vision for the future. It extends centralised control. The Secretary of State already has more powers than any of his predecessors. He can already dictate how many beads seven-year-olds must count in maths tests, but he now wants more powers. More than half the Bill is devoted to failed ideology. The Government have succeeded so far in persuading just 1·5 per cent. of schools to opt out, so the Bill is intended to push the other schools even further.

[Mrs. Taylor]

Another reason for our strong opposition to the Bill is that it is totally irrelevant to the real problems in education after 13 years of Conservative government. The main issues that concern parents, governors, pupils and teachers are not opt-out and grant-maintained status; they are over-sized classes, lack of nursery provision, a shortage of books, lack of resources and the Secretary of State's constant chopping and changing and interference in the classroom.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Is it not high time that the hon. Lady gave up her opposition to grant-maintained schools? She is not very good at U-turns and it took her a long time to do a U-turn over the right to buy. I think that she said that she would do that over her dead body. For the sake of all children, is it not high time that she did a U-turn over grant-maintained schools? She had the benefit of a very good education at Bolton school. Why should she deny other children that chance?

Mrs. Taylor: I want all children, including mine, to have the best education available, and that does not mean following the grant-maintained status route.

The Bill does nothing to address the main problems. Indeed, I believe that it will aggravate those problems as Department for Education resources are concentrated on glossy propaganda to promote grant-maintained schools. It is significant that the fastest growing area of Department for Education expenditure is self-promotion by the Secretary of State. In 1979, the Department spent a grand total of £103,000 on promotion and publicity. Last year it spent £6,942,000—a seventyfold increase. The new funding agency bureaucracy will soak up other moneys which should be spent in the classrooms.

The Secretary of State boasted with his usual modesty that the Bill is the biggest Education Bill ever—a sort of "never mind the quality, feel the width" Bill—and a "never mind the quality, feel the width" speech went with it. The Secretary of State also had the gall to mention the Bill and his reforms in the same breath as the Education Act 1944. I must tell the Secretary of State that he is no Rab Butler. The Education Act 1944 created the foundation of our education system. It was an important breakthrough for the nation's education, not only because of what it contained, but because of the way in which it was constructed. If the Secretary of State wants any of his education legislation to last for 40 months, let alone 40 years, some important lessons must be learned about consultation and listening to people who may disagree but want to see an improvement in education.

Mr. Spearing: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: Rescue her.

Mr. Spearing: It is the Government who need rescuing.

Is it not correct that, although the 1944 Act was the basis of our post-war education, it was introduced by a predominantly Conservative Administration under a Conservative Minister of Education with the wholehearted support in principle of all parties in the House as well as the Churches and all the professions in education? Did it not knit together the hearts and minds of those involved in the profession, rather than divide them, which is what this Bill will do?

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right. The 1944 Act could never have been the success that it was if it had not been for the consensus which was developed so carefully at that time.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): If the 1944 Act had the support of Labour, why was the Labour party so energetically opposed to grammar schools, which were part of that legislation?

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman should understand education history. The previous Prime Minister abolished more grammar schools than any other Secretary of State.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mr. Taylor: No, I want to make progress. I want to concentrate most of my remarks on the limited number of new ideas in the Bill rather than run through every clause.

The opening remarks of the Secretary of State show that he has not taken on board the weight of the opposition to his proposals. Not only those who sit on this side of the House oppose the Bill; the opposition includes the concerted voice of those in local government on both sides of the political fence, and the professionals who are involved in education daily.

The aim of the Bill is to implement the White Paper proposals which were published on 28 July when Parliament was in recess and schools had already started their summer holidays. The consultation period ended on 25 September, which was three weeks into the school term and before most parents, governors and teachers had had time to examine the proposals. This may well be the largest Bill, but it must surely have had the least consultation. However, that does not seem to have mattered a great deal to the Secretary of State, because he has obviously decided that his ideas are near perfect; hence the Bill says that it aims simply to implement the White Paper.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Lady will recall that the Bill will have a protracted Committee stage. It will then have a Third Reading and a Report stage, and be passed to the other place. During that period, representations can be made to Members of Parliament and members of the Standing Committee. In other words, the effective consultation period continues. Does the hon. Lady agree that, despite what she said about the consultation period that was set out, there has been ample time for trade unions and everyone else to make representations to not only my right hon. Friend but every other interested Member of Parliament?

Mrs. Taylor: It adds a new dimension to consultation to suggest that it should take place after the Bill is published and when it is in Committee. I understand that Department for Education officials were drawing up amendments while the Bill was being printed, which shows the haste of the procedure.

The Committee process may be made more meaningful if the Secretary of State serves on the Standing Committee which will consider the Bill. If the Secretary of State wants to tell us that he will sit on the Committee which examines the Education Bill, I shall be happy to give way so that he can make his position clear. However, he thought that he needed his beauty sleep and, therefore, would not serve on the Committee. He can clarify his position and say that he will serve on the Committee. In this instance, his silence shows that he will not be with us. If the Education Bill is so important, why will the Secretary of State not be there?

The timing of the White Paper and the Bill does not surprise anyone who has watched the Government retreat into talking only to those who agree with their ideas. Indeed, the Secretary of State went so far as to cancel a lunch with *The Times* after the newspaper's editorial on the White Paper dared to criticise him.

Ministers appoint like-minded advisers and take their advice, which is not advice at all but simply a reinforcement of their prejudices. Not listening has become the hallmark of the Government. As has happened with the miners, the Government will pay a high price for their education mistakes if they do not learn to listen.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Has the hon. Lady listened to the thousands of parents who have voted with their feet so that their children can have the benefit of grant-maintained education? What message does she have for those parents today?

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman will do well to remember the vast majority of parents who want nothing to do with grant-maintained status.

The Bill is wrong in principle because more than half of its provisions are aimed simply at pushing more schools to opt for grant-maintained status. If any good comes out of the Bill, it will be the opportunity to explore the fallacies of the opt-out proposals.

In 1988, my colleagues predicted what would happen as a result of the education Bill of that year. At that time they were speculating about the position. However, we now have the facts that bear out what my hon. Friends predicted.

Let me remind the House why so much of the Bill is considered necessary by Ministers. There are more than 25,000 schools in England and Wales. The Secretary of State said earlier that of those, 340 have opted for grant-maintained status and 150 are in the pipeline. That is hardly a success for the Government. So we have this Bill to try to push more schools down the grant-maintained road. The Government have tried hard already. We have had the bribes and the glossy image. I hear that heads of grant-maintained schools have been paid to preach to other schools about the virtues of grant-maintained status.

Occasionally, reality breaks through. An example is the letter that the Minister sent to governors of grant-maintained schools which says:

"Funding across the board will be restrained".

As much of the pressure on schools to become grant maintained has come from the promise of extra funding, perhaps it is not surprising that we are having this debate before the public expenditure announcement on Thursday. The Secretary of State does not seem to have put up much of a fight for any education sector. However, it is probably just as well for the Government that this debate is taking place after last Wednesday, given the Secretary of State's treatment of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster). The Minister might not have persuaded some hon. Members into his Lobby last Wednesday, if this debate had already happened. *[Interruption.]* The Minister does not seem to understand that there are some northern Members in the House.

The Government's confusion is not confined to that. The Government have always been confused about the expected size of the grant-maintained sector. The former Prime Minister said that she expected half of schools to become grant-maintained by the last election in 1992. The former Secretary of State for Education, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who is not here now, expected opt-out to take off in what he called a few bad Labour councils. The figures for opt-out show that the vast majority of opt outs have taken place in Conservative local education authorities. So if opt-out is a sign of dissatisfaction with the local education authority, there is clearly far more dissatisfaction with Conservative local education authorities than with Labour ones. Tory Kent and Tory Essex have more opt-outs between them than all Labour authorities put together.

The Secretary of State has now declared his target.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): As an Essex Member, I wish to comment on that. The hon. Lady is wrong. The fact that so many schools are opting out shows how good the local education authorities have been to those schools. They have taken them to a level of maturity, competence and self-reliance whereby they can stand on their own two feet and make decisions for themselves——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief. They are supposed to be questions, not speeches.

Mrs. Taylor: I am glad that I allowed the hon. Gentleman to explain that point. I suggest that he has a word with the right hon. Member for Mole Valley, because I was quoting him earlier when I spoke about bad authorities.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): In attacking grant-maintained schools, the hon. Lady seems to be arguing the case for local authorities, especially Labour-controlled local authorities, and their so-called "excellence at providing good education". Will she also explain why it appears that the 10 authorities with the worst GCSE examination results are all Labour-controlled? Will she also explain why, with one exception, those authorities are all in the top 10 for spending on pupils? Does not that show that Labour local authorities know nothing about educational standards?

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has just proved why league tables and statistical results are of such little value. The Department for Education has sometimes acknowledged that. The hon. Gentleman has been active in trying to promote grant-maintained status. As there are still some 24,500 schools to go, Tory Members will be kept very active on that in future.

Because the opt-out drive has failed so far, the Government are introducing proposals to make opting out easier: no second resolutions for governors; set limits on the spending of those opposing opting out; and clauses 72 and 73, which seem to be a licence to bribe for the Secretary of State. We shall oppose all those proposals, because we do not want schools to make decisions without the proposals having been discussed in detail. We are not afraid of discussing the facts.

In Committee, we shall look carefully at some of the activities of grant-maintained schools and we shall want to know whether Ministers share the views that some of grant-maintained schools have of themselves. For example, does the Secretary of State believe that grant-maintained schools should be sold as private education without the fees? Is that the image that he wants

[Mrs. Taylor]

for grant-maintained schools? I am happy to give way to him if he will tell the House whether he thinks that that is an appropriate description of what grant-maintained schools provide.

Mr. Patten *indicated dissent.*

Mrs. Taylor: The Secretary of State shakes his head. Is that because he disagrees or because he does not wish to intervene?

Mr. Patten: Both.

Mrs. Taylor: I give way to the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins).

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Would the hon. Lady care to defend the use of charge payers' money for blatant political propaganda against grant-maintained schools? How can she defend that?

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman would do well to find some hard evidence before he says such things. He should look carefully at the budget of the grant-maintained trust and of the Department of Education in promoting grant-maintained status.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Taylor: No.

Why are there so many clauses about the liquidation of grant-maintained schools? Is it a recognition of the logical outcome of trusting the Government? Can we expect those schools to run into difficulties?

Mr. Hawkins: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Taylor: No, not again.

Mr. Hawkins: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Lady challenged me to produce evidence. Is it in order, when I seek to produce that evidence, for her to refuse to allow me to do so?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, it is in order to do so.

Mrs. Taylor: The Bill's emphasis on grant-maintained status is simply an attempt to save a failed policy. Despite bribes and the escape route for schools that have opted out to avoid closure, less than 2 per cent. of schools have fallen for the Government's trap. As one of my hon. Friends pointed out earlier, last Friday we heard the welcome result of the Prime Minister's old school, Rutlish, voting against opt out.

The Secretary of State has been giving the impression that grant-maintained schools will get preferential treatment on funding, but he does so without admitting that he will be discriminating against the vast majority of schools. I hope, therefore, that the Secretary of State will answer the simple question: will there be a level playing field for funding or, all other things being equal and over and above any administrative expenses, will a grant-maintained school get preferential treatment? Will the Secretary of State tell us whether the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) was right to say that a grant-maintained school was likely to be successful? I see the Secretary of State telling his junior Minister that he can deal with that when he winds up. The House deserves an answer to that fundamental question now.

Mr. Patten: I cannot resist the temptation. Grant-maintained schools will continue to get their fair share of resources, which recognise their additional responsibilities, their independence and freedom. That was there in the past and it will be there in the future. The hon. Lady should draw my remarks to the attention of those of her colleagues who are campaigning around the country on false information to the contrary.

Mrs. Taylor: If that is an answer, we shall wait a long time for clarification. Perhaps the junior Minister will be more forthcoming when he winds up the debate this evening.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: As the hon. Lady comes from my part of the world and has a similar accent to mine, she will be well aware that the Lancashire education authority starved the grammar schools in Lancashire so that their facilities were way behind when they became grant-maintained. Schools in Lancashire will benefit enormously from the fact that, from now on, the Lancashire education authority's funds, which have been massively misdirected, will now go into those schools.

Mrs. Taylor: That does not appear to be what parents in Lancashire think. Not for the first time, I disagree with the hon. Lady.

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): Will my hon. Friend accept from me that everything that has just been said by the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) is untrue?

Mrs. Taylor: Yes.

Much of the discussion about grant-maintained status has been presented as schools escaping from local authority control—that is what, in essence, the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) was suggesting. The reality is that the grant-maintained schools will be opting into a new, powerful, centralised control system. The creation of the funding agency will not only be expensive, bureaucratic and a waste of scarce resources, but will give unprecedented powers of control to the Secretary of State. The Conservative-controlled Association of County Councils says that the Bill has significant constitutional implications.

At times, the Bill is honest about the Secretary of State's intentions. Clause 245 states that there will no longer be any need for a local education authority. I had thought that subsidiarity was in favour with the Government at present, but apparently not with the Secretary of State. He will be appointing funding authorities that are accountable to no one but the Secretary of State. As the ACC said, that must be a loss of democractic accountability.

We must ask ourselves who those in the funding authorities will be. Will they be as representative as all the other quangos from the Department of Education—the great and good of the Centre for Policy Studies? I do not think that the Government's record on the independence of their organisations can lead us to have much hope in the funding agency.

During the passage of the Education Reform Act 1988, the Opposition raised a number of constitutional issues about the result of increasing power being placed in the hand of the Secretary of State. They were added to a general warning that once the process of gathering power together starts, it will inevitably continue as it becomes a form of addiction for Conservative Cabinet Ministers.

There have been some significant examples in recent years of Secretaries of State becoming hooked to the addiction of power, and the present Secretary of State has taken up the addiction. He adds an extra governor to one school, supposedly as a one-off, but then he carries on and further extends his powers. He allows a school that was part of the reorganisation programme for removing surplus places to opt out. Despite all the fine words about being tough on surplus places, schools have been allowed to opt out. There has been even more interference in the national curriculum, almost daily, by the present Secretary of State.

At the right hon. Gentleman's appearance at the Select Committee, he acknowledged that he would receive 44 new powers as a result of the Education Bill. Given the precedents, I think that we can expect the number to rise during the Bill's passage. Why will that happen? It is because the Bill is a further reckless attack on local government. It builds on past attacks by creating a new experimental system of central control to run grant-maintained schools alongside existing local authorities.

The Secretary of State will create the new Schools Funding Agency which, according to the Bill:

> "shall comply with any directions contained in an order made by the Secretary of State."

If there is a new, centrally appointed funding agency with powers that exist in parallel with those of local authorities, there is bound to be conflict between the new quango and the LEAs.

That conflict will be created simply because the Secretary of State is giving himself new powers. The right hon. Gentleman recognises that such a conflict will exist. How does he deal with it? By giving himself even more powers. The Bill states:

> "any dispute as to whether any functions are exercisable by a funding authority or a local education authority shall be determined by the Secretary of State."

It is not surprising that even Conservative local education authorities feel threatened, and believe that the new system is being rigged from the start.

The Conservative Education Association—not an organisation which I would normally consider quoting—has made a hefty and significant response to the Government's proposals. On the section on funding councils and the increase in the Secretary of State's powers, the association states that it is

> "seriously disturbed at a massive and dangerous increase in powers given to central government"

and accused the Secretary of State of

> "nationalising our schools".

Dame Angela Rumbold: I hope that the hon. Lady will accept from me that the Conservative Education Association, while containing the word "Conservative" in its overall title, is not an official Conservative party organisation. We in the Conservative party have no pre-emptive right to the word "Conservative". I hope that the hon. Lady understands that the comments attributed to it are in no way associated with the Conservative party.

Mrs. Taylor: I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for making that clear. I have been checking, and understand that the author of the submission to the Secretary of State was one of those who travelled with the Prime Minister on the campaign bus during the election, so perhaps some of the comments are significant. It might be worth quoting another of the comments of the Conservative Education Association. It states:

> "We have been disturbed by what we see as the growth over the past year or so of too ideological an approach to education policy making. We believe that there is too much ideology and not enough practical common sense."

Occasionally the Secretary of State would do well to listen to those people—even in the Conservative party—who disagree with him.

The centralisation of power does not stop with a new Schools Funding Agency. The Secretary of State is taking a number of direct powers over grant-maintained schools. They are his favoured few, for which he is supposed to believe in the right of self-determination, but he has taken powers so that he

> "may modify the instrument of government of any grant-maintained school. He may replace any or all of the first governors of any grant-maintained school."

The Secretary of State controls all the resources of grant-maintained schools through the funding agency—a control which he has already used directly this year by warning those schools that they should not apply for capital grants to spend on libraries, sports halls or sixth-form blocks. He controls not only the money, but every instrument of government. He can replace any governor whenever he chooses. If that is independence from the Government, I am not sure what the Secretary of State would mean by central control.

The Secretary of State repeated today that he intends to be tough on surplus places. He even claimed to have adopted some of our proposals. I wish that he had, because we believe that every authority should have plans to deal with that problem, and that there should always be a public inquiry. The Secretary of State does not establish a duty for all local authorities to deal with surplus places. Not surprisingly, the Bill simply gives him more power to pick and choose when the issue is tackled. There will be a public inquiry only if the Secretary of State uses his increased powers to bring in his own proposals.

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that opt-outs are bad news at any time but that at a time of economic recession and a public spending squeeze more of them would be especially worrying? The example of universities relying on central Government funding does not augur well for secondary and primary education. Further centralisation of education at a time of recession will surely be bad news for parents and children.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Some people in the grant-maintained sector are beginning to be alarmed about exactly how much funding will be available. As I said earlier, there may be even more bad news in store for them on Thursday.

Does the Minister really think that his Department is capable of dealing with all the decisions that he wants to take on? Can it, for instance, deal with surplus places—of which the Secretary of State has been making much? He demonstrated that he lacks the knowledge to exercise these powers in his recent letter to all LEAs, in which he listed schools that do not exist, schools that had already been closed and, for one authority, he listed grant-maintained schools, which were well beyond the authority's power to deal with.

Mr. Patten: That phantom list of schools was produced by the local education authorities themselves and sent to us. Does the hon. Lady agree that that shows the need for us and the funding agency to look more robustly at the evidence from local authorities? It seems that they do not even know which schools in their areas do not exist and have not existed for some years. To put it mildly, they should start dealing with their data collection systems.

Mrs. Taylor: I am glad that the Secretary of State sets such store by the information that comes from local authorities. I wish that the Department would put that into practice. The case of Sheffield is instructive. That city has written on more than one occasion to the Department correcting the Department's figures. Sheffield wrote in January correcting the figures, yet in September the Secretary of State and the Department were still using out-of-date, misleading figures. Following one of the right hon. Gentleman's sets of figures, we learn that Sheffield should close seven or eight secondary schools; following the other, Sheffield apparently needs to build three more secondary schools. So much for the Secretary of State's ability to take over all decision making in education.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): I hesitate to prolong the agony, and I salute the hon. Lady's capacity to pack a three-minute speech into three quarters of an hour, but she has given us everyone's view but her own. I should love to know what she thinks about grant-maintained schools. Is she saying that she is not ready to listen to the parents who have voted on this matter? Does she intend to rescind grant-maintained schools? Perhaps she will give us her own views and stop quoting so many other people's.

Mrs. Taylor: There have been two ballots in my constituency since the election. I have listened to a great number of pupils and parents talking about the issue and I know the schools involved very well. The decision to opt out was overwhelmingly rejected because the parents bothered to look at the information and the facts—and I share their concern.

Earlier, the Secretary of State was not willing to be drawn on the extra administrative burden of dealing with surplus places, but he has one clear responsibility in this respect. Many LEAs are worried that the Secretary of State wants them to publish proposals to reorganise schools so that some of their schools will feel under threat and, when under threat, may choose to opt out. Of the schools that have opted out already, no fewer than 63 have done so because they were threatened with closure under a reorganisation.

If the right hon. Gentleman is genuinely interested in tackling surplus places, will he say here and now that he will refuse any application for grant-maintained status from a school seeking to opt out to avoid closure?

Mr. Patten: I have said on a number of occasions, including occasions in the House, probably before the hon. Lady took up her present responsibilities for education, that I will not allow grant-maintained status to be used as a bolthole for failing schools or to be applied for by failing independent schools. Grant-maintained schools and local education authority schools must operate on equal terms. We do not want failing schools of any sort: if schools are failing, they should be shut.

Mrs. Taylor: The right hon. Gentleman has not answered my question, just as he has consistently failed to answer questions throughout this debate. I am sure that the Minister who winds up will want to pursue the matter this evening, as will we in Committee.

Mrs. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): The Secretary of State has just said that we do not want any failing schools—we would all agree about that—but he went on to say that if they are failing they should be shut. What, then, was the purpose of the education associations, which one assumes existed to help failing schools? I disagreed with that method of helping failing schools, but now the right hon. Gentleman says that they should all be shut.

Mrs. Taylor: That is a good point, but my hon. Friend will understand that under pressure the Secretary of State will say almost anything.

Then we have the right hon. Gentleman's proposals for specialisation. We certainly think that that is a code word for selection. I recognise that there is a lobby in the Conservative party—I suspect that we have already heard from it today—that wants to bring back the grammar schools. We may hear more of that later today—indeed, some Conservative Members seem to be indicating that we will. We never hear from the same lobby about the other side of the case—bringing back the secondary moderns—an inconsistency which I am sure is a mere oversight. I wish that those promoting selection would do so openly rather than hiding behind words such as specialisation. Then parents could know where they stood.

Selection is certainly not what I want for my children; nor do I want them to specialise too early. I want educational doors to be kept open for each child as long as possible, not a system of education that closes doors in children's faces.

There should be some scope for cross-party agreement on the part of the Bill that deals with special needs. I served on the Committee that examined the education Bill implementing the Warnock report. We recommended that, as far as possible, children with special education needs should be integrated into mainstream education provision. That principle received all-party support. As we predicted, the problem has been that resources have not matched the requirements of that policy. That has a parallel with community care. Integration is right in principle, but it cannot be delivered if it is treated as a cheap option. The integration of children with special needs will not work unless it is done properly, and that requires extra resources.

The improvements in the Bill, while welcome, are not a complete answer. We welcome the time limits on statementing, although we hope to clarify some issues in Committee. We accept the need for the new tribunal system which acknowledges the concerns of parents. However, I am afraid that we share some of the worries such as those expressed by the Spastics Society that the new tribunal should not be just another panel of experts who can intimidate the parents of children with special needs.

We also wish to look at the case for a proper attempt to ascertain the wishes of the child in line with the Children Act 1989. As the Secretary of State said, we are all well aware of the different statementing records up and down the country. Significantly different proportions of children are being statemented, and the delay in some areas is too great. We hope that the Bill can help improve matters.

The Minister must be aware of the resource implications. We cannot offer a new deal to special needs children without more resources. I hope that the Minister is aware that the proportion of children with special needs who require statementing is small, and that the majority of special needs are met in other ways. It was not clear from the Minister's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) whether he was aware of that. There is concern that although the Bill may somewhat improve the provisions for those who require statementing, it may do so at the expense of those who have a significant but lesser degree of special need.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Lady raises an important matter and I am conscious of the fact that I did not answer it properly when her hon. Friend intervened. Grant-maintained schools are not allowed to discriminate among applicants on grounds of ability unless they are selective schools. In addition, they cannot change their admission arrangements without coming to me as Secretary of State. That means that there is a clear guarantee that unless such schools are selective in some way there is no way in which children with special education needs will not be received into them. The matter can be further discussed in Committee.

Mrs. Taylor: I am not sure that the parents of children with special needs would want to rely on that guarantee. The Secretary of State has missed the point. If local education authorities have to spend more time and resources on children who require statementing, where will the extra resources come from? Is there not a real danger that they will come from the special needs pool which will thereby be depleted, to the disadvantage of children with special needs that are not such as to require statementing?

In his intervention, the Secretary of State spoke about grant-maintained schools. I was not dealing with those, but I share the concern of groups such as Mencap which are worried about the proposed division of responsibility between the funding agency and the local authority. As Mencap says, how can a system operate coherently and efficiently if one body retains responsibility for children with special needs while another is responsible for the schools which provide the education? Mencap and others are increasingly worried that if the funding of schools becomes more dependent on league tables that are supposed to demonstrate their success, children with special needs, and especially those with behavioural problems, may prove even more difficult to place in future. Those are some of the issues that we shall explore in great detail in Committee.

I said earlier that the Bill was wrong because it concentrates on the wrong issues and ignores the real problems in education. We should be building on what is good and sound, such as the GCSE, and not undermining the good, as the Secretary of State did in August and September.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere) *rose*——

Mrs. Taylor: No, I shall not give way. It is too late.

The Secretary of State's reaction to this year's GCSE results was typical of what is wrong with his approach to education. His knee-jerk criticism of the examination results was splashed all over the papers regardless of its impact on youngsters who had worked hard for their success. Tory right-wingers do not like the GCSE because of its course work and because they find it difficult to accept that half of our children can obtain the top grades. The Minister had to respond to his right wing and criticise the examination. His time and the time of the House would be better spent on other issues, such as trying to reform post-16 qualifications.

The Bill should be judged on its contribution to improving education. Does it properly address the long-standing education problems faced by our children? It does not. Despite the Secretary of State's assertion that he wants to open the White Paper's door of opportunity to all children, he is returning to a divisive selective system that will open doors only to some. We have been down the road of selection, of specialised education. It led directly to second-class education for the majority of our children. It encouraged massive and widespread under-achievement and underpinned our low rating in international education comparisons. It gave the favoured few, those who were supposed to be succeeding, a narrow and limited view of what education opportunity was about.

The Bill does nothing to ensure that every child in Britain will be offered the chances, choices and resources to raise educational achievements to the highest possible level. It gives the green light to those who wish to select and reject and will deny many children the chance to learn. It sells the majority of our children short and closes doors rather than opens them.

Successive Conservative Governments have destroyed all hope of consensus in education, although many Conservative councillors share many of our values. There is a fundamental difference in approach between the Opposition and the Minister. We believe that the doors to education should be opened as wide as possible and kept open for as long as possible. The Government seem intent on creating a series of hurdles to discourage young people.

The Bill is dangerously irrelevant to the needs of education. It has nothing to say about how to raise standards and levels of achievement for all our children. Every country in Europe knows that pre-school education with trained teachers provides the basis for higher achievement. Where does the Bill deal with early-years education? Every country in Europe knows that coherent post-16 education which ensures the highest quality of education, leading to real achievement—not the low-level courses designed to reduce unemployment that we have had from this Government—is the key to an efficient economy and real achievement. Where is the post-16 education in the Bill?

Where is there any mention of the need to gain the co-operation of teachers using their professional skills in the enterprise of raising achievement levels? The Secretary of State is failing our children. The White Paper spoke of "developing moral values" and of teaching children to be involved in their communities. How can that happen if schools and pupils are encouraged to opt out of their communities?

The Bill will not only encourage a divided set of schools but will create an amoral framework in which community, parents and children will be encouraged to despise and denigrate each other. The Bill will not help to create the kind of education system that our country wants and needs as we move into the 21st century. We shall oppose it on every occasion.

5.30 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), to borrow an analogy from the classroom, has proved herself a disappointing examination candidate. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State set her a number of examination questions on grant-maintained schools. He did not expect every question to be answered, but most examination papers say, "Attempt to answer one question."

The hon. Lady did not attempt to answer even one and then, perversity on perversity, she set some examination questions for my right hon. Friend—a curious inversion of the procedure that candidates in examinations are supposed to follow. When she did so, he promptly answered them all. The hon. Lady has given a disappointing performance in her answers about Labour party policy on grant-maintained schools.

Let me warn the hon. Lady about one thing. She and the Labour party must tread warily. They are trying to minimise the impact that grant-maintained status is having by marginalising the 300 or 400 schools that have already gone through with grant-maintained status. They claim that that is only a tiny statistic in relation to the great mass of schools. She should recall early Labour party attitudes towards the sale of council houses—a good analogy, as that was the enfranchisement of tenants, just as this is the enfranchisement of parents.

To begin with, the sale of council houses was a cloud no bigger than a man's hand—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will know this familiar biblical metaphor. Now, it fills the firmament of political life. I believe that, while grant-maintained status may be a cloud no bigger than a man's hand now, it will grow similarly to fill the whole education firmament. The hon. Lady and her party should pay careful attention to the coming reality.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I should like to underline what my right hon. Friend says. The Labour party would do well to pay attention to this revolution in education. Is the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) aware that, in my constituency, every high school or secondary school has opted out, apart from one that was not allowed to do so last year but will do so this year? That represents parents who have money, parents who have only a little, and parents who have none. Old and young, rich and poor alike see grant-maintained status as an opportunity for their children and grandchildren, and the Labour party does not understand that.

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend underlines my point. Grant-maintained status is starting slowly, but it will gather momentum and will become one of the great realities in the political firmament.

I was grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State not only for his general presentation of this important Bill but for his special reference to religious education, in which he has taken a great personal interest, reflecting his own commitment, and about which he had a number of important things to say. Better still, there are important religious education features in the Bill.

I shall briefly say a few words about this rather rarefied and specialised subject. The Education Reform Act 1988 required that all new religious education syllabuses should reflect mainly Christian religous traditions. However, as my right hon. Friend rightly pointed out, this requirement has been applied only by the one third of all local education authorities that have drawn up or are in the process of drawing up new syllabuses. That is a poor performance.

Therefore, in clause 224, my right hon. Friend proposes to close a legal loophole by requiring all local education authorities to bring their syllabuses into line with the Education Reform Act 1988, if they have not already done so. This provision is greatly to be welcomed and is likely to receive that welcome in all parts of the House.

Clauses 10 and 11 give governing bodies of grant-maintained schools the right to be represented on local committees that prepare and monitor agreed syllabuses on religious education. This is also most welcome and I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for this. My only concern is that these arrangements do not come into play until 75 per cent. of either primary or secondary pupils are educated in grant-maintained schools within the area of the local education authority. This trigger point should more appropriately be set at 50 per cent. and I hope that my right hon. Friend will examine the matter if an amendment along those lines is tabled in Committee.

Grant-maintained schools will wish to play a part, working with others, in preparing local religious education schemes, but it has to be recognised that in some cases, agreed syllabuses are of poor quality, making few intellectual demands on children. For this reason, the Government are right, in clause 126, to give the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools the right to choose the agreed syllabus of another authority. That is a reflection of how poor some of the existing syllabuses are.

I welcome the support the Bill gives to Church schools and in particular I welcome—I believe that I shall not be the only one to do so—the possibility of the creation of new denominational and non-denominational Christian schools.

My right hon. Friend will have received some evidence from the Church of England Board of Education. This is an immensely influential and beneficial body in the firmament of the Church of England, and the Church of England has a substantial stake, as my right hon. Friend knows, in education. About 20 per cent. of all schools are based on a Church of England foundation, and that is a high proportion.

However, the board of education has submitted some rather controversial proposals to my right hon. Friend. Without wearing my modest official hat as the Second Church Estates Commissioner, and speaking as an ordinary Back Bencher, I warn my right hon. Friend that I disagree with a couple of the ideas that the board has put forward. One is a change in the provisions affecting school worship. It proposes that the requirement for all grant-maintained schools to hold a daily act of worship should be dropped and replaced with the requirement for an occasional act of worship. As part of rendering the requirement occasional, the board proposes that children should be able to visit acts of worship according to non-Christian faiths. Most people accept that schools should teach about non-Christian faiths, provided that the integrity and coherence of each faith are respected and that the legal requirements of the 1988 Act that bear on a mainly Christian content are fulfilled.

There is a great difference, however, between children studying a world religion in a classroom and participating in acts of worship of another world religion. The Church of England's Board of Education of the General Synod proposes that schools should be free to arrange visits to acts of worship taking place within "faith communities", as it puts it. Many parents, however, will see little distinction between children observing acts of worship and participating in them.

I fear that the board's proposals give insufficient weight to the concerns of parents who have a sincere faith, of whatever religion. Its proposals may prove counter-productive in the aim of developing respect, tolerance and understanding.

Many Muslim parents, for example, might have strong reservations about their children visiting Hindu temples. If it is not right to expect Muslim children to take part in acts of Christian worship, it cannot be right for Christian children to be expected to take part in acts of Muslim or Sikh worship. I heard that, a fortnight ago, primary school children within a northern education authority, on a school visit to a mosque, were made to pretend to be Muslims at prayer. Surely that is just as offensive to Muslims as to Christians.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will realise that real difficulties are likely to arise if we act on the board's advice in this context, although we all wish to maintain and integrate the mainly Christian emphasis of the 1988 Act with the need to learn discreetly about the reality of other world religions.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I ask for my right hon. Friend's views on the substance of religious education. It seems that the Government have done well in trying to ensure that the Christian tradition is used as a basis of teaching. In my experience, however, moralistic wiffle-waffle is taught about the third world, rain forests or some damned thing. Nothing is taught about the history of the Christian religion, let alone the Bible. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will tell us his views on the substance of religious education rather than its form.

Mr. Alison: I have great sympathy with what my hon. Friend has said. It is one reason why we owe an immense debt of gratitude to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and some of his predecessors for having joined in the general campaign to ensure that religious education syllabuses are brought properly up to date under the auspices of the 1988 Act and that "mainly Christian" means that most syllabuses have features of Christian religion that are properly taught, which means that there should be room for only one, or at the very most two, other world religion or religions.

Syllabuses are now subject to complaints by parents, and, as a result of the innovation that is contained in the Bill, grant-maintained schools, at least, will be able to shop around for a proper religious education syllabus. That means that there will be a huge emphasis increasingly on a proper Christian content. Schools will be able to introduce religious syllabuses that are not likely to be the subject of complaint and that genuinely teach mainstream traditional Christian religion.

I emphasise that religious education is not to be confused with religious instruction, religious indoctrination or religious nurture. The key word is "education". The complaints procedure and my right hon. Friend's innovation will, I am sure, lead to a great improvement in the content of syllabuses. We do not want thematic teaching to be aimed to impart, for example, the relevance of light in all world religions. That sort of teaching takes us nowhere; it is thematic and hopeless. That is the sort of thing from which we are hoping to escape as a result of my right hon. Friend's innovations and changes.

I hope very much that the anxieties of my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), as he articulately expressed them, will be met in what has been provided.

I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to some representations that I have received from Christians in Education—a department of CARE, Christian Action, Research and Education. It greatly welcomes the Education (Schools) Act 1992, which requires that all schools should be inspected on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of their pupils. Its provisions will help to implement some of the positive concerns that are set out in the White Paper about moral values in our schools.

Spiritual, cultural and moral values, however, are given slightly less emphasis in the Bill than in the previous two important education Bills. We would welcome the possibility of an amendment that would require schools to publish information about their spiritual, moral and cultural values. Such an amendment would help parents to make appropriate choices and give inspection teams a baseline for inspection.

Mr. Patten: Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the tasks which I have laid down upon the Office of Standards in Education, the new inspectorate of schools —it will be examining and reporting on every primary and secondary school in the country over four years, and thereafter once every four years—is to report on the spiritual, moral and cultural ethos of a school? The chief inspector and his colleagues will be giving greater attention to that and setting great store by it.

Secondly, is my right hon. Friend aware that I will, if he thinks that the procedure which I have outlined is inadequate, take seriously his request to consider the possibility—no more than that—of an amendment to the Bill along the lines that he has suggested?

Mr. Alison: My right hon. Friend has fulfilled the almost divine prerogative of "Before you call, I shall answer." He has made a fabulous contribution to the debate. We shall wait carefully on what he has said.

I would welcome also——

Mr. Pawsey: In addition to what my right hon. Friend has said about the intervention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, does he agree that we have seen a positive example of further consultation on the Bill taking place this evening?

Mr. Alison: My right hon. Friend is an immensely flexible and receptive Secretary of State. He is well supported by allies and friends such as my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), who keeps a sharp eye on us when we debate education matters.

It is to be welcomed that inspection teams will be reporting on the spiritual and moral aspects of school life. It is important that the teams include those who are equipped to report on such matters. That is especially important where schools have a particular and, in my advocacy to my right hon. Friend, clear Christian ethos.

We must ensure that we avoid unsympathetic or even hostile inspections. Many schools will not be able to choose their own inspectors. It will be damaging if

[Mr. Alison]

non-Christians, or those hostile to the Christian religion, carry out an inspection of spiritual and moral aspects of school life. I am talking of those who are basically unsympathetic to the entire ethos of a school. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will bear these matters in mind.

My right hon. Friend is to be welcomed for his immense grasp of education matters, representing as he does the greatest seat of learning in the known universe. He has taken a particular, committed, profound and sympathetic approach to the issues surrounding religious education, for which we are all profoundly grateful. We wish him every success with the Bill.

5.49 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): As we are all aware, the Government have dictated education policy for the past 13 years, yet whenever any criticism is levelled against the system, they blame anybody but themselves: they blame the teachers, the schools or the local education authorities. Now, instead of taking the opportunity to invest in education, they intend to make our education system the most centralised, bureaucratic and nationalised system in the western world.

We are told that the Bill will give us a double offering —choice and diversity—but in fact it contains more of the divisive reforms which have already caused upheaval in our schools and antagonised the education professions. Without any concessions to allow schools time to absorb the many and various alterations in recent times, the Bill moves the privatisation of the education system up a gear. It will extend opting out, further reduce the role of LEAs and increase specialisation and selection.

There is a disguised and ominous theme to the Bill. I served on the Committee which considered the Education Reform Act 1988, which gave the Secretary of State immense influence over the education system. We complained at the time that he was taking on too many responsibilities. The proposals in the current Bill reinforce that influence and give him inordinate control over education matters at local level. At a Select Committee meeting last week, the right hon. Gentleman agreed that he would be taking on more than 40 new powers. The ultimate effect will be that the rights of parents and the entitlements of children will be eroded.

Among other things, the Secretary of State will gain the power to approve changes of school character, to decide local admissions policies, to replace governors of opted out schools, to take over failing schools and to reduce surplus places. The sheer length of the Bill makes it impossible to mention every proposal during a Second Reading debate, so I shall concentrate on just a few.

The Secretary of State will have the power to appoint a new school curriculum and assessment authority—a single body to replace and combine the functions of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council. That new body will be firmly under the control of the Secretary of State and will not be in any sense representative. In fact, it will be similar to the NCC and SEAC, which are controlled by puppets of the Government.

The Secretary of State's new powers to intervene in a wide range of matters will create confusion and administrative uncertainty for parents, teachers and schools. The main confusion is about the Government's proposal to appoint a statutory body, the Funding Agency for Schools for England. Its members, again appointed by the Secretary of State, will share the duty to secure sufficient primary and secondary school places from the point where 10 per cent. of pupils are in grant-maintained schools.

If more than 75 per cent. of pupils are in opted-out schools, the funding agency will take complete responsibility for education planning. We are told that local education authorities can apply to be relieved of that responsibility well before that point is reached. I expect that many Tory-controlled LEAs will jump at that opportunity. At the Select Committee meeting last week, the Secretary of State suggested that that was already happening and that many Tory-controlled LEAs were applying to get rid of their responsibilities for education.

Once the Bill is enacted, LEAs will have only a range of residual functions. The potential administrative chaos and institutional conflict is obvious, especially as the funding agency will have an interest in extending grant-maintained status. The members of the agency will be appointees of the Secretary of State and are therefore highly unlikely to show any inclinations to resist Government direction. Indeed, it would be against their interests to do so.

The Bill promises the continued existence of LEAs, but how can we believe that promise when they will have a markedly diminished role and the prospect of further delegation? The pressure to delegate even more will further weaken them and, as more schools opt out, the LEAs will lose powers to the funding agency. Eventually, they will be relieved of all their functions. Local government has been taken out of education. Democratically elected LEAs are being replaced by unaccountable quangos answerable only to the Secretary of State.

It is once again clear that the opportunities for growth and development are to be restricted to the grant-maintained sector. The Government want all schools to opt for grant-maintained status, despite the fact that opting out has proved an embarrassing flop, as the figures that I shall give later in my speech so clearly show.

Immediately before the general election, the then Education Secretary predicted that an avalanche of schools would opt out as soon as a Tory victory was assured. The Grant-Maintained Schools Trust claimed that 2,000 schools would quickly opt out. That has not happened. In fact, there has been a minimal response, with fewer than 400 schools opting out.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the reason why so few schools have managed to opt out thus far is the LEAs' vigorous, vicious and hostile campaign against such schools?

Mr. Steinberg: The majority of schools do not want to opt out because they are satisfied with their local education authorities. Those that have opted out are in local education authorities which have underfunded their schools, and those schools opted out only because they had no alternative but to do so. Opting out has been a complete wash-out in Durham, where there is no support for such a system. That has been profoundly embarrassing for the Government and has contributed to their desperation to make grant-maintained status easier to achieve and more attractive to individual governing bodies. Head teachers and school governors have been bombarded with propaganda. We have heard about expenditure on campaigns by LEAs, but it cannot compare with the amount of taxpayers' money spent by the Government on bombarding head teachers and governors with propaganda.

To ease the route to opting out, the Government intend to abolish the second governors' resolution before a parental vote, thereby reducing the amount of time for resistance. They intend to limit LEAs' spending on information about opt-out ballots and to allow voluntary bodies to impose the establishment of new grant-maintained schools. The Government are prepared to spend large amounts of public money on campaigns in favour of grant-maintained status, but they intend to wipe out any attempts by LEAs to oppose them, by placing a restriction on LEA expenditure. The Secretary of State has confirmed that today.

The proposals are not so much about offering the choice to opt out as about the far more menacing implication of enforced opting out. There is a very real possibility that schools will be forced to opt out against the will of their governing bodies. Opting out is aimed at the break-up of the cohesive pattern of local education. It encourages moves towards selection, with a school able to choose its pupils, and it leads to neglect of the less able or disadvantaged child. Until now, financial bribes have been offered to opting-out schools at the expense of other children in the community. It is no wonder that the largest group of opted-out schools are those under low-spending Tory authorities. It is in Labour areas that parents have the greatest confidence in their locally accountable education service.

Schools where ballots are pending include Blackfriars, Devon Foundation and King Edmund schools in Conservative-controlled Essex, and the George Warr school in Conservative-controlled Wiltshire. The list goes on and on. They are all schools in Conservative-controlled areas wanting to break free of useless local education authorities.

Where schools are labelled as failing, LEAs will give way to local education associations—more ominously known as hit squads—which will move in to take control. Those hit squads are already being labelled as a dad's army, because they will consist of retired head teachers and former managers of industry. Again, the Secretary of State will have the power to appoint association members, who will have the authority to take over the management of a school, or even a group of schools, from the governing bodies and the LEA. Associations will have the power and the funding of a grant-maintained governing body.

Education associations pose significant threats. No criteria are given to define a failing school. It will be left to unreliable, privatised inspectors to decide which schools are at risk. Only schools in LEA areas will have the pleasure of education associations. That presumably means that grant-maintained schools will never fail—or if they do, it will not matter.

Mr. Walden: The hon. Gentleman appears apprehensive—as, in my experience, are some Conservative voters—about pitting one school against another and thus introducing friction. It is important that the public understand that the vision of a smooth-running machine is false. That is a totalitarian vision. Friction, as T. S. Eliot pointed out, is a necessary component of any successful culture. Controlled friction between schools, by generating more competition, will be fruitful and beneficial. Friction is inevitable if one has freedom.

Mr. Steinberg: The only friction that I know is that generated by a Tory Government who have been destroying education for the past 13 years. The Bill is the last nail in the coffin.

An education association will have the power to propose changes in the character of a school under its management and, if necessary, to suggest closure. It will have the power to hire and fire staff in order to achieve its goals, and it will manage a school until the Secretary of State is satisfied that it has achieved a satisfactory performance.

Following the involvement of the education association, the school would be forced to become a grant-maintained school without any ballot of parents. Where is the choice that we hear so much about? The truth is that education associations are being introduced as a way of ensuring that inner-city schools opt out when they would not otherwise do so.

In some areas, three separate authorities will operate—the local education authority, the funding agency, and the education association. What is that but a recipe for absolute chaos? The Government are determined that the number of surplus places should be reduced to make financial savings. The Secretary of State has given himself ultimate control in the power to force a local authority to reduce the number of its school places.

It is to be expected that LEA-controlled rather than grant-maintained schools will be targeted. The funding agency is almost certain to favour grant-maintained schools, and the new policy of rationalisation will result in "full" grant-maintained schools and the closure of LEA schools. Parents' choice will be limited when they find that a school of their choosing has been closed so that a grant-maintained school can flourish. That is total hypocrisy. LEAs attempting to close schools in an overall provision plan have found that the Government allowed threatened schools to opt out—and in some areas produced even more places by opening a city technology college.

The Bill contains a substantial section on specialisation, which is distinct from selection. Specialisation is presented as schools "playing to their strengths" and is to be encouraged by the option of adding sponsor governors with a background in commerce or industry. Specialisation is, therefore, likely to be associated with increased funding inequality. Also, a school wanting to develop its specialism will be allowed, if necessary, to alter its structure.

Grant-maintained schools will be given a free rein, with the possibility of becoming selective. They may apply to change their character and admission policies and will then be judged on their merits by—guess who—the Secretary of State. That will undoubtedly lead to selection re-emerging by the back door.

Mr. Clappison *rose*——

Mr. Steinberg: I have already given way, and I have much more to say.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Bill's provisions will not work in counties such as Northumberland, which have a three-tier system comprising first schools, middle schools and high schools?

Mr. Clappison *rose*——

Mr. Steinberg: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I wish that he would sit down.

If I were the Member of Parliament for my hon. Friend's constituency, I should be very worried about the local schools. They are the targets of the surplus places that the Government are talking about. Such schools are likely to be closed down. Unless they opt out, they will probably have no future. I should be a very worried man if any such schools were in my constituency.

Selecting children for specialist schools ignores the developing and changing nature of children's abilities and needs. It assumes that the number of children having a particular aptitude at 11 years of age is definable—and that the same children and number will have identical aptitudes and needs later in their education. Educationists know that that is not the case, but the Government, as usual, ignore reality and claim to know best.

In Durham, the local authority co-ordinates local planning and control in deciding what is best for the school, parents and students. We face the prospect of individual units specialising in music, science or languages vying for business. A number of schools will thrive in that environment and will be able to develop into selective centres with a high reputation for quality in their area of expertise. That will be achieved by selecting the brightest children. Anyone can do that. There will always be the survival of the fittest, but a proper national education system cannot develop in a free market atmosphere.

The Government continue to reject equitable resourcing to nationally agreed minimum levels; yet with a national funding council, national curriculum, and national testing, the need for nationally agreed levels of resourcing is inescapable. The Prime Minister's insistence that pupils everywhere should have the same opportunities is solely a reference to the national curriculum. There is no such insistence in relation to funding.

The Government continue to promote the myth of parental choice. They do not face the fact that, ultimately, parents will find their children being turned away from schools which are full, whether they are specialised or selective. The policies proposed by the Government will lead not to parents choosing schools, but to schools choosing pupils. As surplus places are removed, choice becomes more limited, because more schools are full. Parents are able to express a preference from a variety of options, but do not have the right to a choice of school. It is not explained what will happen to pupils when their parents are unable to secure their first choice.

Although the Bill goes some way towards improving provision for special needs, I do not think that it goes far enough. Those with special needs are still under threat, and the introduction of the funding agency will bring confusion. The LEA and the funding agency will, from the 10 per cent. entry point, share a duty to secure sufficient places in the area for pupils with statements; the LEA will continue to be responsible for pupils with statements, whereas the funding agency may become responsible for pupils with special educational needs without statements. That is totally confusing, and I fear that it will endanger the links that have been carefully made between mainstream, special schools, and their support services.

The future of the integration of disabled and handicapped children in mainstream schools will be at risk unless a duty is placed on grant-maintained schools to admit any disabled or handicapped child, rather than the duty being placed only on the grant-maintained schools specified in the statement. The quality of education provided for such children will be seriously endangered unless we legislate for more than what I see as a quota system.

The proposals could also result in LEA schools having to provide for all special educational needs, with grant-maintained schools becoming even more elitist than already planned. The 1981 and 1988 Acts were never resourced adequately, and there is already a huge commitment of resources for LEA schools. We do not want or need elitist grammar schools; we need schools which provide for a cross-section of the school population, giving all children the best possible quality of education. Such schools must be adequately resourced.

While our European neighbours develop an education policy according to national interest, out Government pursue a policy of dichotomy, division and disregard. The Bill is irrelevant to the real needs of education. Not even passing lip service is paid to increased investment and better facilities. Parents care whether a school has sufficient books and equipment, enough teachers and adequate buildings; the Government's only investment, however, is in the establishment of a mechanism to dismantle local control.

My principal demand is for minimum standards of resourcing for education, with particular regard to staffing levels linked to class sizes and curricular needs, to nursery provision, to books and equipment and to in-service training for teachers. It is clear that the education service is drastically underfunded. A significant and immediate injection of funds is essential; in turn, a high-quality education service will rely on well-motivated, properly qualified and trained teachers, with the time and resources to fulfil their professional role.

Quality teaching goes hand in hand with an increase in the recruitment of teachers, and with their retention in the profession. The Bill makes very few references to teachers, and gives no hope for the opening of a serious dialogue with the profession the search for an improvement in schools. It says nothing about the central role that the teaching profession must play in any scheme to improve the quality of education. That may not come as a surprise, but it represents a fundamental flaw in the Bill.

The Bill will reduce the influence of the LEA as an employer by increasing grant-maintained status and delegation under local management of schools. Teachers will thus become more vulnerable. The removal of surplus places will lead to the displacement of teachers; unless the Bill is changed drastically, the redeployment of teachers —already extremely limited—will become a virtual impossibility. The LEAs' ability to redeploy teachers will be seriously diminished. Grant-maintained schools would be unlikely to accept redeployees, and the funding authority is not likely to take responsibility for managing a redeployment programme and encouraging grant-maintained schools to employ redeployees. Schools which remain under LEA control will face surplus place reductions themselves, and are unlikely to be in a position to accept redeployees.

A quality public education service is the foundation of a civilised and economically successful society. The success or failure of the public education service rests essentially on both the level of resourcing and the efforts and contribution of the teaching profession. Without the necessary investment in education—including its teachers' salaries and conditions of service—its full potential cannot and will not be achieved, and the nation's children and the nation as a whole will suffer from all the adverse consequences.

6.15 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): If the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) thinks that grant-maintained schools are such a flop, why did he devote about 75 per cent. of his speech to attacking them? If they are a flop, why is the hon. Gentleman so worried about the future of LEAs? I suggest that he is confused.

I found the speech of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) particularly disappointing. It was totally negative. After 55 minutes of it—and an intervention from one of my hon. Friends—the House is still unclear about the Opposition's official policy. Are they going to repeal legislation relating to grant-maintained schools, or are they not? Are they going to take grant-maintained schools back into LEA control, or are they not? If the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) wishes to intervene, I shall willingly give way to him.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I shall have something to say tomorrow.

Mr. Pawsey: I hope that the House heard that. The hon. Gentleman wishes to remain silent, and Conservative Members find that silence eloquent.

I welcome the Bill, which maintains the thrust and momentum of both the 1986 and the 1988 Acts. It is the third in a trinity of Bills designed to improve the quality and standard of state education, from which the majority of our children benefit. One aim of the Bill is to develop the grant-maintained school. There is no doubt that, following our general election victory in April, grant-maintained status is here to stay and will increasingly become the norm, especially in the secondary sector.

Speaking at the Council of Local Education Authorities in Liverpool earlier this year, my noble Friend Lady Blatch said:

> "Local education authorities can no longer be guaranteed a monopoly in providing education services."

Those who hear in those words the death knell of the LEA may be somewhat premature, but there can be little doubt that they sound a clear warning note about its continued existence, at least in its present form. A wind of change is blowing through the state education system, and LEAs will undoubtedly feel the draught.

The role of the LEA will unquestionably diminsh as the number of grant-maintained schools increases. It should be remembered, however, that the LEA exists not for the benefit of the well-meaning people who serve on it, but for the benefit of children and their education. If that education can be improved by a vehicle other than an LEA, we should not hesitate to adopt such a vehicle. No one system enjoys a monopoly of virtue; there is clearly merit in increasing the amount of choice and diversity, and that applies to school administration just as much as to the schools themselves. It is likely that a residual role will remain for LEAs, but it clearly will not be as all-encompassing as it is now.

I readily acknowledge the work of those who serve on LEAs, both elected members and officials. We live in a time of change, however, and the education system cannot be immune to that change. It does not operate in a time warp. Clearly, it must respond to the greater parental expectations that exist as a result of the 1986 and 1988 Acts.

Local education authorities, established almost 100 years ago by Act of Parliament, are not the only vehicles that can deliver good education to the nation's children. I am convinced that there are alternatives. The grant-maintained school is one. In the past, it has always been accepted that the Government must accept responsibility for what goes on in the nation's schools, even though the Government do not administer them. When I look at our education system, I am reminded that although the Government are responsible for what goes on in the nation's schools, they do not have power over how money is spent in those schools. They may will the means, but local government, through the local education authorities, decides how those means will be spent.

It is sometimes argued that the resources made available by central Government are inadequate, but that is not borne out by the facts. In response to a recent parliamentary question that I tabled, it emerged that the United Kingdom spends a higher percentage of its gross domestic product on education than either Germany or Japan. That is underlined by the fact that the pupil-teacher ratio in this country is now 17·5:1. Only seven years ago, it was 18·5:1. There has been a steady improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio throughout the lifetime of this Government.

The increase in resources is also borne out by teachers' pay. According to a recent answer to another parliamentary question that I tabled, the average teacher's pay on 1 April 1992 was £20,630, an increase of some 273 per cent., in cash terms, since 1979—or a real-terms increase of 46 per cent. Despite the ill-informed comments of some Opposition Members, it is clear that this Government have consistently increased funds for education since 1979.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): The hon. Gentleman refers to the Government's commitment to education, but is it not true that, in real terms, spending on education each year since 1979 has been less than that in other areas of Government spending? If the Government were spending the same percentage as was spent in 1979, an additional £1·5 billion would have been spent on education in the last year alone. Those are the real figures.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman takes no account of falling school rolls. That is the key here, and it was the basis of the reference made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education to surplus places. It may be that the hon. Gentleman did not listen to my right hon. Friend's excellent speech.

The problem facing the Government is that they have no control over the way in which funds are spent. To take up an illustration given by my right hon. Friend when he opened the debate, when we look at Birmingham, the nation's second city, we see that in 1991-92 its standard

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spending assessment for education amounted to £457 million. Spending on education in the same year amounted to £392 million, so its standard spending assessment was underspent by £65 million. That illustrates some of the problems that have to be overcome by the present system of administering education.

The priorities of some local authorities are not always those of my right hon. and hon. Friends. Most of us want more money to be spent in the classroom, yet all too frequently resources are wasted on matters that do not relate to the child in the classroom. I suspect that that is one of the reasons why my right hon. Friend is anxious to move forward with grant-maintained schools. With grant-maintained schools, the apron strings that secure schools to the local education authority are cut. We see a much closer relationship develop in the grant-maintained school between the school, its teachers and its governing body and the local community.

Grant-maintained schools are a substantial success. Parents like them. There is little doubt that by the end of this Parliament half of all the nation's secondary schools will have applied for grant-maintained status. Grant-maintained schools use resources best. They can make decisions more quickly and in their own best interests.

Those three specific issues have to be contrasted with what happens in the local education authority school. First, it does not enjoy the same level of resources, for some of that school's money is used to fund the local education authority. Secondly, decisions relating to that school are often taken at local education authority level, and the LEA may be some miles away from the school. Thirdly, the LEA's consideration of the needs of that school is sometimes distracted because of the conflicting interests of other schools within its area.

It is also interesting to note that grant-maintained schools encourage a greater sense of involvement by both parents and governors. It was significant that in a recent article in *The Times*, Dr. Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, said:

> "The single most potent factor in academic success is parental involvement and support."

Although some of us might challenge his view about parental involvement being the single most potent factor, it plays a substantial part. The greater involvement of both parents and governors in the running of a school, which is seen as their own school, must be good for the education of the children in that school.

It is interesting to note that Opposition Members are beginning to come round to that point. My hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to a press release that was issued in June this year by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who was then the official Opposition spokesman on education. I shall quote what he said in full:

> "It must be recognised that local circumstances will vary. The community of schools is under threat of being broken up but parents and governors may feel bound to make decisions about what they think is best for their school. Labour must not appear to be placed in a hostile position of opposition to such parents."

That may not have been a blinding flash of light on the road to Blackburn or even Dewsbury, but it certainly represents a shift of opinion by Opposition Members.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on those areas where substantial numbers of parents have been interested in opting out? The London borough of Wandsworth's appalling record and its total contempt for the educational values and standards of the schools that are trying to educate children in that area has led to parents very reluctantly—I speak as one parent in that position—taking the view that anything is better than to have one's children under the regime of the London borough of Wandsworth. That factor has led some people to vote for opting out. I should have thought that that would be a matter of serious concern to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea) *rose*——

Mr. Pawsey: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but one of my hon. Friends, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), also has great knowledge of what goes on in the London borough of Wandsworth and its neighbouring authorities. Therefore the hon. Gentleman will, I know, forgive me if I give way to my hon. Friend who will put the other point of view.

Mr. Bowis: I suspect that the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) knows no more about Greenwich than he does about Fulham, which he left not so long ago. The truth is that Wandsworth's schools only recently escaped from the Inner London education authority's regime, under which 45 per cent. of parents voted with their feet and took their children out of that borough's education system. They are now coming back. The schools are improving. Wandsworth is giving the go-ahead to those schools that wish to go grant-maintained and the results—attendance and everything else—in Wandsworth are better.

Mr. Pawsey: I was right to give way to my hon. Friend, who has given the hon. Member for Greenwich his come-uppance.

To return to the speech of the hon. Member for Dewsbury, who now leads for the official Opposition on education, I am reminded that when she was the shadow spokesman on the environment she was originally opposed to the sale of council houses, but that even she came round eventually to acceptance of that policy. I believe that history will repeat itself. Grant-maintained schools in the 1990s will be what the sale of council houses was in the 1980s, for the same fundamental reason: they give more power and more responsibility to the individual and reduce the role of the town hall and the bureaucrat in people's lives. I am convinced that most parents know best what is right for their children, and grant-maintained status encourages that laudable objective.

I was pleased that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not duck the problem of failing schools, especially those in inner cities. Some schools have failed their pupils, and LEAs have not always been able to rise to the challenge of the failing school and to lift to an acceptable level the quality of education at the school. Under the Bill, where a school is identified as being at risk, the Secretary of State will be empowered to appoint an education association to take over its management until it regains and maintains essential standards. That is a fallback position, which will be adopted only after the LEA has been given every opportunity to put its house or the school in order.

The education association will be small. Its members will be appointed by the Secretary of State and it will receive direct grant from central Government. It will have powers similar to those enjoyed by a grant-maintained school. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State addressed this specific problem, because some inner-city schools have undoubtedly failed pupils and parents. The education association will bring new ideas and new minds to an old problem, and so often it is new ideas rather than money that are needed to answer the problem of the failing school.

The Bill makes it easier for specialist schools to emerge, and I look forward to their development. I want more schools to develop expertise in science, music and the technology that leads to engineering knowledge.

Hon. Members will recall that the title of the White Paper that gave birth to the Bill was "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools". There is little doubt that such a twin approach will advance the quality of education. Parents want more choice in the type and character of schools. The old idea that only one type of school can deliver education to all the nation's children is increasingly discredited. Children are not, thank God, identical. Some will always rise to the challenge of an academic environment, just as others will prefer a slower and perhaps more technical approach.

The Bill must ensure that children get the education that is best suited to their needs. The grant-maintained school provides more flexibility and autonomy and develops a stronger commitment among staff, parents and governors, which certainly results in better use of resources.

It has been patronisingly argued by Opposition Members that headmasters and school governing bodies lack the initiative, intelligence, expertise and enthusiasm to run their own schools and need the crutch of the local education authority. It has been argued that those schools cannot think for themselves or develop without the wisdom or guidance of the LEA. I have news for Opposition Members: most heads and governing bodies want more freedom to decide their own future. They are only too well aware of the shortcomings of the existing LEA system and want to improve their school and the education that it offers for the benefit of their children.

The new Funding Agency for Schools will be responsible for recurrent and capital grants and will share with LEAs the duty of securing sufficient school places until 75 per cent. of pupils in an area are educated in grant-maintained schools. At that point, the funding agency alone will discharge that responsibility. It does not establish a sort of LEA or set up an LEA by another name. The funding agency will have fewer powers, and essentially its job will be to allocate funds and not to direct the form of education in an area.

Some, principally Opposition Members, say that we are centralising education, but that allegation is not borne out by the facts. We have reduced the role of the middle man in education—the LEA. Grant-maintained schools will have enhanced autonomy and greater responsibilities and the Department of Education will be responsible for providing funding. The interface that will be created by those two halves will do much to improve the quality and standard of state education and will give real local control. There will be no third party to interpret or distort the intentions of national Government as they apply to schools.

I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to small primary schools, especially those in small rural areas. I am pleased that they will be able to come together in clusters —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am delighted to have the support of my hon. Friends, who appreciate that point —making it easier for them to apply for grant-maintained status. Village schools with relatively few pupils do not feel able to apply for grant-maintained status. Under the Bill, that will be made much easier and more attractive. They, too, will share in the benefits that come from grant-maintained status.

I conclude by saying that Christmas is not too far away and by recalling my right hon. Friend's well-known sense of humour. The Bill reminds me of a Christmas cake. It is substantial, full of goodies and very fulfilling. I commend it to the House.

6.36 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): May I begin, even in his absence, by congratulating the Secretary of State on delivering a speech which at least he enjoyed? Unfortunately, I did not enjoy it and I suspect that many people who are truly concerned about education would not have done so. I far preferred the measured speech of the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg).

Mr. Pawsey: He appreciated that.

Mr. Foster: I thought he might.

The Bill is the 17th education measure that the Government have introduced in the past 13 years. One gets the impression that the Tory approach is, "We shall keep on trying and might get it right one day." I believe that the Bill fails to get it right, and I hope to explain why I so believe. I also hope to deal with one or two of the points that the Secretary of State made directly to me.

I acknowledge that there is merit in some parts of the Bill. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) referred to those, and I agree with her comments about special educational needs, to which I add the subject of pupil attendance. There is some merit in the Bills's proposals on those subjects, and I hope that it will be possible to achieve all-party agreement on them in Committee.

For many, however, the biggest problem with the Bill is its omissions. It fails to tackle the key fundamental problem that is faced by many of our schools—underfunding. There is no commitment to ensure the massively increased funding that is so desperately needed to repair our rapidly crumbling school buildings, to provide more teachers, to reduce class sizes, to provide more opportunity for under-fives and to provide better equipment and more books.

No doubt we shall have to wait until we hear what the Chancellor says in his autumn statement on Thursday. I suspect that none of us will hear any good news about overcoming the underfunding of schools. If the Bill is enacted, governors will still face the stark problem of choosing which books or which equipment not to purchase, or of choosing which teachers they will have to sack.

The Bill goes no way towards meeting the aims set out in the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools". I cannot see a single clause that will ensure that every child will have the best possible start in life. Indeed, I suggest that the chaos and division which

[Mr. Foster]

the proposals will bring will go a long way towards harming the current quality of education in schools in England and Wales.

I am sure that if he were here, the Secretary of State would have recalled that some months ago, I urged him to ensure that there was adequate consultation on the White Paper before the publication of the Bill. I specifically asked him to ensure that the consultation period did not cover only the summer holidays when it is most difficult for those directly concerned with education to produce co-ordinated responses. I know that I was not alone in making such a request. Clearly, the requests were largely ineffective, because the Secretary of State went ahead and the consultation period largely covered the summer holidays, with just a couple of weeks tacked on to the end.

What was proudly hailed by the Secretary of State as the largest ever piece of educational legislation has had what I understand to be almost the shortest consultation period attached to it. If what we hear is true, the shortness of that period has caught out even Department for Education officials. It is almost certain that the Bill will receive as many amendments from them as it will from Opposition Members.

One would think that the Government would have learnt their lesson from the poll tax with all its problems. The system of law-making used to be that we thought first and then legislated. The Government seem to see it the other way round—that we legislate first and think afterwards.

Perhaps it did not really matter that there was a short consultation period. After all, there is little evidence that the Government took much notice of the responses they received. The latest edition of *Education* magazine says:

> "The Bill contains virtually no surprises. Nor does it reflect in any way the weight of opinion which so roundly questioned many of Mr. John Patten's original policy plans."

It is as if the Secretary of State and his Department are a black hole into which any vaguely dissenting voice disappears, never to be heard again and certainly never likely to influence the thinking of the Secretary of State.

It was, therefore, perhaps somewhat foolish of the Secondary Heads Association at its recent conference to complain, as many others have done, about the isolationist stance of the Secretary of State. It was perhaps even more foolish of the new president of the association to comment:

> "Since the election the Secretary of State has refused to consult the very people, heads and deputies, who will be required to make his new proposals work."

It probably was foolish because the evidence suggests that, even when the Secretary of State consults, he takes only limited notice.

The Secretary of State does not even take much notice of people who are normally his supporters. The Conservative-controlled Association of County Councils came across the reluctance of the Secretary of State to consult and then to listen. The association writes of its concerns that they were

> "explained to the Secretary of State at a meeting with him . . . obviously, time did not permit their reflection in the published Bill."

That is very charitable of the ACC. I suspect that the real reason was that the Secretary of State simply did not agree with the points made by the ACC.

Mr. Bowis: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is about to enlighten the House on the process and procedures of consultation which led him in May to be in favour of every school being grant-maintained, but in July to believe that no school should be grant-maintained.

Mr. Foster: I have already said that I will turn to the points raised by the Secretary of State in a few minutes. I will pick up that point if the hon. Gentleman will wait a few moments.

As we understand it, the Secretary of State has received hundreds of responses to the White Paper. I and many other hon. Members have received copies of many of those responses, which make interesting reading. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has referred to one response from the Conservative Education Association. It is so important that it is worth repeating one small extract from the document. The association says:

> "The Government is nationalising the schools of England and Wales . . . it represents a massive and dangerous increase in the power given to central government."

We have already heard from Conservative Members that there is now an attempt to disown that association and its comments.

Let us consider some other responses. It is believed that the intention that the unelected funding agency for schools should take over many of the functions of local education authorities will mean a marked loss of democratic accountability. That is the view of the Tory leader of Kingston upon Thames council. He continued:

> "In the place of the local LEA will be a remote national body, albeit with regional offices, which will be accountable only to the Secretary of State. It will be quite impossible for this body to respond flexibly to local needs, or to the problems of aggrieved parents."

Let us consider the Conservative-controlled London Boroughs Association. What did it have to say about the Bill and about the White Paper? The association described them as a "cause of serious concern". Organisations from all walks of life have criticised the White Paper, but it is clear that those comments have fallen on deaf ears. Their comments have dealt with many specific aspects of the Bill.

I touched earlier on the 39 or 44 increased powers that the Secretary of State will take on. Those 39 or so steps are steps towards the erosion of local accountability and local democracy. They are an attack on local government. That point is picked up by another of the responses to the White Paper:

> "The Bill implies a profound shift in responsibility from local to national government for the provision of education that is of great constitutional significance."

Those are not my words, or the words of Liberal Democrats, Labour Members or trade unions. They are the words of the Tory-controlled Association of County Councils.

It is interesting to reflect on the debate on the Education Reform Act 1988. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said:

> "The Secretary of State has taken more powers under the Bill than any other member of the Cabinet . . . Within the parliamentary system, no Secretary of State should ever be allowed to hold such a degree of power."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 792-95.]

Under this Bill, the Secretary of State will take on some 40 additional powers on top of those that he received from the 1988 Act. Is there no limit to the Department's desire to take all power to itself?

There is no doubt that the Bill is an attack on local government. It further erodes the shared responsibility between local and national government which was such an important feature enshrined in the Education Act 1944. Let us consider the major thrust of the legislation, which is the Government's desire to expand the grant-maintained sector despite having no evidence to suggest that a school will be able to deliver higher-quality education to its pupils merely by becoming a grant-maintained school.

The whole concept of opting out is beginning to create chaos and division in our education system. It is already leading to the two-tier system that we have sadly already seen in the national health service. It removes any opportunity for coherent strategic planning at a local and democratically accountable level.

I intend to refer in a moment to the intervention of the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) about U-turns. However, let me say first that Liberal Democrats have consistently opposed opting out, and we are not alone in that. I referred a few moments ago to the present Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. This what he said about opting out five years ago:

> "Opting out should be dropped completely. It will undermine the whole of the basic educational system of this country."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 795.]

We understand why the Government are so keen to make it easier for schools to opt out. Like their proposals for city technology colleges, the Government's so-called grant-maintained revolution has turned out to be a damp squib. At the present rate of schools opting out, we will have to wait until the year 2150 before all schools have opted out. It is frightening to think that, in that period, there will have been another 200 major Education Bills through the House. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth say that he expected that more than 50 per cent. of schools would have applied for grant-maintained status by the end of this Parliament. That is well in excess of even the most optimistic dreams of the Secretary of State.

There is evidence elsewhere in the Bill of the Government's attempt to railroad grant-maintained status through. For example, governors may now decide to put forward proposals for opting out as any other business at about 10.30 pm at a governors' meeting when many of the governors may already have gone home. If they do that, there is no redress in the legislation.

The Government want to make opting out easier and they are also introducing a funding agency in England and its counterpart in Wales. The membership of those unelected quangos will be determined by the Secretary of State without any consultation. However, the Liberal Democrats share the Secretary of State's view in one respect at least. We accept—and we advocated it long before the Conservatives took it on board—that budgets and management decisions are best made at local school level. That is why we should like to see an extension of local management to all schools, not just to those that take the risky path of opting out.

We should like that extension to be contained within a local, democratically accountable strategic planning framework. That is the problem about the alleged U-turn to which the Secretary of State referred. He quite rightly referred to an article that appeared in a local newspaper. However, that article gave only the first half of the story, which is that we should like to see further delegation of power and responsibility to all schools. The article did not include the vital ingredient that that should happen within a strategic planning framework at the local level which is democratically accountable.

In that sense, we could almost argue that the Government are not being radical enough. Given that the Government are so wedded to open competition within education, it is surprising that in certain circumstances, they are limiting the period within which grant-maintained schools can obtain services from the local education authority.

When the Under-Secretary of State for Schools replies, perhaps he can explain how, under the market philosophy in which the Secretary of State and his Cabinet colleagues believe, the Government will limit the opportunity for grant-maintained schools to purchase services for their LEAs when, for example, the LEAs provide the best quality service at the best possible price.

The Bill is not as radical as we should like it to be in other aspects. We are very sympathetic towards the proposals to amalgamate the School Examinations and Assessment Council and the National Curriculum Council, although we should like to make changes to the composition. However, given the Government's clear wish to see vocational and academic qualifications given equal status, we should like the Government to go further and integrate into the new body the National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

Clearly there is not enough time for me to examine all aspects of the Bill today. We shall be able to examine those aspects in Committee. We want to examine the possibility of the reintroduction of selection by the back door. The Secretary of State assured us that clauses 230 and 231 will not do that. We also want to consider carefully the proposals for sponsor governors in voluntary-aided schools, because at first sight that appears to be a mechanism by which those with the largest cheque books can buy themselves places on governing bodies.

Not long ago, the former inspector of schools, Mr. Eric Bolton, predicted:

> "if we were able to lift the veil hiding the Government's intention for Education, we would find, not a coherent vision —worrying or otherwise—but uncertainty, confusion and incoherence."

The veil has been partly lifted with the Bill, and Eric Bolton's predictions have been justified. The Bill creates more confusion, uncertainty and inherent instability than it resolves.

The Secretary of State told us in the House recently that he had made an excellent speech at the Tory party conference. I disagreed with him and I have found very few people who would agree with him. The Secretary of State would now have us believe that the Bill is equally excellent. I disagree with that as well. The Bill is bad and it does not tackle the fundamental problems facing our schools today. It will increase division and set school against school, teacher against teacher and even pupil against pupil. That is why I and my colleagues will oppose the Second Reading of the Bill in the Lobby tomorrow.

6.57 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I warmly welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate on this important Bill. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education on introducing legislation which will rank alongside the other important measures that the Government have introduced to promote parental

[Mr. James Clappison]

choice and, above all else, higher standards. The drive for higher standards lies at the heart of the Government's education programme. We believe that higher standards can be achieved through the exercise of parental choice.

I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). The word "standards" passed her lips only once, in passing, at the end of her speech. She said very little about how she would raise standards. The word "choice" did not pass her lips at all. Anyone who heard the hon. Lady would be driven to the conclusion that standards appear low down the Opposition's agenda and that choice does not appear on it at all. That is the great difference between Opposition and Conservative Members. The drive for higher standards is the fundamental objective of our Government. I welcome the reforms in the Bill, which put in place the necessary framework for the achievement of higher standards. That framework will be warmly welcomed by my constituents.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned five schools which voted for grant-maintained status on Friday. I am proud to say that one of those schools is in my constituency. At Bushey Hall school, a popular and well-regarded school, 83 per cent. of the parents voted in favour of grant-maintained status. That decision came hard on the heels of the vote of parents at another school to opt for grant-maintained status. At Mount Grace school, another popular school, 89 per cent. of the parents voted in favour of grant-maintained status.

The parents at those schools will be most surprised to hear what Opposition Members and especially the hon. Member for Dewsbury said about selection. The parents clearly voted to seek grant-maintained status because they wanted to keep the character of the schools—mixed-ability schools with highly motivated teaching staff who seek to bring out the best in every pupil.

The parents will greet what Opposition Members said about selection with utter derision. Selection was not in the parents' minds. They may have been interested in specialisation, but that is a different matter. One feature of today's debate is that Opposition Members are unable to distinguish between specialisation and selection. That is worrying in view of the need for specialisation, especially in technology. I welcome what the Government have said about technology schools and colleges.

Mr. Enright: Will the hon. Gentleman explain what he means by specialisation? He said that it would mean more technology. Will specialisation be only in technology?

Mr. Clappison: The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that 80 per cent. of a school's time is taken up by national curriculum subjects. That will be the case in any school which opts to specialise. However, some parents and some schools may feel that in the remaining 20 per cent. of a school's time there should be some scope for specialisation. It is possible for schools to specialise in several subjects. Classics may be important, but the hon. Gentleman may agree that today there is a strong need for specialisation in technology. Many schools may choose to specialise in technology, including possibly some in my constituency.

Parents in my constituency will be interested in the attitude of Opposition Members to the exercise of parents' democratic choice. The hon. Member for Dewsbury talked a great deal about local democracy and accountability. She had no view to express to parents about them exercising their choice in ballots. What does she say to the 89 per cent. of parents at Mount Grace school who voted in favour of grant-maintained status? The message that comes over loud and clear from the Opposition is that parents' views do not matter and that Opposition Members know better than they what is best for their children. Those parents will be worried by what Opposition Members said, but I am sure that they will draw great reassurance from what Conservative Members have said about the reforms in the Bill.

Ms. Estelle Morris: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that a school serves more than the children who attend it at any given time? It also serves children who will be pupils there in the years to come. Does he accept that the school serves the whole community? How can he justify a system which does not give a vote to most members of the community but only to parents who have children in the school at that particular time? How is that democratic? How does it allow people in the community to express a view about the type of school that they should have in their neighbourhood?

Mr. Clappison: I know that the parents of other children in my constituency and in the general community widely welcome the decisions of those schools. I am also aware that the local communities in Birmingham have welcomed the decision of schools such as Baverstock school to opt for grant-maintained status. Such schools make a distinctive contribution to the life of the community. The hon. Lady's argument is spurious. She seeks to deny parental choice. She suggests that parents do not know what is best for their children. That view will not receive the support of the overwhelming majority of parents.

Parents, will however, welcome the reforms in the Bill. They will not see the need, for example, for a second governors' resolution when there has been a first resolution and in any event there will be a parental ballot. Nor will they see what is wrong with limiting local authority expenditure campaigns about grant-maintained status. Of course, local education authorities will be allowed to allocate some expenditure to such campaigns. They will be allowed to pay for the production of one leaflet. But why should they be allowed to continue spending valuable resources on propaganda? Why should they go beyond their duty to transmit reliable, balanced, objective information? Parents will not see why local authorities should squander money in that way.

Parents will certainly warmly welcome the measure to allow clusters of primary schools to opt for grant-maintained status. I welcome what my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said. It is an important point. As yet, few primary schools have chosen the grant-maintained status option because they face obvious difficulties of scale. However, the Bill will assist them to opt for grant-maintained status by allowing them to opt out in groups and to pool their resources. The Bill does not force parents to do anything. It does not exercise favouritism. It enables parents to carry out their wishes. When the Bill is enacted there may well be a substantial increase in the number of primary schools which opt for grant-maintained status in the wake of the substantial numbers of secondary schools which have done so.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury and other Opposition Members have been keen to play the numbers game, but they will lose. The number of grant-maintained schools is increasing all the time at an accelerating rate. At the time of the general election, there were 217 and there are now 330. There are 150 more in the pipeline. *[Interruption.]* By deriding those figures, Opposition Members deny the right of parents to exercise choice.

Opposition Members stand in the way of a great tide of parental opinion. Parents have seen the success of grant-maintained schools, which have raised standards. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may laugh at talk of raising standards, but their constituents will not find it a laughing matter, especially those in Birmingham.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): Does the hon. Gentleman regard the 1·4 per cent. of schools which have opted out as a great tide of enthusiasm?

Mr. Clappison: That figure represents thousands of pupils and parents. Those parents have made a decision about what is best for their children. The hon. Gentleman will have to accept that the schools which have opted out of Labour local education authority control are a beacon of hope for other parents in the area. We know how difficult it has been for such schools and how many obstacles have been put in their way. Schools which have opted out have higher standards, increasing numbers, a more conspicuous school ethos and greater parental support. Those beacons of hope are needed in Labour LEAs.

Opposition Members will be aware that almost invariably the schools which prop up league tables—drawn up on any basis of academic performance—are in Labour LEAs. Parents will have noted the light-hearted way in which Opposition Members treat standards and choice. To Opposition Members it is a matter for laughter. Higher standards, greater academic achievement—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris) Order. Let us have a little decorum in the classroom.

Mr. Clappison: The overwhelming majority of parents in Britain want higher standards. Opposition Members talk of releasing grant-maintained schools from central control. They have got it completely wrong. They are denying parental choice and the exercise of parental rights, and standing in the way of the wishes of an ever-increasing number of parents.

At the general election, the Opposition's manifesto echoed what they have said today about doing away with grant-maintained schools and returning them to local education authority control. They lost that election, and the only decision that they will have to make in the next four years will be when to reverse that policy and accept the inevitable, and how best to disguise the fact that they were wrong all along. They must face the fact that there is an ever-increasing volume of support from parents for grant-maintained schools, which are invariably associated with success. Indeed, they have become a great success story in our education system.

I welcome the Bill, which puts in place the necessary framework for the development of that success story. I look forward to thousands more parents exercising their rights and achieving the highest standards for their children through the grant-maintained system.

7.10 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): May I tell the hon. Members for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) and for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) that grant-maintained schools are not a reality in the political firmament in Wales. Not more than three are up and running in the Principality.

I hope that the special needs objectives are achieved and that the proposals work. Nothing is more distressing than to interview parents in my constituency who believe that their children are not getting a fair crack of the whip on that important matter. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) that an injection of money is urgently needed so that the existing system works, let alone so that the proposed system is successful.

I wonder whether there has ever been such an arrogant speech proposing the merits of a Second Reading measure as that made by the Secretary of State. It was a tour de force, but it was bombastic, arrogant and calculated. There was a lot of posing, pointing, declaiming and provocation in that tirade of one hour's duration. Such a style will not and cannot win a friend. However, I agree with the Secretary of State's opening remark that every child should have the right to the best education. After all, children are young only once.

By implication, the Bill acknowledges major problems. Conservative Governments have been in power since 1979. Although they have been responsible for the education service in Wales for some 13 years, yet another Secretary of State has come to the House with legislation designed to put right the many serious faults, many of which, after such a long time of government, we can now lay at the door of the Conservative party. After all, since 1979 Conservative Administrations have had more than £100 billion of North sea oil revenues, which they have squandered when some of them could have been put into the education service to solve some of the problems with which we are now grappling. We have only to witness the over-large classes, the national deficiencies in skills and training, and the tumbledown and dangerous schools throughout Britain. Furthermore, teachers' morale is now dangerously low and schools are using out-of-date books and equipment.

If teachers are demoralised, schoolchildren will lose. Teachers in areas of high unemployment have particular problems. Bad housing, housing shortages and homelessness represent powerful challenges to teachers in a hard-pressed profession. Many pupils in state schools—perhaps in all schools—come from broken homes. Marriages and partnerships frequently break down and it is foolish to believe that the consequences of those problems do not manifest themselves in the classroom from day to day.

The Government underestimate the scale of the problems faced by those who must practise the art of teaching in the classroom every day. Teachers have not been well served by recent Secretaries of State, who have let the education service down. The work of teachers and the hopes of parents have been seriously affected. Looking back, we had Mr. Mark Carlisle and Sir Keith Joseph—

[Mr. Barry Jones]

one was tired and the other was tortured. Soon afterwards, we had the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke). Their attitudes to their positions showed that they were clearly on the political make. It is fair to say, however, that we had a bland and rather quiet interregnum when the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) was Secretary of State. In all those 10 years of office, the major problems faced by our school service were not improved but made worse. The revenues from North sea oil were not employed effectively to improve prospects for children.

The funding council in Wales and the funding agency in England are fundamentally undemocratic, yet all hon. Members will agree that they are at the heart of the Bill. They are likely to undermine the structures based on elected local education authorities under the Education Act 1944. The Bill is silent on future levels of investment in the school service. That factor is crucial, but the Secretary of State gave no inkling about how his proposals would be funded or how the problems within the school service will be tackled financially.

I wish to protest about the undemocratic nature of the funding authorities. The Secretary of State for Wales, who has an English constituency, is to set up a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation—a quango. It will be neither accountable nor elected, but nominated. It will be set up in a Wales which voted overwhelmingly for Labour, by a Conservative Cabinet Minister without a Welsh parliamentary seat. It is insulting to Wales and goes against the grain. It is not in keeping with the times. The Government are making a major error of judgment in their treatment of Wales.

Under the Bill, what guarantees will there be that the many smaller and rural schools in Wales will remain open? What is the long-term future of the Welsh joint education committee? Can the progress in the Welsh-medium education—where strides have been made—be maintained? Can the successful community schools now located in our high schools continue to fulfil their widest roles? The schools provide the locations for youth clubs and societies, and remain open 360 days a year. Under the Bill, can the community schools continue with their fine work in the long term, not least in my county?

What consequences will the Bill have for the emerging post-industrial communities in our south Wales valleys, which deserve the very best? I remain unconvinced that the Bill will help those communities. I pose the same questions about the schools in the rural and scattered communities in mid-Wales and north-west Wales. The recent changes in Her Majesty's inspectorate are for the worse. The inspectorate will be at sea when the Bill is enacted.

The Bill will prove a backwards move for Wales. The Government's decision to set up a funding council is a major misjudgment. Wales is democratic; it is a mature political democracy. We have concluded that we want fewer, not more, quangos. We want more elected representatives to deal with the issues and problems. The Secretary of State for Wales has made an error in acceding to English measures being enacted in Wales.

If the Welsh LEAs are abolished—as they will be eventually under the Bill—what chance will there be for the school orchestras, bands, choirs, drama groups and numerous sporting activities in the long term? We must pose that question, as we in Wales know that the LEAs have played an important role and provided good leadership. We are entitled to conclude——

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No, I shall not give way, as I shall soon conclude my speech. After two hours of speeches from the Front-Bench representatives, we need shorter speeches from the Back Benchers.

The Bill is undemocratic because the funding agency and the funding council, unlike the elected LEAs, are unaccountable to all but the Secretary of State. The Bill contains a massive defect. The funding agencies will create a big new bureaucracy, but there is a crashing silence on the source of the extra money needed. The Bill will encourage selection. The Society of Education Officers has correctly summed it up and states that the Bill is

"a recipe for duplication and confusion."

The Bill should point to a much wider provision of nursery education. It should aim to rebuild and modernise our crumbling schools, and make all schools warm, light and safe. It should seek to provide more books and modern equipment for the use of pupils and staff. It should plan to end the scandal of oversized classes.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No, I shall not give way, as the Front-Bench team has had its hour. If the right hon. Gentleman is called he will have his time, although I am not at all sure how he has spent his time while in office.

The Secretary of State did not make the case for the increase in the centralisation of our school service. The House should refuse the Secretary of State's invitation to support so flawed a Bill.

7.25 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside will understand if, for reasons of etiquette, I cannot respond to any of the issues that he has raised, due to my role elsewhere. I am not surprised that he failed to give way to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State as, in him, we have a right hon. tiger from Wales who will certainly respond to the hon. Gentleman's point later.

The debate was opened in stunning style by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I can do no more than repeat the epithet which came from Selby to the effect that there must have been divine intervention when questions were answered. We look forward to more of that as the Bill proceeds to its rightful place in the statute book. My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) continued in that light when he spoke of the trinity of legislation.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said too much, but the most memorable part of her speech was the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). The hon. Lady produced the three minutes of meat of her speech and seemed to say that the Labour party was opposed to grant-maintained schools because they were no good, so no-one wanted them, which was why there had to be campaigns to stop them in case too many people wanted them and, if so, it was unfair, because if not everyone was able to have them, no one should have them. I hope that I have correctly related her policy.

The Opposition should not oppose the Bill. They have not given a reason why they should do so in principle. Some issues for discussion have been raised from both sides of the House, and we shall no doubt continue to discuss them today and tomorrow. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will listen to and answer questions raised. The debate should be a chance to clarify and to explain to the world outside how the measure will proceed. The Bill has followed a consultation period, which is clearly and rightly continuing.

At the outset I declare an interest that I share with the hon. Member for Dewsbury as I am a consultant for the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association and, although I think it does not matter in the context of today's debate, for the Association of Colleges for Further and Higher Education and for the Association of College Management. I should also declare the opposite of a pecuniary interest—something which costs me—in that my daughter is training to be a teacher and I am the son of a teacher. Therefore, I speak with feeling when I say how wonderful teachers are, and I expect my right hon. Friends to support me all the way. Teaching is a wonderful profession and we are fortunate that its members devote their lives to it—I say that in all sincerity, family apart.

The House does well to introduce legislation to enable teachers to provide the best education for our children and to draw the best from our children. Education is about "educo"—drawing out of children what is contained in them. We sometimes forget that "educo" also applies to the teacher. If a teacher does not have the knowledge and experience drawn out of him or her, the benefits cannot be instilled in the child and the child does not receive a full education.

All too often, arguments about education become polarised between those who wish it to be entirely child-centred and those who wish it to be entirely imposed. I liken the process to baking a cake. If a child is given the ingredients and told to bake a cake, he or she will make a nasty mess. It helps if the teacher gives some guidance not only on the relative quantities of the ingredients, but on how to mix and bake, and at what temperature. Teachers' experiences, taken together with the innate abilities, ingenuity and initiative of children, will lead to quality education.

Mr. Enright: I was delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman refer to the Latin roots of the verb "to educate"—he said that it meant drawing out. Would he like to reflect on what "instil" means? Originally it meant a sort of forced feeding.

Mr. Bowis: I was using the verb "to educate" from the teacher's and the child's point of view. We do not want any forced feeding; I hope that the best teachers will encourage feeding without resorting to the sort of drip feeding to which the hon. Gentleman may be alluding.

I was chairman of my London borough education committee at the time of Lord Joseph's reforms—excellent reforms in their way, to do with reading, poetry, and so on. There was also the technical and vocational education initiative. Teachers said that it was all wonderful, but wondered when they would be allowed to get on with the business of teaching. I was in this place when the Education Reform Bill introducing the national curriculum was going through. Again, teachers said that it was great, but they wanted to get on with teaching. What do grant-maintained schools represent if not the opportunity for teachers to get on with teaching, in partnership with heads, parents and governors? I cannot for the life of me understand why heads or teachers should resist this plea.

There are positive and negative reasons for choosing grant-maintained status—a fact which sometimes confuses the Opposition. There are certainly negative reasons why people should want to escape from a bad LEA, but there are also positive reasons why they should join a good GM school. I do not need reminding of the horrors of the inner London education authority. I remember from the days when I was first elected, in 1987, the carol service that ILEA provided for its children. It had nothing to do with "Away in a Manger" or with Christmas trees; it had to do with Trafalgar square, the place where people go to demonstrate.

I can remember the anti-cricket and anti-competitive sports mentality in ILEA. I can also remember the anti-police attitude. I quote an ILEA document circulated to teachers at the time:

> "The police have a vested interest in law and order and . . . thus are not best qualified to talk to children about the subject as their views are likely to be one sided".

I can remember, too, ILEA's views on physical education:

> "The hidden curriculum of PE does more than its fair share to produce and reproduce the social and psychological basis necessary to sustain a system populated by ruthless captains of industry, technocrats and subservant proletarians."

I can remember the time when Benjamin Britten's "Let's make an opera" was condemned as racist and sexist, largely because the villain was called Black Bob. I can remember the time when ILEA produced, at twice the cost, half the results for the children of London, particularly for those at secondary school. All this is why parents voted with their feet in the borough of Wandsworth.

As I said, however, there are also positive reasons. Parents and school can see the benefits which can flow in terms of budgetary control and school morale—which in turn can lead to a higher quality of education. I have never said that grant-maintained status is the most wonderful thing that can happen to a school. A school may be on the right lines without it. But I do say that it often represents the right way ahead. Equally, it is a challenge, not an easy option. Choosing grant-maintained status means accepting the responsibilities which go with it.

I had hoped that the Labour party's previous education spokesman was coming around to a more positive view of GM schools. At the time of the election, it seemed that the Opposition were agreeing to support parents and not to go back and undo everything that they have achieved and wanted. Today's sad statement of policy, however, made me realise that all that has come unwound in the intervening months.

To listen to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris) on the subject of voting is to remind oneself that when Labour introduced changes to schools—from grammar to comprehensive—it did so by means of circulars: there were no votes for parents. Suddenly the Opposition have found a new belief in democracy. Our way is the best way, since it deals with the wishes of parents.

[Mr. Bowis]

I welcome the movement in this Bill to restrict the campaigns being fought against grant-maintained status. They have been grossly unfair in some parts of the country, and parents have been misled, not least in the borough of Merton, about which my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) spoke earlier.

I ask my right hon. Friend carefully to examine the way in which empty places are assessed. Sometimes applications for grant-maintained status are refused on the understandable grounds that there are too many empty places. There is always a balance to be struck between the need to remove empty places and the opportunity to take on grant-maintained status. It is not always easy to distinguish the genuine from the non-genuine. On several occasions I have wondered whether an assessment in my area has taken into account the use of rooms by nursery classes, for instance. Not always, I fear. We should also bear in mind other educational uses—secure resource centres, libraries, and so on. We must keep up the pressure to get rid of empty places, but we should also keep under review the procedures that these assessments follow.

I have four questions for the Secretary of State; we can explore them further as the Bill proceeds. The first concerns quality control and how to ensure it. There needs to be such control before schools reach the stage when the education association is brought in. I saw how schools were rescued from ILEA by Wandsworth borough education committee and its officers, and I am sure that the same can be done for other schools by patient work to take them off the at-risk list and to enable them to flourish thereafter. We need quality control, not just a rescue system when schools have reached the stage when the education association has to be brought in, correct though that method probably is.

Secondly, I should like to explore further the co-operation between the funding councils and the LEAs. Perhaps the councils could seek the views of LEAs and present the joint view, if one can be found, to my right hon. Friend for his final adjudication. Such a presentation could include local matters which might affect the LEA, not the funding council.

Thirdly, I hope that my right hon. Friend will come to the schools prom in a fortnight's time and have a careful look at its programme. He will see all sorts of bands and orchestras—the county youth band, county wind groups and jazz bands, and so on. These groups are organised on a county or borough basis by the education authority to bring musicians from schools together and to create this wonderful festival of music. Many hon. Members on both sides feel that this is a precious system, and we need to ensure that it is not put at risk by the uncertainties which may emerge from an examination of the management of schools.

Fourthly, I want to ask a question put to me by Deaf Accord. It concerns special needs and the grant for education support and training—GEST—which, as my right hon. Friend knows, was the Government's response in 1989 to the needs of the deaf-blind. That grant has enabled provision to be made on a regional basis. We need to know that the service will be guaranteed and, if it is available in a school which goes grant-maintained, that it will still be provided in the region for which it was originally intended. Above all, we need to know how this funding will be dealt with in the future.

The hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) spoke about special needs. I take a particular interest in that issue and welcome the Secretary of State's moves on it. He has met many of our concerns—some of which were raised in debate earlier this year—on the speeding up of statementing, the appeals procedures and parents' choice. We should also look at the whole issue of the funding of schools for children with special education needs who do not necessarily reach stages four and five and thus full statementing.

Sixty per cent. of the children in one of my schools on the border of another London borough have special educational needs. However, only 10 per cent. of them are statemented and the school receives from Wandsworth borough extra funding only for that 10 per cent. The school takes many children from across the borough boundary and receives nothing extra through recoupment for them. I should like to see a scheme which provides recoupment from the centre in the same way as mandatory student awards. The Secretary of State will not be able to produce the response that he gave earlier to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) because there might be a Treasury input.

I warmly welcome the Bill and wish the Government well as they take it through Committee. It is the latest Bill on the road to seeking the best for every child. That is done by making sure that the best is the norm.

7.41 pm

Ms. Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): Before I turn to the substance of the Bill, I should like to deal with what the Secretary of State said earlier, when he made yet another of his repeated attacks on Birmingham's education system. He was not sufficiently well mannered on that occasion to let me, a Birmingham Member, answer him, so I shall take this opportunity to do so. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is not listening."] That is nothing new. I sometimes wonder whether the Secretary of State realises how much damage his repeated, unjustified and inaccurate attacks on Birmingham's education system are doing to the children. He has chosen to leave the Chamber. Earlier in the debate, the Secretary of State was manoeuvring his political virility and not engaging in proper discussion with a Member from one of the largest education authorities in the western democracies.

In September, the Secretary of State launched a disgraceful attack on surplus places in the city of Birmingham, knowing full well that the city had a solid agreement with his Department on how those surplus places would be reduced. That agreement has been in place since before the general election, but despite that, the right hon. Gentleman chose to make political capital out of it. If Birmingham is close to the hearts of Conservative Members, why did the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and the Secretary of State, both of whom spoke about Birmingham, not take the chance to congratulate the city on the improvement in this summer's examination results which were published last week?

I shall make the Secretary of State an offer. It is not one that I would make to many people, and certainly not to many Conservative Members. I shall take him out for half a day in Birmingham and show him Sheldon Heath school, where he will see some of the best design work in the country. I will show him Cockshut Hill school, which has a wonderful technology centre and a level of expertise among teenagers that is unparalleled.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Morris: The hon. Gentleman must be joking.

I will take the Secretary of State to Harvey Road school, Stechford school——

Mr. Pawsey: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Lady mentioned me in her speech, and it is the normal practice for a Member thus mentioned to be given an opportunity to reply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): It is not a matter for me.

Ms. Morris: I shall also show the Secretary of State Gilbertstone school. I have visited all those schools in the past few weeks, and in them primary school children excel in all areas of the curriculum and teachers create a marvellous learning environment. I shall even buy the right hon. Gentleman his lunch at East Birmingham college, where he will see adult learning and vocational courses taught to an exceptionally high standard. After all that, he will not even have left my constituency, let alone visited the rest of Birmingham, but he will have seen quality learning and quality teaching.

The Secretary of State must stop using Birmingham children as political football: people there do not deserve it, and teachers' morale and pupils' performance is falling because of it.

It seems that the Secretary of State and some hon. Members have read a different Bill from the one before the House. The Secretary of State spoke about quality, choice and accountability. Every response to the Bill that I have seen finds selection, uncertainty and confusion. The Bill destroys not only local accountability but the partnership between central and local government. It will destroy co-operation between schools and the network of support systems that is to be found in most local education authority areas. Nothing in the Bill and nothing that has been said in the debate can possibly justify that destruction.

I am saddened by the fact that so little recognition has been given to the valuable role played by LEAs in our education system. For almost a century, nearly every piece of education legislation has been entrusted to LEAs for implementation. The Secretary of State said that legislation in the past 13 years has improved school standards. Who implemented legislation on training and vocational education, pioneered pupil profiles, trained the governors and guided the implementation of the national curriculum? It was not hon. Members but people in LEAs, working in conjunction with the Government and schools.

Conservative Members seem to take credit for the legislation but will not give credit to the organisations that helped to make it a reality. The LEAs provide stability and continuity, and are the cornerstone of teaching and learning. Nothing justifies undermining that, but funding councils are to replace the LEAs. No matter what has been said by Conservative Members, those funding councils will take over a significant number of the functions that are currently carried out by the LEAs. The councils are ill thought out and ill defined.

The Government do not appear to have a strategic plan for education into the next century. We do not know how many grant-maintained schools are envisaged. Nobody has told us why 10 per cent. is chosen as the entry point for funding councils, or why 75 per cent. has been chosen as the exit point. No one can guess how quickly those percentages will be reached in local authorities, and no one has explained how what remains of an LEA will fit into any new local government structure. We have been offered no proof that grant-maintained schools are successful in any measurable way.

The Bill is not about education: it is about bureaucracy and structure. For ideological reasons, the Government seem intent on pushing schools into an unknown abyss, and they have no idea of the consequences. I am the first to admit that LEAs may not be perfect, but they have a proven track record for innovation and as efficient vehicles for the management of education.

The Bill will irreparably damage the network of expertise and support that is to be found in most LEAs. Above all LEAs are accountable to local people. The Secretary of State said in the Select Committee, and I have heard it said in the debate, that the local democracy argument does not count for anything, because not many people vote in local government elections. If only two people vote in a local council election, it is one more than will cast a vote for someone to serve on the funding council.

What gives locally elected education authorities their strength and legitimacy is the fact that they operate from the community that they serve. People know who serves on them and how to get hold of them. Anybody who has represented his party at local council level will know that the crucial point is that a low turnout in a council election does not mean that people do not use local government. Whether they vote or not, people use the structures and the accountability of local government to express views and seek help. There will not be that access to members of the funding councils, and the quality of the decisions that those councils take will be the poorer as a result.

The Bill is not only destructive but misleading. Its main buzzword is "choice". It raises parents' expectations. They think that they will be able to choose from an array of schools. One can imagine it, as the form comes through in January. One can see the parents saying to each other, "Should we choose the grant-maintained school or should we go for the LEA school? Should we try for a city technology college, or should we put our son into the grammar school? Should we take a risk on our 11-year-old developing an aptitude for maths and send him to a specialist school? Or should we choose that school down the road to which that nice business man has just given all that extra money?"

There is then the ultimate choice. Can hon. Members see it: parents sitting there and saying, "Should we send our son or daughter to that school down the road where the head has just been sacked and which has been given a label saying 'failing school'?" Does any hon. Member think that that is what it would be like and that that will be the nature of the choice before parents? No law, and the Bill is no exception, has ever guaranteed parental choice. The best parents have ever had is the right to express a preference. That is all that the Bill will offer.

Furthermore, with pupil numbers increasing and surplus places reducing, the choices for parents will diminish even further. The Bill shies away from the crucial

[Ms. Morris]

issue of how schools will choose whom to take when demand exceeds supply. That concept is bound up with the concept of a range of different schools. No one can escape the reality that schools will choose and parents will be chosen, that teachers will select and pupils will be rejected. The only parents who will have any choice—the only parents who have ever had any choice—are those who have money, and those who have the skill and the contacts to weave their way through what will be an incredibly complex system.

The basis of the White Paper and Tory party thinking is that schools should compete for pupils and resources. Schools have always been competitive. There has always been friendly rivalry between neighbouring schools. There is nothing wrong with that. That does no harm to schools or pupils. However, schools have been competitive within a framework based on the understanding that there is a wider responsibility to a public service of which they are all part. Because they understand that, schools have been co-operative as well.

We should never underestimate the value to the education process of teachers from neighbouring schools sharing skills and knowledge, of their being prepared to collaborate and even to share resources. If the Government turn education provision into a marketplace, they will destroy that co-operation. They risk forcing schools to build barriers between themselves so that they can jealousy guard their ideas and strengths with the aim of climbing higher up the examination league table. That is wrong, because it will not give the nation what it needs —higher standards in all our schools and not just in few.

This afternoon, Tory Members have alleged that Labour Members do not want individual schools to improve standards and do well. That is an insult, and they know it. The difference between the parties is that we are intent on providing a system that raises standards in all schools for all pupils rather than on focusing the resources and attention on a few selected schools and a few selected people.

The Bill is one of the longest Education Bills in the history of education. In its 252 clauses, it manages to bypass the real issues surrounding education and the real problems facing our schools. We still have classes with over 30 pupils and school buildings that are a disgrace in a modern economy. We have a work force of frustrated teachers who despair, year after year, at having to make diminishing resources go further and further. We have teachers who are fed up to the back teeth with filling in forms when they would sooner be in classes with pupils teaching them what they need to be taught.

Above all, schools in the 1990s are trying to operate in an economic and political climate that militates against their success. For as long as abject poverty exists in our towns and cities, so many families have to cope with the problems of homelessness, and poverty-related illnesses continue to rise, education standards will fall, because education and teaching do not take place in a vacuum.

Schools need, more than ever, stability and continuity, certainty and clarity. The Bill and all that Government Members have said today offer none of that. That is why nearly all the clauses in the Bill deserve to be fought every inch of the way. We must stop the infliction on schools and children of a bureaucracy that will do no good to anybody.

7.56 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): Parental choice is exercised rather differently in rural areas from how it is in urban areas. Both at secondary and primary level, there is often no obvious choice for parents in rural areas, which is why we have a tradition—particularly in the part of Devon that I represent, which has more than 90 parishes —of local schools providing an education for children right across the spectrum, from those with special needs through to the high achievers and those who go on to attain higher academic qualifications. Therefore, choice for parents is geared to ensuring that standards in rural schools are maintained because they are part of the community.

The White Paper rightly looked at the difficulties for small rural schools. Many of our schools have fewer than 100 pupils—60 or 70 is not uncommon. I know that governors have been addressing themselves to the proposal for clustering the smaller primary schools. I am sure that schools that wish to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the Bill will co-operate.

However, I ask the Secretary of State to look again at the proposal on the governing bodies at such small schools. People feel very passionately about their local school. That does not mean to say that they do not work with other small adjacent schools so as to reap the advantages of economies of scale. However, the parent governors in particular want to feel that they are the governors of their local school, as this is the traditional role. I ask the Secretary of State to address that problem to see whether we can provide for primary schools the opportunity to cluster without governing bodies feeling that their representation of their school is threatened. That would be most welcome.

Will my right hon. Friend also look at another aspect of the rural schools? He is rightly addressing the issue of surplus places, and I have already heard hon. Members speak of the good use to which the money that could be realised in this sector could be put—not least to help children with special needs. The county of Devon has 7·9 per cent. surplus places, compared with a national average of 22 per cent. Any radical pruning of surplus places in the small rural schools would have a detrimental effect. It might mean that we could lose a school and then see a definite need for it two years later. I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State carefully to examine the different ratios, especially as they bear upon rural schools.

It is a pity that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) would not let me intervene following his remarks about drama, music and school orchestras. Since local management of schools, I can assure him that schools in my constituency have been able to provide and, indeed, enhance those excellent facilities. If schools in Wales have difficulty in learning how to do that under local control, I am sure that there are people in Devon who could provide excellent advice.

My main interest in the Bill is the way in which it provides for pupils with special needs and their parents. I have a special interest in the subject and I know that I am joined by many charities that welcome the Government's initiative, especially as set out in part III, which extends choice to the parents of a child with a statement. They will be able to be involved in the choice of a suitable school and, more important, in the setting of a statutory time limit in which a statement is to be provided. The appeal directives are also welcome.

Since April, when I became a Member of this place, I have received many letters on education from anxious parents. I have not received one letter from a parent who is concerned about the quality of education that his or her child is receiving, but I have received many letters from parents of children with special needs, many of whom I have been able to see. They are desperate and frustrated because of the time that it has taken for their children to be assessed and statemented. I know that the provisions that bear on these matters are greatly welcomed. It would seem that the Government, in a broader sense, are reflecting on the 1981 legislation.

There are matters that I hope my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will bear in mind when the Bill is considered in Committee. Clause 156 turns on the input from health service providers. It refers to children under five years of age and the need for the health service to inform parents of and to advise them on the voluntary organisations that might give them appropriate advice on their child. I understand why the clause is in the Bill. If a child has come under the care of clinical psychologists or paediatricians, it will be apparent in many instances before he or she reaches school age that it will be helpful for the parents, and the school that the child will be attending, to be aware of individual needs, which should be considered long before school age.

Unfortunately, when it comes to learning difficulties, there are many conditions that the medical profession is unable to diagnose. That means that a child may be under the care of paediatricians and clinical psychologists long after the age of five. I am concerned that some clinicians tend to feel that, once a child has reached school age, his or her problems are only educational and that they need no longer have an input. I hope that we are moving towards a system of multi-disciplinary teams and input from a range of people who have a connection with the problems of an individual child. To justify the role of paediatricians and clinical psychologists up to the age of five but not beyond does not take into account the fact that in many instances it will not be until the children are older —sometimes not before they are in their teens—that the exact difficulties will emerge and possibly medical diagnoses will be made.

Obviously, there needs to be special provision in pre-school years, but input from the medical profession should be extended while the child is at school or in other full-time education, whatever his or her age happens to be. Let us take the case of a child of 12 or 16 years, even, who does not receive any form of diagnostic assessment that enables the medical profession to say, "This is the child's problem"—that happens in some instances. It is obviously a pity that the parents are not advised by the clinician about the voluntary agencies that might be able to give useful advice and support. I should like to see input from the medical profession extended throughout the school life of the child.

Specialist or charitable schools are also important. The Audit Commission, in its report entitled "Getting in on the Act", cautioned on the basis of the experience of Denmark. It reported:

> "As such pupils grow older, the gap between them and their peers becomes wider and they become socially isolated."

There is a need to be flexible. We would entirely agree with integrated education for pupils with special needs where their needs can be adequately met—I emphasis "adequately"—in mainstream education. Denmark, however, is finding increasingly that it is having to increase the provision of special schools or make the necessary provision within the private charitable school sector.

The Bill will establish stronger statutory rights for children with special education needs and their parents. I hope, however, that we shall examine more carefully quality of input and the outcome for the children. We are rightly concerned about standards for children in mainstream education; we wish to raise standards and we are interested in measuring outcome. Similarly, these are important matters for the child who is statemented as well as for the child who comes into the 18 per cent. category, who has special needs but has not received an official statement.

It worries me enormously that even when a child has a statement and additional specialist teaching time is allocated, parents still complain to me that they read that the child will receive an additional five hours of teaching, for example, but find that that five hours does not always go directly to the child. They find that it is used by the local school to provide more teacher time and more one-to-one teaching.

Special education needs involves much more than one-to-one teaching time. Without a doubt, that form of teaching is useful. It is more important, however, that the time that is allocated to the child, or the additional assistance, is appropriate to his or her needs. One-to-one teaching is not sufficient. It is important that the teacher, or any other person in the school who deals with the child, has been properly trained and is properly qualified to deal with the child's specific needs.

Additional hours for individual children who have been statemented should not be merely mopped up within the education system. The hours should be used specifically for the individual child and not as general support for the class or school. That is not the outcome that the parents expect when they read and accept the statement. If we are serious about quality of teaching and outcome for both children with special needs and mainstream children, it is important that these matters are examined.

Mr. Jamieson: May I give the hon. Lady an opportunity to support Devon county council, which is responsible for the area in which her constituency lies? Perhaps she will respond to a comment that went before the education committee—it is a Tory authority—only recently. It was said:

> "It is difficult to see how a funding agency could be other than remote, unresponsive, ignorant of local issues and unaccountable to local feelings."

Mrs. Browning: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, but it was not relevant to special educational needs. Those needs will continue to be dealt with by local education authorities. I have already said that there are areas of special educational need with which I am not entirely happy.

The hon. Gentleman has mentioned Devon, a county with one of the highest percentage rates of statemented children in the country. It is well over the 2 per cent. that Professor Warnock anticipated in her report, and the same can be said in terms of the 1981 Act. Three cheers for Devon for its achievement—it has done better than many

[Mrs. Browning]

other local education authorities—but we are still using targets and figurees that stem from the Warnock report, the conclusions of which were enshrined in the legislation of 1981. There was identification of the 20 per cent., of which 2 per cent. would need either specialist education, additional help or specialist help within the mainstream of education.

I am delighted that the 1981 Act is being reviewed. The difficulty with Warnock—excellent report though it was and a watershed in its day—is that although it listed a whole range of conditions that should qualify for the 2 per cent. group and mentioned dyslexia and autism, neither of those two conditions is included in the list of 20 subjects. We all know that there are thousands of children with dyslexia or autism. In many cases, autism is not diagnosed until late in a child's life, especially for those at the more able end of the continuum. However, it is a lifelong condition and handicap.

I received a fax today from the National Autistic Society, which says about autism:

> "Several LEAs do not accept it as a useful label."

That is appalling for the parents and children who live in the area of an LEA that does not recognise the term "autism". Indeed, I know that some LEAs do not accept the term "dyslexia". I am not sure what they call it—I think it is "specific learning difficulty". If we are to provide quality of education for such children and if we are to define and measure outcomes, it is vital that diagnostic assessment is accurate from the beginning. Only then can we provide the specialist education that they need.

Some of those children do not come within the 2 per cent. group; many come within the 18 per cent. group. The difficulty for them, especially if they do not have challenging behaviour but are typical children who sit quietly in the classroom and allow everything to wash over them, is that when they leave full-time education they are the children we fail because they hit the buffers. When they go on to training or the workplace, it becomes apparent that they have serious problems that were not addressed during their school lives. They become a difficult problem for the training and employment agencies and others who seek suitably to qualify them to take their place in society. As the Audit Commission report said, they become isolated socially because it is often too late to begin a programme that should have started 10 or 15 years previously.

I welcome the step forward in part III of the Bill, but I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider the matters that I have raised. I hope that we can build on the Bill's provisions in Committee and within the general review of the 1981 Act. We need to ensure that local authorities do not use politically correct language—the modern terminology—to disguise the serious problems faced by many children with special needs, especially those in the 2 per cent. and 18 per cent. groups.

8.13 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Like many other hon. Members, during the summer holiday I read the White Paper that was the prelude to the Bill. It spoiled my summer holiday, as I am sure that it spoiled the summer holidays of many teachers, those involved in education, parents and, I hope, many hon. Members. The White Paper made me angry because of its absurd proposed time scale. It is a profoundly insulting time scale for a Bill that we are told will transform the education system for a generation and more.

Some hon. Members have drawn comparisons with the 1944 Act, but that was a consensual document, carefully researched and prepared, which set the basis for an education system for a quarter of a century. Everyone who has examined the Bill has remarked on the contrast with the 1944 Act. The Bill is intellectually shoddy and it was preceded by an intellectually shoddy White Paper. That was the main reason for my anger when I read it. It was not so much what the Government were proposing, as the fact that they were proposing to do it on the basis of an intellectually shoddy argument. Every hon. Member should remember that when considering the detail of the Bill. The White Paper was like a Pattenesque article in *The Spectator* about God, morals and the universe. It was elevated into a White Paper and is now transferred into a major Bill. It would be funny if it were not so serious and tragic.

It is not the Opposition who are making those comments—far from it. Indeed, it is quite a job catching up with the comments of every informed outside commentator. I shall quote what was said by Stuart Maclure, the former editor of *The Times Educational Supplement*. He is one of the most independently minded, committed and informed supporters of the British education system. He read the White Paper while he was on his summer holidays, and he said:

> "Is it my imagination or is this White Paper not unbelievably bad? Bad in a sense of poor quality—far below the standard you expect from a great department of State? Could you imagine David Eccles, Edward Boyle or Anthony Crosland—or for that matter Margaret Thatcher or Keith Joseph—putting out such a slipshod and windy White Paper? And here is John Patten proudly boasting that he wrote the first and worst chapter himself."

The Bill is shoddy. It is devoid of any analysis or research and it is unfounded in every sense.

One Conservative Member gave a little peroration on how grant-maintained schools were somehow the route to quality, I wanted to intervene, but he would not let me. The fact is that there is no established link between grant-maintained schools and quality. One would have thought that there would be an attempt to show some connection, especially as the whole of the education system is to be transformed on the basis of that alleged connection —but there is no evidence of such a link, despite what Conservative Members want to believe. There is also no link in the White Paper with the fact that there is to be a wholesale reorganisation of local government.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Wright: I shall give way to those Conservative Members whose children attend state schools. Is the hon. Gentleman one of them?

Mr. Thurnham: My child goes to a special school——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Is the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) giving way?

Dr. Wright: Yes.

Mr. Thurnham: I have a child with special educational needs who goes to a special school. It is a voluntary school, not a state school, but it is excellent. It is maintained out of the fees paid for the children. The hon. Gentleman tried to impose a quite unnecessary qualification on hon. Members who want to intervene in his speech. Perhaps he will tell us which grant-maintained schools he has visited to judge the position for himself.

Dr. Wright: That is an interesting question and I am happy to answer it. I have been in more than one grant-maintained school. Indeed, I have something to say later about Birmingham, which may interest you. However, perhaps we should not swap such questions because there may be some vulnerabilities around the place.

There is no evidence that there has been any serious consultation. It has been a fraud, rather like the consultation about opting out of bits of the health authorities. One of the Government's great achievements has been that for ever and for all time they have devalued the word "consultation". It means that they are statutorily obliged to issue a document before they tell you what they will do.

The White Paper's one practical offering was that the funding formula for grant-maintained schools would be related to standard spending assessments. Within two days of the Government making that announcement, it was exposed as nonsense. Because schools generally spend about the SSA level, most grant-maintained schools would lose out. The Government retreated from that one specific proposal within 48 hours, and we are still waiting for something to replace it.

Earlier, the Secretary of State almost admitted just how sloppy is the Bill. He said that it could be tightened up in Committee—"Don't get too stressed. We have people who can do some work on it." That is an extraordinary remark to make about supposedly major education legislation. The Secretary of State was saying, "We may not have it right at the moment, but I am sure that we can get it right as we go along".

That is no way to proceed in respect of the country's education system. If we were not used to that mentality, it would seem even more extraordinary.

At the heart of the Bill is the dismemberment of the post-war education system and a move towards compulsory, universal opt-out. I hope that we can reach a consensus on some aspects, such as special educational needs, assessment integration, the curriculum, and attendance—but they are not at the heart of the Bill, as the White Paper's first Pattenesque chapter tells us.

The Bill must be seen in the context of the failure of the opt-out experiment. If it had succeeded, the Bill would not be required. Opting out is considered completely irrelevant by the overwhelming majority of schools, teachers, and parents. Its failure compelled the Government to introduce inducements into the system and to skew formulas, to get what they want. The Conservative party is supposed to be the party of choice, and the public have said that they do not want opting out. The Education Reform Act 1988 gave the public the opportunity to choose. They made their choice and rejected opting out. The Government respond by saying, "You are jolly well going to have it, whether or not you like it."

Even sordid little provisions such as dispensing with the second ballot are an attempt to abbreviate the democratic and consultative process.

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Wright: The same principle that I enunciated earlier applies.

Mr. Congdon: I am not interested in the hon. Gentleman's qualifications.

Dr. Wright: Then I will not give way.

We have also seen the complete failure of the delegation system put in place by the 1988 Act. The Bill is in some respects a betrayal of that system. If it had worked and the Government were committed to it, it would not now have the ladder cut from under it by moving from delegation to complete severance. Despite the nods in the direction of the 1988 Act, the Bill technically repeals much of that legislation on the ground that it is inadequate for the Government's purpose.

We have yet to see the arrival of the promised market solution to education. There is belated recognition that, even if people wanted to solve certain problems, they will not do so. Some form of planning must come back into the system. The Bill reflects the Government's inability to overcome problems through the market, which cannot plan, solve placing, or confront all the system's other problems. Unfortunately, the Bill approaches that aspect in a way that combines confusion and centralisation. That is one of its worst features.

Many point to the way in which the Bill is riddled with defects from top to bottom. It embraces an enormous capacity for confusion and muddle between the funding authority—now known throughout the system as the sweet FA—and local authorities. In one of his glib asides, the Secretary of State said that there would be competition in the planning of school places. Imagine what that will mean in trying to run an education system.

We should listen instead to those in the classroom. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris) explained that the funding authority will be completely divorced from the other support systems that make schools work. The Bill reflects no understanding of what such a system involves and that a funding authority will need a quality dimension and some kind of quality inspectorate.

The education association proposals for failing schools are laughable and reveal no understanding of the processes whereby schools succeed and fail, or of the consistent, long-term strategies that must be adopted. There is no clarification either of the funding basis. There is a bribe to voluntary schools, but there is no level playing field, and technology colleges are only an option for the grant-maintained sector. Even in the Government's own terms, there is no even-handed approach. Real diversity and choice would mean a level playing field between the different elements in the system. On count after count, the Bill fails, and many will be pressing for guarantees as it progresses.

The Bill also undermines the very system of school government—and I support parental involvement—with the engagement of parents and volunteers that has been slowly and painfully built up over several years. That is not just my contention. The National Association of Governors and Managers comments——

Mr. Congdon: We know what they are like.

Dr. Wright: You want to abuse that association too, do you?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to intervene, but there seems to be a growing habit among hon. Members to use the word "you". I can understand hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber who are not yet familiar with the rules of the House falling into that habit, but I hope that they will remember that the Chair is not responsible for this Bill or any other.

Dr. Wright: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is just unfortunate that Conservative Members instantly abuse organisations with whose views they do not agree. That is not at all helpful. The National Association of Governors and Managers, which has done sterling work in supporting the new system of school government, states:

> "The newly established system of school government would be weakened if some governing bodies were induced or obliged to assume additional responsibilities which they could not effectively discharge within the time and commitment that they could give them."

I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will bear that important point in mind.

What, then, is the Bill really about? Clearly, it is about conveying a particular ideological view to the education system, whether people agree with it or not, with no evidence to support it and with no concern about its likely effects. Worst of all—one would have thought that Conservative Members would find this slightly disconcerting, but plainly they do not—the Bill nationalises the system.

I am not quoting what has been said by Opposition Members. We heard earlier that the Minister had cancelled a date with *The Times* on the basis of a sterling editorial, which had said exactly the same: that the system would be run from Whitehall and stuffed with quangos. The Bill offers us the erosion of local democracy and local accountability, the end of pluralism and partnership and a complete reversal of what we thought the education system was all about. It gives the Secretary of State more than 20 new powers; it sets up quangos; it provides for appointments by the score to be made by the Secretary of State. On almost every page of the White Paper is a magical sentence giving the Secretary of State a new power of direction.

The Bill will bring about a major constitutional change. It will mean the end of a system based on partnership, and the worst feature of all is the casual way in which the change is being made. It used to be a source of pride among Conservative Members, among others, that one of the great virtues of our education system—indeed, an index to our whole constitution—was the fact that it was a national system locally administered. I am tempted to say that the Bill replaced that with a national system nationally administered, and I would say it if it did not overstate the coherence of the Government's proposals.

The proposals are deeply dishonest. The Government have not even had the courage to set about creating the kind of system that they would really like to create; instead, they are legislating in a mean, sordid, shoddy and dishonest way.

Let me conclude my speech—*[Interruption.]* This is important, at least to some Opposition Members. When we say that the Bill is irrelevant and dangerous, we say it because we mean it. Our reasons are not ideological; we are concerned about what goes on in schools, and what happens to children and parents.

Two or three days ago, a constituent wrote to me about her children, who attend a primary school in my constituency—I will not name it. She wrote:

> "Dear Sir,
>
> At a recent school meeting I was rather appalled to be told that the school budget had been cut to an all time low. Our school has already lost three staff members, making conditions for both staff and pupils extremely difficult, and if teachers are ill children cannot be taught. There are now mixed age classes in the upper end of the school years 3 and 4 together and years 5 and 6 together. My own child is seven years old and is in a class with 7, 8 and nine-year-olds. This is an intolerable situation. The teachers cannot be expected to work properly, and give their all under the new curriculum, to mixed age classes, and it would not be expected of them.
>
> Mr. Major has said that our children deserve the best education, but with the restrictions that are being put on them, I feel that our teachers cannot give this."

My constituent goes on to describe how money is having to be raised for essentials; hon. Members will know the kind of story that she tells.

Faced with what I am afraid is the reality in today's schools, my constituent asked me to write back telling her what was being done. I shall write back saying, "The Government are presenting an Education Bill. It is a tremendously big Bill, one of the biggest that we have had." She will ask what the Bill will do about the conditions that she described. The answer is that it is completely irrelevant to her concerns: indeed, in many respects it will make matters worse, by making effective planning much more difficult. Let me add that that lady's local authority is spending above its SSA level on education.

Those are the issues that people want to discuss. That is what education means for people who live in this country and use its schools. They are not on some ideological trip, as the Conservative party is. Every response to the Bill—not from Opposition Members, but from others who know about education—has used the same words: confusion, instability, incoherence. I only hope that the Government will take such words on board, and that their obsession with structures will give way to some understanding of education as a process—for that is what they clearly do not understand.

It is not just a question of resources, although of course resources matter. Let us not hear the same sterile argument again. Nearly every speaker so far has mentioned Birmingham—mention of Birmingham appears to be almost statutory. The Secretary of State put us on that track virtually at the outset. My children go to school in Birmingham; that is my vested interest in the Birmingham education system, but there are many serious questions to be asked about it.

Let me add two points to the important observations that have already been made. First, many of the problems experienced in Birmingham result from the under-resourcing of the system, which means that resources must be relevant. Indeed, the Secretary of State made that case earlier, when he pointed out that many resources had been taken from education and put elsewhere. Resources matter deeply.

Secondly—this has not been mentioned so far—Birmingham suffers from all the damage inflicted by a layer of selection. If we really want to use Birmingham as a model, we must see what kind of model it is. It is a model of a system on which a layer of selection has been imposed, creaming off 10 per cent. of the pupils and creating a two-tier arrangement. It is a bit rich of the Government to describe such systems as monstrous, when the Bill is about to re-create them.

The anger that I felt when I read the White Paper in the summer has now been compounded with a good deal of sadness. I was sorrowful, rather than anything else, to observe that the Secretary of State seemed to think that a measure of profound importance to many people was merely a jolly wheeze. What good fun it was to introduce a Bill like this! As the right hon. Gentleman puffed and preened in his usual way, telling us how he was going to wreck the system, I reflected on the tragedy that we were dependent on Conservative Members to say, "Hang on a minute; we cannot go on like this. We cannot set in train a sequence of events that will set school against school, parent against parent, governor against governor and teacher against teacher. We cannot let the system be wrecked because the Secretary of State—on some ideological mission, enslaved by right-wing pressure groups—thinks that it is a good idea."

A real agenda for education is waiting to be seized. It is an agenda to do with quality and excellence; it addresses questions such as "Why do a third of 16-year-olds fail to gain a single GCSE pass at grades A to C?", "Why do one in four school leavers fail to gain a single graded GCSE?" and "Why do only one in five 18-year-olds gain an A level pass of any kind?". We should be discussing those problems. There is a huge educational agenda out there, and—as in 1944—a consensus is waiting to coalesce around it. The tragedy is that the Bill has nothing to do with any of that.

8.39 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I have been waiting to hear about the two grant-maintained schools that the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Wright) said that he might have visited, but by the time he reached the end of his speech he seemed to have forgotten about it. What a disgraceful qualification for an intervention. What is wrong with people making sacrifices to send their children to private schools, if they want to give them the best education they can? What is wrong with somebody striving to earn the highest possible income in order to pay the fees and, in the process, paying taxes so that the children of other people can have a better education as well? What is wrong——

Dr. Wright *rose*——

Mr. Thurnham: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He went on for long enough. When I asked him whether he had visited grant-maintained schools, he seemed to make out that he had, and then it turned out that he had not. If he had visited grant-maintained schools in his area, or in Bolton, he would have heard a very different story.

I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman were to visit Greyfriars school and Baverstock school in Birmingham he would not find the decline in morale and standards about which he and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris) spoke. He should also visit Bolton's grant-maintained schools—St. James's and Crompton Fold—and see the spirit among the children, parents and staff—and the bearing and manner of the headmaster, someone who knows what he is doing and how to run a school in the best interests of the children, not as part of a uniform bureaucracy, which is what the Opposition favour—absolutely no choice whatsoever and no opportunity for people to do their very best for their children.

I commend many of the Bill's provisions to the House. I am disappointed, however, that Opposition Members have been unable to appreciate its good features. I wonder how many lives the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has? I notice that she is not in her seat. She was kind enough to let me intervene during her speech. She once said that the right to buy would be over her dead body. I am not sure whether she wants this Bill to be passed over her dead body. I hope that she will eventually see the light, however slow she may be to do so.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education pointed out in his speech that about £300 million a year is wasted on the provision of surplus places. I hope that he will direct Bolton education authority's attention to the waste that occurs as a result of its surplus places. On a pro rata basis, I should not be surprised if £1 million a year was wasted on surplus places in Bolton. I hope that the education authority will make additional funds available for schools that deserve more money to be spent upon them. In addition to the two schools that have already become grant-maintained. Canon Slade is to hold a ballot at the beginning of December. I am sure that the parents will see the benefits that we are discussing tonight.

A disappointing feature of the debate is the negative attitude adopted by the Opposition. Parents have written to me recently expressing their concern about the negative attitude of Labour authorities over the provision of bus fares for children attending private schools. One authority refused to provide the uniform for a child who had won a scholarship to a music school because it was a private school. The parents were on income support. How disgraceful. That nine-year-old child just does not exist in the eyes of that education authority. Those authorities are making a considerable profit by not having to pay for the education of these children if they do not even contribute towards the cost of bus fares or school uniforms.

I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) on her excellent speech, in which she highlighted the special needs requirements, for which the Bill makes provision. The Bill will be a great success in that area. It deals with so many of the obvious requirements. I understand that the total cost of special needs education is about £1·5 billion. I intend to deal with some of the issues raised with me by constituents.

First, the arrangements for speech therapy are not working satisfactorily. I hope that the Bill will enable them to be improved. In the case of one child, Rebecca, in my constituency, her parents are still having to pay for her to have private speech therapy, although it should be available through state arrangements. A proper agreement should be reached between the health authority and the education authority as to who exactly is responsible for speech therapy. However, the latest circular seems only to have added to the confusion. It has not resolved the issue.

The House has already heard about the long delays over the issue of statements. I hope that the Bill will help to reduce those delays and make the issue of statements a

[Mr. Thurnham]

much more straightforward process. The special educational needs tribunal, the appeal tribunal, should work far better than the present arrangements, under which one appeals to the same body that made the original decision.

I hope that the Bill will address the need for choice of school in every possible respect. Children should not be forced to go to a special school when the parents and the child feel that that is not in the child's best interests. The local authority can make that decision now against the wishes of the child. I hope that full parental choice will be introduced.

I am also concerned about the status of voluntary schools. In my constituency I have Birtenshaw, which is a very fine school for children with special educational needs. Its future is very uncertain under the new arrangements. I hope that the Minister will be able to give some comfort to such schools. I have already referred to the fact that my son is at the Royal School for the Blind in Wavertree, which is also run on a voluntary basis. That school also needs reassurance about how its costs will be covered.

It is important that costs are compared fairly between the state and the private sector. If one takes into account all the overheads in the state sector, one often finds that a local authority tends to favour its own schools when their costs are probably higher than those in a well-run voluntary school. As for the arrangements in special residential schools for emotionally and behaviourally disturbed children, there is considerable uncertainty about the number of children in those residential schools. A survey carried out in 1987 for the National Children's Bureau showed that there were about 11,000 children in these special schools. The costs of having children in special schools can be very high. In the case of Pepperharrow it can be high as £50,000 a year. However, it has been pointed out that the earlier a decision can be made to send a child to such a school the greater the chance the school has of success with that child.

It may be that the Home Office ought to pay the bills. If children are not put on the straight and narrow after, in many cases, a disastrous early upbringing, they will clearly cost society a great deal of money later if they resort to a life of crime and end up in prison for half their life and commit crimes when they are out of prison. I hope, therefore, that the Home Office will be persuaded to cover some of the costs instead of leaving the cost to be borne completely by local authorities.

I attended a meeting recently at the Department for Education when a delegation from residential schools for emotionally and behaviourally disturbed children met the Minister, Lady Blatch. She said that she felt there was a need for these schools to market themselves to the local authorities, but local authorities are monopolies and can make decisions for reasons that are not entirely rational when it comes to marketing. If they have their own schools, they will be inclined to favour them and make short-term decisions based on immediate costs rather than on decisions that are in the best interests of the child—and in the long term, without doubt, in the best interests of society.

I have also received a note from Mr. Stephen Lloyd, the director of the Hesley group of schools. It consists of six schools for EBD children and children with special needs. He says that he is not happy with the way that the White Paper sets out the position. He believes that there is a contradiction between more pupils now being excluded from schools—we do not appear to have any figures, but I hope that the Department will start to collect figures for exclusions, because concern is growing about that matter—and the fewer placements that are now being made in residential schools for therapeutic purposes. Those fewer placements are taking place because of financial restrictions.

Mr. Lloyd believes that the Education Act 1981 is not addressing that problem. He argues that there is no significant difference between the costs of residential education and care in the private sector and in the mainland sector, if all costs are compared on a like-for-like basis he says:

> "The White Paper is wrong to suggest limiting parental choice to the maintained sector only. Many other examples of high quality provision exist and, given similarity of gross costs, the child's best needs should be met (with parental involvement in decision making) irrespective of the legal operating base of the school."

I am concerned that parents in my constituency are being denied the opportunity to send their children to Birtenshaw school, although they have moved to a house nearby.

Mr. Lloyd continues:

> "The theme of the White Paper is 'choice'. This restriction of choice negates the theme. If one is planning a comprehensive service for children, local authority administrators should have the ability to use 'out of authority' placements as part of their planning process for best 'provision and financial reasons'. Many such officers are restricted by local authority policy from doing so."

He says that the

> "White Paper is wrong to suggest that such oversight cannot be given to non-maintained or independent schools and implying, again wrongly, that local authority schools automatically achieve such status."

Residential schools have high fixed costs, if one regards staff as fixed costs, and obviously get into difficulty if the number of pupils declines. I appeal to my right hon. Friend carefully to consider the case for residential schools. He will be aware from his previous position in the Home Office of the great cost to society of children who are classed as EBD. I hope, therefore, that he will not allow residential schools to wither on the vine because of the short-sighted policy of local authorities. He is in a position to direct that more resources be allocated to those schools so that in the long term, society can benefit from the good work that they do.

8.51 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I came to the Chamber to hear a debate on the Education Bill. Many parents, teachers, councillors, and some Tory county councillors in Devon, in which my constituency of Devonport lies, will be watching this debate closely. I shall measure the column inches in *Hansard* tomorrow to assess the amount of time that the Secretary of State spent attacking the Opposition rather than addressing the serious matters in the Bill.

The Bill is about the future not only of the education system but of local democracy. It is no exaggeration to say that, if the Bill's proposals are fully implemented, by the turn of the millenium local government could have all but disappeared.

The Bill was spawned from the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools", which was packed with unresolved questions and conflicting ideas and, worst of all, resounded to the heavy rumble of the remorseless juggernaut of state control. The White Paper was the diagnosis and the Bill is the cure. I had hoped that the Secretary of State might have told us what the disease was.

The White Paper has every appearance of having been written by a novice on a voyage of discovery. As we leaf through it, on every page there is a treasure trove of hitherto undiscovered facts about our education system. I am sure that the education world held its breath when it was told in paragraph 1.5 that "comprehensives serve many communities". That astonishing revelation was surpassed in paragraph 1.16 by:

> "The reality is that children have different needs."

Only the deep insight of the experienced eye could have spotted that. Paragraph 1.41 says:

> "praise or encouragement loses value if lavished on every piece of work."

In my days as a teacher, that last trite epiphet, which was seemingly drawn from a bottomless pit of banality, would have attracted a failed grade and the comment: "Lacking in depth, showing little more than the most shallow understanding of the subject in hand. See me."

When the White Paper was written, the Secretary of State was new to his command and as he travelled on his voyage of discovery in the world of education he encountered the natives, who had time-honoured practices and modes of working that he did not understand. So, like a proselytising missionary, he moved among them, attempting to change their way of life before he understood them, seeing evil where there was none and stamping out sins which did not exist.

The Secretary of State would have done well to have paid regard to some of the 850 responses to the White Paper. Clearly, he would have furthered his own education had he done so. He has treated the consultation period with contempt by making no discernible changes to his proposals in the period of metamorphosis from White Paper to Bill.

The worst aspect of the Bill is its power to embrace our education system with the clawing arms of state control. The Government want to inflict on our schools the very thing that they say is bad for business. The Government who introduced the state curriculum and dictated the content of examination syllabuses now wish to dictate articles of government, abolish local accountability, replace governors at will, send in education associations and, most of all, invest more and more powers with the Secretary of State. I remind him of the Prime Minister's foreword to the Tory manifesto for the last election, which stated:

> "Politicians must never make the mistake of thinking the state knows best."

As the Secretary of State takes more powers to himself, inhibits the actions of others and dictates every aspect of education, I remind him of a quotation, for which I had to burrow in Devonport high and low, from Angus's description of Macbeth:

> "Those he commands move only in command,
> Nothing in love: now does he feel his title
> Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe
> Upon a dwarfish thief."

I deal now with one of the five great themes of the Bill: choice—a concept enshrined in the name of the White Paper. When it comes to parents selecting a school for their child, choice is subtly changed to "preference", but, most important, the Bill removes the most fundamental of parents' choices: the right to choose who runs the system locally, the right to choose councillors in elections, the right to elect an LEA and the right to change the people running the system if they so wish. The only person with choice will be the Secretary of State, who will have sole power to decide members of the funding agency.

The Bill purports to free parents and schools from the alleged bureaucracy of local education authorities, only to replace them by a beast far more terrifying—the funding agency. Schools will be embraced by a far more powerful bureaucracy, which will be more remote, unresponsive, ignorant of local needs, unelected and unaccountable to local feelings. That costly new bureaucracy will prove worse by far than the one from which the grant-maintained schools thought they were escaping.

There are other ways in which choice is being eroded. If the Government close all the surplus places in schools to make the aggregate number of places equal to the total number of pupils, parental preference will vanish as children are shoe-horned into the places available. To maintain the concept of preference, some surplus places must remain. I should welcome a statement from the Secretary of State about what percentage of extra places will be required and what basis of information he has used to arrive at his decision.

It is worthy of note that the Bill does not propose that one more penny is spent on books, on equipment, on teachers, or on leaking roofs, and that the only extra funds available will be for the bureaucracy of the funding agency. The Secretary of State has given an assurance that the money will be found by savings from removing surplus places. That is ironic, as most of the surplus places exist only as a result of the schools having the ability to opt out if facing closure by an LEA. The opting-out laws have destroyed the local education authorities' ability to plan and to make savings.

It is astonishing that such reliance should be placed on savings from the removal of school places when the definition, true number and nature of surpluses have not been established. Furthermore, there have been instances when the Government have allowed schools that would otherwise have been closed by local education authorities to remove surplus places to become grant-maintained schools.

My lack of confidence in the Government's capability to act quickly and to respond to local needs has been more than adequately highlighted by their treatment of Devon county council, a Tory authority, in its plans to reorganise secondary education in Plymouth. The plans were launched in 1984, but it was only this summer that the announcement was made that in September 1993 the final reorganisation of the last two schools will take place. The attempts by the local education authority to remove surplus places have been met by prevarication, fumbling inefficiency, and totally unwarranted and costly delay.

The main object of the Bill is to make schools go grant maintained—hence the need to set up the funding agency to replace the local education authorities. At no point does the Bill address the positive relationships which schools enjoy with local education authorities. Schools do not exist in a vacuum; they need the formal and informal networks, mostly provided by the LEA, on which they rely heavily. The Association of County Councils says:

[Mr. David Jamieson]

"The National Curriculum and its associated arrangements are not implanted in the life of schools simply by virtue of text from the National Curriculum Council, or SEAC or the DFE."

From my own experience in schools, I can confirm that the national curriculum, the GCSEs and the local management of schools proposals would not have been in place now if it had not been for the excellent work of local education authorities. Schools look to the LEAs on a practical basis for support services, specialist legal and employment advice, in-service training, and much more. Many local education authorities include councillors and full-time officers who provide inspiration and leadership. Indeed, the quality of education owes much to the vision of those people, who belong to other parties as well as to my own.

All those benefits could be replaced by a centralised, remote funding agency appointed solely by the Secretary of State. Not in my wildest dreams could I imagine the grey, faceless quango, full of the Secretary of State's appointees, doling out grants in Whitehall, replacing our excellent local education authorities.

The Secretary of State made an announcement that there are now 350 grant-maintained schools. That is hardly an avalanche.

Mr. Patten: There are 340.

Mr. Jamieson: As I said, it is scarcely an avalanche. In 1987 the former Prime Minister assured us that by this time there would be almost 11,000 opted-out schools.

The Bill is needed because of the resounding lack of enthusiasm of parents for grant-maintained status. The Secretary of State made much about democracy in his speech. If he had confidence in local democracy, he would introduce proposals to allow schools to hold ballots to opt back into local education authority control. Perhaps the lack of enthusiasm to become grant-maintained is due to lack of trust in the Government.

I am sure that parents of children in grant-maintained schools will monitor the Secretary of State's commitment with interest. It was a case of, "Watch my lips: grant-maintained schools will receive more money", but the Secretary of State's muttered aside in response to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) spoke volumes. When the hon. Gentleman asked whether more funds would be available, the Minister said, "Not this week." I hope that that is on the record and that the Minister will explain what he meant by that when he replies to the debate.

It is not my intention to address the detail of the Bill at this stage. However, I cannot ignore clause 19, which gives any parent the right to a copy of a list of names and addresses of every parent of every child registered at a school. Schools and local authorities currently consider that information to be confidential, limited-access information.

Sometimes we judge a Bill on the major issues that it raises, but it is the detail which betrays the lack of insight of its authors. When clause 19 was inserted in the Bill, did the Secretary of State pause for a moment to consider the consequences of publishing that information? That information could be used by commercial organisations. Far worse, however, an estranged or violent parent could use it as a device to trace other parents or children. The information could be used in the heat of the moment by a parent to demand the address of a particular child. At present, such demands are regularly turned down in schools. At the very worst, such information could provide a comprehensive list of local children for people with the basest of motives. A most senior education officer described the proposal to me yesterday as the paedophile's charter. I hope that the Minister will recognise the error of clause 19 and announce its withdrawal.

Today we should have been considering the real issues which affect our schools. Parents should have the right to minimum standards enshrined in law. We should have been addressing issues such as class sizes, building standards, levels of equipment and teacher-pupil ratios. If the Bill had been about conditions and giving parents rights and genuine choice, I could have commended it to others. However, it is seriously flawed and it has engendered bitter opposition from local authorities, including the authority in my constituency, it has found little resonance with parents and it will effectively nationalise our schools.

9.8 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I will not follow the path pursued by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), as I do not have much time. However, I was interested to hear him quote Shakespeare. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will recall these words of Shakespeare:

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more".

I know that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport is a keen supporter of the National Union of Teachers. He will be pleased to learn that this evening I saw Fred Jarvis, who was general secretary of the NUT for many years. He had a terrible accident two weeks ago when his car overturned, but he emerged with only a scratch. Fred is good and well. As one who enjoyed a grammar school education, he will support the best education for others. The Bill will facilitate that.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) spoke disparagingly about the Birmingham education system, which gives special education to 10 per cent. of its children. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the same argument against selection was used against the Parmiters school in Bethnal Green when I was the Conservative candidate for Stepney and Bethnal Green some years ago. I do not argue for selection but let us treat the matter academically.

Socialists in the area, including Shirley Williams, said that that two-form entry grammar school was wrecking the surrounding comprehensives. They said that the fact that 60 children received a grammar school education in the area wrecked the 20 or 30 local comprehensives. Parmiters school was destroyed, and the 60 children a year who had previously gone to that distinguished school were distributed about six per school to the comprehensives.

What difference did that make to those schools? None whatever. But it damaged the opportunity of the children who would have enjoyed a good, strong, grammar school education, just as the hon. Member for Devonport did. I know that he was pleased with his education. Those children lost the chance of such an education, and suffered accordingly.

Mr. Jamieson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No. I listened to the hon. Gentleman for a long time, and he has not left me long, so I will ask him to forgive me.

The hon. Member for Devonport said that the Bill centralised education. How can he say that when the Bill envisages a system which gives schools throughout the country independence which they have never had before?

Mr. Jamieson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Greenway: He sits and shakes his head. I should be glad to take him to my constituency, to poor, not so poor and comparatively wealthy areas. All the secondary high schools have opted for grant-maintained status, except for one, which is on its way. Other schools within striking distance of my constituency have also become grant-maintained. They enjoy a new independence.

I give cleaning as an example of the benefits of opting out. If the hon. Member for Devonport has ever run a school, as I have, he will know how important it is to have the school clean and free of graffiti, to have the floors scrubbed, and so on. If the school becomes derelict, that leads to more dereliction and a bad attitude among the children.

Northolt high school examined its cleaning budget when it gained grant-maintained status. It took the cleaning contract away from the local authority and found a private cleaning system. It saved £70,000 a year. Where does the money go in such cases? It does not go back to the cherished local authorities about which we have heard so much. It goes to pay for books, pencils, rubbers and teachers for the children.

Some of the children in Northolt high school are poor and deprived. They come from sad, tough backgrounds. I should have been thrilled and impressed if I had heard Opposition Members say that they were striking out for poor children and would support the opportunity which will come from the diversified system of education which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State outlined.

The diversified education system includes the assisted places scheme. I know cleaners in Hanwell whose children have had assisted places and are doing well. They are grateful, and the children have enjoyed the places. The diversified system enhances the role of Church schools and single-sex schools. It takes into account the fact that children are all different. If the hon. Member for Devonport—I concentrate on him but I should address my remarks to all Opposition Members—has ever run a school, he will know that children are different and need different types of schools and courses.

The awful pressure that I experienced professionally from the Inner London education authority when it went loony Left was unbelievably Labour doctrinaire. It did not want choice for children. Rather, primary schools were zoned to secondary schools. Children went to their local primary school and were then zoned into their local secondary school. There was no choice or diversity, and certainly not the choice for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is providing. As a result, standards were not what they should have been.

The Opposition cannot say that every child should be treated the same and that no account should be taken of their differences. They must be given the education that each child needs and deserves. That is where the Labour party has gone wrong for so long, yet it still does not see it.

I agree with my right hon. Friend that it is scandalous that Labour-controlled local authorities should have used chargepayers' money to mount campaigns against schools that wanted to go grant-maintained. For example, the previous Leader of the Opposition sent his children, Stephen and Rachel, to Drayton Manor high school in my constituency. Parents of children at that school in Hanwell decided that they wanted the school to go grant-maintained. The loony Left council in control of Ealing sent the education officer, the deputy education officer and all the brass from the education committee—the paid officials—as well as elected members to pressurise parents and governors against doing that.

However, those governors and parents, to their great credit, held out and investigated what grant-maintained status could mean for the school. They decided that they wanted an independent state school. The parents canvassed other parents and the governors and eventually, after a long tough struggle lasting many months against the Labour local education authority, they won through. To his credit, the chairman of the governors resigned.

I have noticed that Labour governors of schools that go grant-maintained do not always resign when the school goes grant-maintained, even if they oppose it. Why do they hang in there? Are they converted or do they stay there for further trouble? Time will tell. I hope that Opposition Members will support me when I say that, if Labour governors who have been dedicated to the battle to oppose schools going grant-maintained stay on the board of governors, they will do so in a constructive manner and support the school's new status. That is fundamental and important.

Religious education is as important as any subject on the school curriculum. The tragedy is that two thirds of local education authorities have not had a new syllabus for religious education, which is desperately needed. It needs to be genuinely and sincerely argued out and hard fought for. Under the Education Reform Act 1988, the former Ealing Labour council produced a new religious education syllabus that did not refer to God, the Bible, the Prayer Book or Jesus. That RE syllabus was required to be mainly Christian. Such a spurious exercise is not acceptable to parents. Parents in Ealing opposed it and petitioned against it. Finally, when a Conservative council was secured in 1990——

Mr. Enright: Which school?

Mr. Greenway: The school was in Ealing. Why does not the hon. Gentleman listen instead of interrupting from a sedentary position? Where are his manners?

Mr. Enright *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: No, I shall not give way.

A religious educational syllabus was produced in Ealing by the local socialists which virtually disowned Christianity. Parents from Acton high school and others petitioned against it strongly. I am surprised that the hon.

[Mr. Greenway]

Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), who is a friend of mine, despite appearances, and who is a Roman Catholic——

Mr. Enright: What is the name of the school?

Mr. Greenway: I mentioned it, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not take what I say seriously. I hope that he will read *Hansard* tomorrow, look at what I have said and ensure that, where he has influence in other sectors—I am sure he does—where a Labour party or any other party is in control, such a thing never happens again.

9.21 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): A number of Opposition Members will have sympathy with the views of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on religious education. During a high-quality debate reference has been made to special education, a subject that unites a number of hon. Members. But that is where any consensus must end.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) and other hon. Members referred to the consultation process that led to the White Paper and subsequently the Bill. The lack of consultation is not untypical. When we consider the proposals for reforming —if that is the right word—Her Majesty's inspectorate, we see that the consultation process was short and was, on balance, ignored.

When the head of Ysgol Hughes in Gwynedd and the heads of the nine primary schools that feed into that comprehensive school wrote to the *Western Mail* in September, they said:

> "We are amazed that this document"—

the White Paper—

> "was released, not only when schools were closed for the summer holidays, but, furthermore, when the term of office of one governing body is drawing to a close, and the next body is not yet elected."

To have a consultation exercise about a major reform of schools and education at the beginning of the school summer holidays shows the Government's lack of seriousness about consultation.

Dr. Spink: The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that in my constituency half the schools—17 out of 34—read the report, understood it, discussed it with me and wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State with their comments on the White Paper. That is consultation par excellence, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that effort.

Mr. Murphy: The hon. Gentleman will have heard the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) say that the consultation process would continue in Committee. My experience in Committee under this Government shows that very few concessions are made at that stage, but times are changing and one never knows.

There was, at least, sufficient time for public organisations and those involved in education in the Principality to consider the consultation exercise and the White Paper. They have told the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister of State their views on the proposals. We would expect the National Association of Local Government Officers, which represents those who administer education, the National Union of Teachers, and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers to be worried about the proposals. But, so, too, are head teachers in Wales, local education authorities, the majority of academics who teach education in Wales and most people in the Principality. The Society of Welsh in Education said that the White Paper was

> "one of the most outrageous documents produced this century".

The National Association of Head Teachers said:

> "the impact of the proposed legislation upon Welsh life, heritage and culture, specially in rural Wales, will be incalculable".

The House will therefore realise that this Bill is essentially alien to our Welsh culture.

A teacher who wrote to our national newspaper in September said:

> "The failure of the Welsh Office to act independently, or to listen to its own advisers, is a terrible betrayal of the education service in Wales."

He went on, appropriately since the Minister of State is with us:

> "The Minister of State for Wales' sole function seems to be to rubber-stamp the latest imposition from Westminster, however wrong-headed or contradictory."

The problem with the legislation that has come from across the Severn estuary is the same problem as the writer of the 19th century Encyclopaedia Britannica had when he wrote, "for Wales, see England".

The proposals fly in the face of our strong Welsh democratic traditions and they are alien to our strong Welsh community values. They ignore almost wholly the separate administrative structure of Welsh education, set up as long ago as 1881. Above all, the Government have no mandate for the proposals from the people of Wales. Of the 38 Welsh Members, only six are Conservatives. All the others, Labour, Nationalist and Liberal Democrat, are united on this occasion in their feelings about opt-out schools and about the Bill.

The Bill is a disgraceful and unnecessary imposition on the Welsh people. Nowhere is that more obvious than in the so-called opted-out, grant-maintained schools in Wales, where they have proved to be deeply unpopular.

Mr. Patten: I understand that the hon. Gentleman has a couple of excellent grant-maintained schools in his constituency. Does he condemn them? Is he against the teachers and parents there?

Mr. Murphy: The Secretary of State has been given false information: there are no grant-maintained schools in my constituency.

Mr. Patten: I apologise; my geography is not good enough. I understand that they are in the county next door.

Mr. Murphy: Yes, they are in that county. I shall come to those schools in a moment. Meanwhile, of all the hundreds of primary and secondary schools in Wales, only three are grant-maintained, two of them as a direct result of proposals for closure. Four primary and 10 secondary schools are now applying for opt-out status. Four of the proposals from those schools were thrown out by the parents and two of the proposals were rejected by the Secretary of State—hardly a success story for GM schools in Wales.

Some of my hon. Friends have asked about the purpose of the Bill. Presumably it is designed to offer further inducements to GM schools. If grant-maintained status is so popular, why the need for the Bill?

Many Welsh educationists see problems in the Bill. The possible reintroduction of grammar schools and of selection are universally detested in the Principality. We believe, too, that the so-called specialist schools would mean a concentration of resources on a small number of schools. We admire our experts in Wales; we do not say that those who have spent a lifetime studying education should be derided for their views. The experts tell us that the proposals will cause major problems in our rural areas. The last thing they want are grant-maintained schools in the south Wales valleys or in the inner parts of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport. Is it any wonder that, of the 692 ballots for opt-out in Britain, only 121 came from Labour-controlled local authorities?

The point on which the Secretary of State was given false information is of interest to the House. We hear about the great success story of three opt-out schools in Wales, but two of them, Cwmcarn and Brynmawr in Gwent, were given grant-maintained status by the Secretary of State. They had asked to join the system because Gwent county council had been asked by the Welsh Office to come up with some ideas about school reorganisation.

I have no doubt that the Minister of State will mention the £23 million spent in Wales on teaching no one and the 118,000 empty school desks in the Principality. When the local authority came up with plans to save that money, the schools that were to go because they were too small were saved so that the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State had something to say about opt-out schools in Wales. Where is the logic or sense in that?

The Secretary of State said that those schools were in my constituency. Cwmcarn, which has only 323 pupils, was in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), who, by pure chance, was the Leader of the Opposition at the time, and the Government thought that they could score some cheap political points by allowing opt-out in that constituency.

Perhaps the worse aspect of the Bill is that even more quangos will be created in Wales. Only last week the Secretary of State for Wales replied to one of my hon. Friends about appointments to public bodies in Wales. The answer took up 42 columns of *Hansard*. Almost 1,000 people in Wales are appointed by the Secretary of State in a Government who have no mandate whatever in the Principality.

We are now being asked to have a curriculum council. There is some merit in that, and in the fact that the assessment aspect will be added to it. However, the Secretary of State has no statutory duty to consult it and there are doubts about its future independence. The Welsh Joint Education Committee has been established for many decades and is ideally qualified and suited to do that job. Why has it been sidetracked? Why can that body not be the curriculum council for Wales?

The Minister of State is responsible for the Welsh language in Wales and will be aware of the good work carried out by the Welsh language education development committee of the WJEC, the so-called PDAG. It has been in existence for only six years, is effectively independent of the WJEC and everybody else, and virtually everybody in Welsh-medium education in the Principality has said that it should remain. The deputy director of the Open university in Wales and the chairman of the University of Wales board for Welsh-medium teaching and many others wrote to the *Western Mail* some weeks ago and said that the committee's disappearance was

> "yet another attempt to undermine local democratic control over education by centralising all power in the Welsh Office and its nominated Quangos."

There is much talk about education associations. If the so-called failing schools are in danger of disappearing, those associations will move in and take them over, but everyone knows that the best body to do that is the local education authority. It can do it discreetly and quietly and, without fuss, it will try to improve the school. The panoply of bringing in some association, another quango appointed by the Secretary of State, is absolute nonsense. It has been suggested that retired head teachers should be used for the job. One Welsh director of education wrote:

> "This is an extraordinary proposal and suggests a kind of task force of geriatrics who will rescue a school from perdition."

That is only one aspect. The worst of the quangos will be the Schools Funding Council. It is unnecessary and unwanted. The Secretary of State will be able to appoint even more people to it.

It does the Secretary of State and the Minister no credit when they ignore the good work of the Welsh Joint Education Committee, which only recently achieved top place in eight out of 20 A-level subjects—more than either the Oxford or Cambridge boards—and an 82 per cent. A-level pass rate. One of the finest institutions in the Principality is not being used, simply because it is linked to local government.

All Welsh Members of Parliament are sick and tired of the quangos by which Wales is increasingly being governed. They are packed with the placemen and placewomen of the Secretary of State and the whole system is becoming corrupt and rotten. It is becoming a public scandal in Wales and the Bill does nothing but ensure that that will continue.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Is not the only solution to this deep-seated problem the establishment of a democratic Parliament for Wales with legislative and tax-raising powers? If we had that, we should not have to endure Bills such as this.

Mr. Murphy: Regional government elected by the people of Wales is the answer to these quangos, because democracy, at whatever level, is valuable. We cannot afford to lose it.

In her first-class speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris) said that local education authorities have done a good job, but that the Secretary of State is reluctant to talk about that, and the Bill and the White Paper make no mention of it. However, as Dyfed county council has told us, only they can deal with the provision of Welsh language properly. They should be dealing with surplus school places, the oversight of admission policies, the overview of special education, weaker schools, local planning, local advice and in-service training. All those functions are properly the prerogative of democratically elected local education authorities.

I hope that the Minister will tell us something about his plans for the reform of local government in Wales, as we are all awaiting with interest what the White Paper, if there is to be a White Paper, will have to say on that. As long as

[Mr. Murphy]

there is uncertainty in local government, it will effectively be blighted. No expenditure decisions can be made or long-term planning undertaken.

The Bill will fail because it is out of tune with Welsh traditional democratic values. It is ironic that in 1902, when an education Bill sponsored by a Conservative Government was passing through the House, Mr. Balfour said that the time had come for the end of what we would today call quangos. He said:

> "Our reform, if it is to be adequate, must in the first place, establish one authority for education . . . possessed of power, which may enable it to provide for the adequate training of teachers, and for the welding of higher technical and higher secondary education . . . In the second place . . . this one authority for education being as it is responsible for a heavy cost to the rate payers, should be the rating authority of the district . . . I would say to them"—

the ardent believers in quangos—

> "that though they may prefer an ad hoc authority, they must surely know that no ad hoc authority now can cover the whole ground of education".

If only Mr. Balfour were back so that he could talk about the value of democracy.

The bureaucratic jungle in England about which my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) spoke exists in Wales as well. Planning for schools will be in the hands of local education authorities, the Further Education Funding Council for Wales, the Schools Funding Council for Wales, the Welsh Office education department, grant-maintained schools and education associations. If ever there were a recipe for educational chaos and disaster, that is it. In the words of a former chief inspector of schools in Wales:

> "It is surely a triumph of hope over experience to expect that such self-interest, isolated, fragmented decisions, made in thousands of separate institutions, will add up to a sensible, effective and efficient national school system . . . there is no clarity at present about the Government's vision for the public education service of this country."

My hon. Friends the Members for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) both pointed that over these two days, rather than discussing this nonsense, we should be talking about nursery place, oversized classes, the lack of books and equipment and crumbling schools. That is what is at stake in education in Wales and the rest of Britain.

The education system in the Principality and the country generally is yearning for stability and certainty. Instead, education is driven by the dogma of competition, market forces and the other rubbish that comes from the Centre for Policy Studies. The result is a jungle. School is set against school, college against college and college against school. That is no education provision for our young people.

A few months ago in Cardiff—in the fine St. David's hall—500 young people from Gwent undertook a great festival of music and culture. They came from our valleys, county towns, villages and the inner city areas of Newport. I am fearful that the Bill's provisions will mean that such a festival will never take place again. Similarly, I fear that the advice that is given by local education authorities and the ability to give anyone, irrespective of where he or she lives and his or her earnings, the opportunity to have a good education, will be destroyed by the enactment of the Bill. When the professor of education at the university of Swansea said that the Bill

> "is a shoddy, conniving and mendacious document that has little to do with raising standards or choice",

she spoke for the people of Wales.

9.41 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): I am delighted to have the opportunity to reply on behalf of the Government on the first day of the debate. It gives me the opportunity to highlight the aspects of the Bill which are of particular relevance to Wales and to put the record straight on a number of points made by the hon. Members for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) and for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). Before dealing with any detail, I have a question to put to both hon. Members about crumbling schools. If that is the position under the existing local education authority regime, why have local education authorities underspent their capital allocation this year by no less than 15 per cent?

I hope to deal with some of the other issues that have been raised—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will settle down so that we can hear the Minister.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I hope to deal with some of the other matters raised during the debate. I am in the happy position of not having to rush through the issues as my hon. Friends the Members for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) and for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), the Under-Secretary of State, will have the opportunity to deal with outstanding matters when they open and close the debate tomorrow.

The principles on which the Bill's provisions are based and the proposals as they were set out in the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools", apply equally in Wales as they do in England. The way in which they are implemented, however, will differ in certain important respects.

The Government have an excellent record in recognising the distinctive needs and historical, cultural and linguistic characteristics of the education system in Wales. There is no clearer example of this than the way in which we have implemented the national curriculum. I do not know whether Opposition Members are aware of this, but we have made separate orders for geography, history, art and music—which, together with the Welsh language, will form the core of what we call Cwricwlm Cymreig—the Welsh curriculum—which will give children in Wales an understanding of the influence which the uniqueness of their country has on their lives.

We have established a separate Curriculum Council for Wales. The hon. Member for Torfaen seems not to know that the body is already in existence. In fact it is. It advises the Welsh Office on curriculum matters. I hope to say more about it in a moment. More recently, we have taken steps to establish a separate and independent office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales—[*Interruption.*] I do not know what the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside finds wrong with that. I assure him that that office is greatly respected in Wales.

The Bill's provisions continue in the same vein, with separate and different arrangements for Wales where we consider them to be right and necessary. Much of the Bill is concerned with grant-maintained schools, to which the Opposition are implacably opposed—at least for the time being. I shall spell out in a little detail just where we are and what is happening in the grant-maintained sector in Wales.

There are three grant-maintained secondary schools in place already in Wales—Cwmcarn, in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), and Brynmawr, both in Labour-controlled Gwent, and Bishop Vaughan in Labour-controlled West Glamorgan. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) claimed that the majority were in Conservative-controlled authorities. Five other schools have balloted in favour of seeking grant-maintained status, and the proposals are either with my right hon. Friend for consideration or are awaited shortly.

There has been a tremendous surge in interest in grant-maintained status over the past few months. There have been more parental ballots during the past six months than in the previous three years, and all bar one have been in favour of grant-maintained status. We are aware of interest in dozens more schools and I expect the issue of grant-maintained status to be on the agenda of most schools in Wales as the new governing bodies are reconstituted this term. I anticipate a significant increase in the number of applications coming to my right hon. Friend in the next few months.

We should not forget the background against which that surge of interest has taken place. The attitude of some local authorities has been quite deplorable. My hon. Friends have described the position in many English authorities, which have not accepted a policy endorsed by the electorate last April——

Mr. Win Griffiths: Endorsed in Wales?

Sir Wyn Roberts: This is a united kingdom. Is the hon. Gentleman a separatist?

Those English authorities have not recognised the wishes of parents and governors to have a greater say in the running of their schools. Neither have they collaborated in the interests of the education system generally and the welfare of pupils in particular. Their attitude has been one of open hostility and petty vindictiveness. It is not surprising that other schools, faced with that openly hostile attitude and intense pressure from LEAs, have taken a more cautious approach to the question of grant-maintained status.

As I have said, the position is changing. Parents, governors and head teachers are recognising more clearly the benefits and advantages of grant-maintained status. I have visited two of the three grant-maintained schools in Wales. Indeed, I visited one on Friday. They are reporting much greater freedom in the use of their budgets and more money to spend on books, equipment and staff. The hon. Members for Dewsbury, for Bath (Mr. Foster) and for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) should take note of that.

Those schools are also reporting a greater freedom to decide on their own priorities and not to have them determined to a large extent by the LEAs. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) spoke about that. Those benefits are apparent to parents, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and others described.

Mr. Win Griffiths: In Wales, too?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Yes—in Wales, too. I am not surprised that each of the three grant-maintained schools in Wales has increased pupil numbers this year.

Another important aspect is the interest currently shown in grant-maintained status by the primary school sector in Wales. We have a large proportion of primary schools, and almost 30 per cent. of them have fewer than 100 pupils. I am keen to emphasise the benefits to them of grant-maintained status. I assure Labour Members that those schools are certainly taking an interest. We are witnessing a tremendous upsurge in grant-maintained status in Wales—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members may laugh now, but the laugh will be on the other side of their faces in due course.

At present, calculation and payment of recurrent and capital grants to grant-maintained schools in Wales is undertaken by the Welsh Office, as is the monitoring of the propriety of grant-maintained schools' expenditure. With the large number of such schools in Wales, it would not be right for those essentially executive tasks to be performed by the Welsh Office—which is why the Bill makes provision for the establishment of the Schools Funding Council for Wales to undertake grant-paying functions. It will not be bureaucratic, any more than its English counterpart will be.

The council will also have duties for the effective administration of the grant-maintained sector in Wales in working alongside the local authority maintained sector to secure sufficient school places and, in certain circumstances, to rationalise provision and to remove expensive surplus places.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Wyn Roberts: In a moment, as soon as I have described the essential differences for Wales.

I stress that applications for grant-maintained status will still be decided by the Secretary of State for Wales. We are taking a pragmatic approach to establishing the funding council. Although we envisage a growing number of grant-maintained schools, it would be wrong for us to anticipate parents' wishes—so the Bill includes an enabling provision to allow the funding council to be established by order. That will be done when the level of grant-maintained schools justifies the formation of a separate body. It is therefore in the hands of parents in Wales as to when the funding council will be established.

I hope that we shall hear no more nonsense about the imposition of an undemocratic quango on the Welsh education system. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) asked where local democracy was when the comprehensive system was foisted on us with a vengeance by circular. The Government adhere to the principle of parental choice and involvement, and if the Schools Funding Council for Wales is established it will be because parents decide that they want a significant grant-maintained sector in Wales. The experience of recent months indicates that we shall have a significant number of grant-maintained schools in Wales sooner rather than later. It is right, therefore, to make proper provision in the Bill.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister give way now?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman once I have put over this point.

[Sir Wyn Roberts]

As to curriculum and assessment, quality is the key to our education reforms. We aim at raising standards of pupil performance by setting standards and measuring achievements. Our proposals reflect our decisions on the next steps. In parallel with the amalgamation of curriculum and assessment functions in the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority, we are providing for the transfer of assessment functions to the Curriculum Council for Wales, and for the renaming of the council as the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales.

Mr. Enright: On what principles will the Welsh Office select members of the Schools Funding Council? Will they be selected in the same way as members of South Glamorgan district health authority, or will they be selected in a reasonable and democratic way?

Sir Wyn Roberts: If the hon. Gentleman reads the relevant clause in the Bill, he will see that the council is composed largely of educationists and business people.

The Curriculum Council for Wales has already played a strong supporting role in the development of the national curriculum requirements in Wales. As a result, the distinctive geographical, cultural and linguistic heritage of Wales, the "Cwricwlwm Cymreig", is an integral part of the national curriculum in the Principality.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Will the Minister give way?

Sir Wyn Roberts: No; this is very important. The council will continue to support work in monitoring and reviewing the curriculum, but as a result of this Bill it will receive new assessment functions. Those functions are the assessment of Welsh at all stages, including GCSE and A-level, and the assessment of all other subjects in Wales for key stages one to three.

The new authority will build on the curriculum council's work, but will be a more substantial body for Wales. It will advise Ministers on all aspects of the curriculum in Wales, and it will have a significant part to play in supporting the place of Welsh language education.

Mr. Llew Smith: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has not been present for most of the debate. I am dealing with points that have been raised by hon. Members who have spoken.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I believe that the time is right for the council to become more involved in ensuring that supporting classroom materials are available, particularly materials in Welsh. We propose that the authority should take over the development of classroom materials for Welsh medium and Welsh second language. That work is currently carried out by my Department, with the advice and support of the Welsh language education development committee of the Welsh Joint Education Committee.

We are grateful for the work that the WLEDC has done over the years, but I must tell the hon. Member for Torfaen that we have moved on significantly since the establishment of that committee. The national curriculum is introducing the Welsh language to all pupils aged five to 16 in Wales. The council is responsible for monitoring and review of Welsh within the curriculum—work that the new authority will carry forward, with statutory assessment for the national curriculum, GCSE and advanced level work.

It makes sense now to bring that work together with curriculum and assessment work so that the one can inform the other. It also makes sense in making the best use of available resources in a way which improves accountability for those resources. That is the difficulty: here we have a sub-committee of the WJEC which is largely dependent on Government money, as delivered through the Welsh Office. Even when the WLEDC was established, some people asked for it to have a statutory basis, and that is precisely what we are providing now. Above all, it makes sense for teachers to be able to look to a single source for advice and guidance on Welsh language teaching and materials.

The proposals in the Bill will enable work on curriculum development and assessment in Wales to be brought closer together. They carry forward the work of the curriculum council into a new and extended body, which will have a key role in raising standards in our schools in Wales and in supporting Welsh language education.

It has again become clear to me during the debate that the Labour party stands firmly for the status quo in this, as in everything else. The Labour party sees grant-maintained schools as a threat to the uniformity that it prizes above all else. It is against parents having a say in the kind of school that they wish their children to attend. It is against more devolution of power from county hall to the boards of governors of individual schools.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ordered,

That Mr. Malcolm Bruce be discharged from the Science and Technology Committee and Mr. Andrew Miller be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Don Dixon, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Ecolabelling

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mackay.]*

10 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of ecolabelling, or green labels, as they are often called. I am pleased to see that the Minister of State is to reply to the debate, although I have to remind him that the last time we debated environmental issues he said that his wife did not trust him to do the shopping.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): And she still does not.

Mr. Bennett: I hope that, by the time the Minister has learnt a little more about ecolabelling, he will be trusted to do the shopping.

It has always been important to me that we should try to leave our planet in good heart for future generations. That sentiment is shared by a large number of people in this country. I accept that any demand on resources for the purchases we make diminishes the resources available to the planet. However, one can make choices in the resources that we use. Some are more environmentally friendly than others.

That view is shared by a substantial number of people in the United Kingdom. Figures suggest that about 30 per cent. of the population would, if given the choice, prefer to buy something that is environmentally friendly rather than a product that is less environmentally friendly. Sadly, the number of people who make environmentally friendly choices has waned, the reason being that people believe that they have been conned—that various manufacturers jumped on to the green bandwagon, claiming that their products were environmentally friendly, and people then found out, after discussion, debate and articles in the press, that some of those products were nothing like so environmentally friendly as had been claimed. They were not green in the environmental sense; it was just that manufacturers hoped that people would be "green" enough or naive enough to buy those products.

We need a Government-inspired scheme. I have raised the issue on several occasions in the House, including an Adjournment debate. I urged the Government to introduce their own scheme, but their answer was that they preferred to go along with the European Community scheme. I understand the argument: that, if we can encourage people throughout the European Community to buy environmentally friendly products, the environment will gain far more than it would if it happened only in the United Kingdom. I fear, however, that it is taking a long time to get a European Community scheme off the ground.

I am very pleased that a United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board has been set up, but I am disappointed that it is to look first into white goods—for example, washing machines. It is important that people should be provided with the opportunity to buy environmentally friendly washing machines, but I suspect that that will not provide people with as much choice as they would like. The difference of only a few pence between the price of one soap powder and another, one of which is environmentally friendly and the other not, makes it fairly easy for people to decide to choose the environmentally friendly one, because the price difference is not all that great. However, washing machines on the market at the moment which claim to be environmentally friendly are considerably more expensive than others. That makes it much harder for people to make the right choice.

I hope that the Minister will address one or two of the problems in choosing a washing machine. For instance, a machine that is environmentally friendly in one part of the EC, let alone in one part of the United Kingdom, may not necessarily be environmentally friendly in another. One of the criteria is the volume of water that is used. In parts of the EC where water is in short supply, the most important criterion will be that the programme uses little water, and perhaps uses it several times in the process. In the lake district or other parts of Britain where water is more freely available, low water consumption may not be as important.

Another important criterion may be the amount of heat that is used to dry washing. In parts of the EC where temperatures are high, it may be far better to use natural heat from the sun rather than a drying machine. I should be interested to hear from the Minister, therefore, what progress is being made in the one area where Britain is supposed to be giving the lead—washing machines.

I am disappointed that the scheme is not up and running. I know that much of the ground work has been done, but the first question that I put to the Minister is, how soon will it be possible for me to see in shops products displaying the United Kingdom ecolabel and to know that they are environmentally friendly?

How soon will there be a list of environmentally friendly products? I notice from the literature that the Ecolabelling Board has issued that Denmark is supposed to be dealing with kitchen towels, toilet tissues, photocopiers and writing paper, Germany with laundry and detergents, France with paints and varnishes and the United Kingdom with washing machines and dishwashing machines, light bulbs, soil improvers and hair sprays. Denmark will also deal with tee-shirts and bed linen, and France with batteries. I welcome that, but I hope that the Minister will tell us that, by next Easter, we shall be able to buy an environmentally friendly product that has the EC seal of approval.

I was told that the scheme is progressing slowly because it is an EC-wide scheme. Five countries, including the United Kingdom, have been preparing the list. What are Greece, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Holland, Ireland and Luxembourg, which perhaps does not have the necessary resources, supposed to be dealing with? If it is to be an EC-wide scheme, all member states should have been involved in preparing the list of products and specifications.

What is the Minister doing to try to persuade his ministerial colleagues to amend the trades description legislation? It would be nice to find a product displaying the ecolabel symbol and to know that it was environmentally friendly, but at present one can find all sorts of signs and symbols on products, some of which make very vague claims about being environmentally friendly, without any scientific backing.

I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us very firmly that, by the time these labels are in force, it will be an offence for people to make environmental claims unless they can be backed up by scientific evidence. I hope that that can be done quickly.

[Mr. Bennett]

I am a little concerned about the policy of some of the big supermarkets. In preparing for the debate, I asked my researcher to get me some information on Sainsbury, which was keen to produce a pack showing what an environmentally concerned company it is. My research of walking around my local store doing the family shopping shows that the policy appears to have more to do with the speed at which products can be sold and with profit margins than with whether products are environmentally friendly. I do not make the accusation against Sainsbury's alone; I am sure that it is true of most of the supermarkets. If the system is to be encouraged, we depend on the stores quickly to have a range of ecolabelled products to which they can give prominence.

I notice on the list that Italy will consider packaging, which is an important question. I have often held forth in the House about what I see as the over-packaging of certain products. If we have ecolabelling for packaging, how do we decide whether an ecolabel should be put on to the packet to say that the minimum packaging has been used? Will the label be put on only when the package has been used to wrap contents that are environmentally friendly? If not, it could be misleading.

If the principle in ecolabelling is that the product should be environmentally friendly from the cradle—the manufacture of the product—to the grave—its demise—we should consider one or two products that in themselves do not appear to be anything other than wholly environmentally friendly.

The Daily Telegraph today makes some comments about all-the-year-round strawberries and says that they are tasteless. That is not the important point about them. The important point, according to that article and others, is the use of methyl bromide to sterilise the soil or the product. That chemical is used increasingly in the import of vegetables and fruit. There are considerable environmental questions and questions about development when we bring in fruit and vegetables from parts of Africa, and sometimes from countries where there is a food shortage, to be sold in British shops.

I understand that it is nice to have a range of vegetables and fruit, and to be able to please one's family or friends by offering them an exotic choice. However, in environmental terms, we should consider the cost of transport, which may be considerable. In addition, if substances that damage the ozone layer are used in growing such fruit and vegetables, some people may stop and ask themselves whether they really want to buy out-of-season strawberries, for example, as an exotic fruit because environmental damage may have been done in the production process.

The durability of products is also a factor in ecolabelling. The United Kingdom has gone a long way in considering washing machines. To what extent is the potential life of the machine considered? If a machine is easy to repair, on the whole it will be a more environmentally friendly product. However, over the years I have come across several products that are perfectly all right as long as one can get a replacement for a relatively minor part. Sometimes the production of a particular model finished long ago, so tracking down the individual part is difficult. In awarding ecolabels for washing machines, to what extent can the Ecolabelling Board be confident that, in 15 years' time, the machine will work efficiently and that spare parts can be obtained?

Another consideration is buying furniture made from hard wood. I can understand why we should not buy furniture made from wood from tropical rain forests. However, to buy an oak table which may last 300 years may be rather more environmentally friendly that to buy a table made of chipboard which will have to be replaced in six months' time. That is a difficult issue, and I should like the Minister to make some comments.

My reason for raising the subject is to try to get a progress report from the Minister. I hope that he can tell me how quickly there will be products in the shops with ecolabels and how quickly there will be a comprehensive list of such products. I hope that he can tell us what efforts are being taken to persuade other EC members, who do not seem to be taking the matter seriously at the moment, to produce specifications so that we can have a bigger list of such products. I should also like the Minister to comment about the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 and about packaging. I hope that he will also be able to deal with one or two of my more general issues.

I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say. I very much hope that we will have an effective system up and running very quickly. The time for debate and argument is over. The system is long overdue.

10.15 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): I congratulate the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on securing this important Adjournment debate. He has taken a keen interest in the development of an ecolabelling scheme, and has raised the subject on many occasions.

I want to correct a comment that he made at the beginning of his speech in respect of the last occasion when the subject was raised during parliamentary questions. In reply to the hon. Gentleman, I did not say that I did not know what washing-up liquid my wife uses, because I do know. I was merely trying to explain that I would not presume to tell her which washing-up liquid to buy. No doubt hon. Members who are married would never dream of making such major decisions on household policy. I will stick to minor ones on Government policy.

I welcome this opportunity to report progress with the development of the scheme. There are essentially two ways for a Government to tackle environmental problems—through coercion or encouragement. Often it is appropriate, or indeed necessary, to set statutory standards, to limit or ban certain substances or processes or to require particular action to be taken. However, there are also many occasions when more can be achieved by voluntary co-operation. Ecolabelling offers us such an opportunity to go beyond confrontation and achieve significant environmental gains by encouragement—the organic carrot rather than the stick.

The 1980s saw increasing public awareness of environmental issues. "Pollution", "acid rain", "ozone depletion" and "global warming" became household terms. People began to ask themselves what they could do to help the environment, and we saw the growth of green consumerism. There were notable successes, two of the most obvious examples of which were the removal of CFCs from aerosols and the growth of the use of lead-free petrol. However, more needs to be done.

As so often happens, there has been some disillusionment, as the hon. Gentleman said. People have come to doubt whether some greener products work as well as conventional products, and there have also been question marks over the independence and veracity of some manufacturers' green claims. Nevertheless, market research shows that consumers are still concerned about the environment. A recent survey showed that about 42 per cent. of people have changed their habits or bought certain goods out of concern for the environment.

That is where ecolabelling has a role to play. It is an authoritative scheme, which is independent of manufacturers. It can identify products that are less harmful to the environment than others and so encourage the design, manufacture, marketing, and, of prime importance, the use of such products.

The EC regulation setting up the ecolabelling scheme prohibits any false or misleading advertising of the ecolabel or the use of any label or logo that leads to confusion with the ecolabel, and the hon. Gentleman produced an example of the EC logo for the ecolabel.

More generally, the Government have made it clear that we will legislate, when the opportunity arises, to amend the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 to make clear that it covers green claims and to deal with claims that products "contain no X, Y or Z". The hon. Gentleman pressed me on that point. In the meantime, it is encouraging that the advertising industry, in conjunction with the Department of Trade and Industry, has published clear and positive guidelines on how far advertisers can go in making environmental claims.

We gave considerable thought to how best to set up an ecolabelling scheme. We could simply have set up a United Kingdom scheme. We thought about it deeply. However, in a little more than seven weeks, we shall enter the single European market. Could a plethora of national schemes offer as much to the consumer, industry and the environment as a single Communitywide scheme?

We were guided in particular by the views of the Environment Select Committee of this House. It examined the options in the last Parliament, and strongly urged the Government to co-operate with the development of a European Community ecolabelling scheme. The United Kingdom decided, therefore, to take an active role in the development of a European Community ecolabelling scheme and pressed hard for early agreement of the regulation to set up the scheme. I am pleased to say that that agreement was reached last December, and regulation 880/92 was formally adopted in March this year.

The EC ecolabelling scheme covers all consumer products except food, drink and pharmaceuticals. Food is not included, but there is a separate EC directive on organic food. So those who are worried about the use of methyl bromide should be reassured by that directive. In Copenhagen in a few weeks, the United Kingdom will press for restraints in the use of methyl bromide as a fumigant or pesticide.

The ecolabelling scheme is based on the principles of life cycle analysis. The scheme will work on a simple pass or fail basis—a manufacturer must show that the product meets all the criteria, or an ecolabel simply will not be awarded.

The ecological criteria for a product group are agreed at European level following a detailed study of the environmental impacts of the product group from cradle to grave—that is, from the sourcing of raw materials, through the manufacture, distribution chain, packaging and use, right through to the ultimate disposal of the product. The aim is to develop criteria which will minimise the key environmental impacts, without increasing other impacts or compromising either safety or performance—the product still has to do what it is supposed to do.

The criteria will be pitched at a high environmental level. However, ecolabelling is a relative scheme—it is not intended to say that products are environmentally friendly but rather to provide information and guide consumers to less harmful products. For the scheme to be successful, therefore, it is important that there are products which can meet the criteria. The process of setting the criteria must therefore take into account what is currently achievable. There is no set target but, as a rule of thumb, perhaps 10 per cent. of currently available products should be able to meet the criteria and receive an ecolabel. The criteria will be reviewed after about three years, and we shall tighten them up if necessary.

As I said, the life cycle assessment of the product group will take account of the environmental impacts of packaging—which the hon. Gentleman raised. We believe that this is the best way to deal with packaging in the ecolabelling scheme, because packaging inevitably forms an integral part of the product and is seen that way by the consumer. As a result, where packaging makes a significant contribution to the overall environmental impacts of the product, as is the case for hairsprays, this will be addressed by the final criteria.

To ensure that the environmental impacts of packaging are treated consistently between different product groups and to identify, if possible, best-practice rules, such as minimising packaging—that is the first rule—which could apply across the board, the Italians are conducting a study of the environmental impacts of packaging materials. We expect a final report from them shortly. They are also considering whether it might be possible to ecolabel the packaging of food, drink and pharmaceuticals where the contents are excluded from the scheme. It is not yet clear whether this would be a practical option.

Separately, the European Commission has also produced a draft directive on packaging and packaging waste that will establish specific markings for packaging alone and address some of the wider issues raised by packaging.

Ecolabelling is a European scheme, so some decisions, such as the adoption of product criteria, must be taken in Brussels to ensure consistency across all 12 countries of the Community. However, most of the work in administering, developing and promoting the scheme will be carried out at national level, and the EC regulation requires each member state to set up a competent body to run the scheme. The United Kingdom has set up the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board.

The United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board, chaired by Dr. Elizabeth Nelson, began work in July in an advisory capacity, but, as I announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on 20 October, we established it formally by regulations under the European Communities Act 1972 on 1 November.

[Mr. David Maclean]

As the House will know, we had originally hoped to launch the scheme before the end of this year. I assure the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish that I am as disappointed as he is at the lack of speed that others have shown in getting the scheme up and running. There have been some difficulties at a European level in setting up the necessary administrative arrangements. In particular, there have been lengthy delays with the establishment of the consultation forum of interest groups—industry, retailers, consumer and environmental groups—which must consider all criteria before they can be adopted. The development of product criteria has also proved more difficult and taken longer than originally planned.

The United Kingdom has played, and will continue to play, a leading role in the development of the scheme. Through our presidency of the Community, we have been pressing the Commission to implement the scheme speedily and asking that other member states show the same commitment to it as we are showing because we think that it is important. Certainly I am disappointed that some other states have continued to develop their own national schemes, so splitting their effort, sadly, to the detriment of the Community scheme.

The United Kingdom, jointly with the Commission, recently hosted a meeting, on 23 October, of representatives of the competent bodies of other member states to discuss issues of common interest—such as the assessment of applications, monitoring compliance and the promotion of the scheme. I understand that it was a very successful and positive event, which should do a lot to help push the scheme forward.

Many of the environmental issues involved in the development of product criteria are extremely complex and there is not always agreement on how best to tackle them. To help resolve some of the difficulties that have arisen, the Commission is now considering the appointment of a consultant to co-ordinate the use of the developing science of life cycle analysis in the product group studies.

Despite those delays, work is well under way—some half a dozen member states are leading or are about to begin studies of about 20 different product categories, some of which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. The very thoroughness of the studies should mean that the final criteria have correspondingly greater credibility. They may take a bit longer, but hopefully they will be more accurate and credible when they are completed.

The United Kingdom has already submitted formal proposals for washing machines and dishwashers and, now that the necessary European infrastructure is finally getting into place, it should be possible for them to be adopted in January. Two other United Kingdom studies, on hairsprays and light bulbs, are also coming along well, although I must confess that a study of soil improvers is proving trickier due to a lack of data. I understand that the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board is considering what further products it might study.

Other member states' studies are also progressing—some well, others somewhat more slowly. But overall, we should have agreement on a range of product groups in the first part of next year. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I want to participate in the launch of a large range of those products as soon as we possibly can.

Although large white goods such as washing machines and dishwashers should be among the first products to be covered by the scheme, the scheme will not be ready until a range of products is ready. Others that should be ready include paper products—writing and photocopying paper as well as kitchen rolls and toilet tissue—hairsprays and laundry detergents, everyday low-price products, about which the hon. Gentleman was worried.

I hope that manufacturers and retailers will not try to exploit the ecolabel by adding a mark-up to ecolabelling products. There may be cases where new, cleaner technology enables a manufacturer to produce an environmentally more benign product. However, even in such cases, the product shohld be competitively priced to succeed in the market against traditional products.

Although we should have preferred to meet our original plans to launch the scheme before the end of this year, what matters now is to ensure that the scheme is launched successfully early next year. To that end, the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board is planning its publicity strategy to make the best possible use of its resources and get its message across effectively—to industry, retailers and ordinary consumers. We want to ensure that the scheme is a success.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 10 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (JUBILEE) BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Read the Third time, and passed.

LLANELLI BOROUGH COUNCIL (RIVER LLIEDI) BILL
[Lords]

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Occupational Health

1. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase the time that medical students spend on occupational health issues during their training.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Medical students already learn about occupational health medicine as part of the standard undergraduate medical curriculum. The General Medical Council has responsibility for the content of the curriculum and has recently issued a discussion document proposing changes. Those include proposals to increase our future doctors' knowledge of occupational health matters. The Government fully support the General Medical Council's proposals.

Mr. Marshall: I thank the Minister. On a personal note, it makes a change to have discussions other than during Northern Ireland business.

The Minister must realise that occupational health is not taught in seven out of 27 medical schools, and in many others it is treated casually. If the hon. Gentleman has discussions with the GMC, will he impress upon it the need to make occupational health a core subject rather than allow it to remain a peripheral subject?

Dr. Mawhinney: I reciprocate the hon. Gentleman's first remark.

I take the hon. Gentleman's point. It was partially his concern that caused the GMC to issue its proposals. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to occupational health being an important part of the medical undergraduate curriculum.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I welcome my hon. Friend's admission that occupational health has not always been taught as well as it might have been. Will he assure the House that when he consults the GMC, he will pay particular attention to comparative studies with the services offered by our Community partners which, in many respects, have a much more sophisticated system?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that suggestion.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister, in his discussions with the GMC, also consider the effect of the present restrictions on hospital intakes on the quality of medical training? I quote a letter from the consultants at Llandough hospital, which serves my constituency——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but we do not have quotations at Question Time. He may paraphrase briefly.

Mr. Morgan: A letter to me from consultants at Llandough hospital, which provides medical training for south-east Wales, refers to the fact that medical training is suffering because of the current restrictions on intakes. The dean of the medical school is concerned that, with no paediatric intake, no gyneacological elective operations and no waiting list in elective surgery, junior doctors do not have enough work to do and medical students are not being properly trained. What will the Minister do about that?

Dr. Mawhinney: I have no doubt that, if the hon. Gentleman wants us to take the matter seriously, he will be in correspondence with us and we shall look at the letter that he has received from his constituents. However, that matter goes much wider than this question.

Practice Nurses

2. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the number of practice nurses employed by family doctors has changed *(a)* since 1978 and *(b)* since 1990.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): In 1978, 888 whole-time equivalent practice nurses were employed by general practitioners. The number at 1 October 1990 was 7,698—a massive increase of more than 700 per cent. The latest figures available are to 1 October 1991, when 8,776 nurses were employed by GPs.

Mr. Day: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer, which I am sure that the whole House will welcome. Does he agree that that answer is evidence of a vast—indeed, record—increase in NHS resources? Will he confirm that, since 1979, nurses' pay has increased by 50 per cent. in real terms? Does he agree that that is a sign not only of increased resources but of efficient use of those resources, which is vital in the present climate of pressure on public expenditure?

Mr. Sackville: What my hon. Friend has said about nurses' pay is correct. Moreover, the total budget for family doctor services has more than doubled in recent years. The effect is clear: additional services are being offered, such as immunisation, and practice nurses are very popular with patients.

Community Care

3. **Mr. Legg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the response from local authorities to the announcement about community care finance she made on 2 October.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Our decision to introduce a ring-fenced special transitional grant of £539 million in 1993-94, and to announce that and the grant for the following two years in advance of the general local government settlement, has been widely welcomed.

Mr. Legg: The sums that my right hon. Friend has won for the implementation of community care by local authorities are very welcome. Does she agree that, at a time of difficult choices in public expenditure, it is most welcome that priority is being given to community care? This is a long-awaited feature of Government reform.

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend. Certainly, very difficult decisions must be made about public expenditure, but we believe that it is right to fund care in the community fairly. That is a long-standing policy. We introduced the legislation; we have introduced the regulation; now, we are fairly funding it. It is now up to local authorities and health authorities to make care in the community the success that all intend it to be.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: Does the Secretary of State believe that those funds will be safe after the Chancellor's statement on Thursday? It is possible that he will remove the money that has been made available through her good offices, by way of the back door. In reality, no extra funds may be available for community care.

Mrs. Bottomley: I have made it clear that we have maintained our commitment to fund care in the community fairly, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that, when all the consequences of the autumn statement are understood. It is now up to local authorities to accept a responsibility that they have long sought and to ensure that when they provide services the users of those services, rather than their own narrow or partisan interests, are at the forefront of their minds.

Dame Jill Knight: Does my right hon. Friend anticipate that, under the new arrangements, the excellent work carried out by drug rehabilitation centres such as Turning Point, in my constituency, will be allowed to continue? Is she aware of the grave concern that is felt about that matter?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am happy to reassure my hon. Friend on that point. Drug and alcohol rehabilitation units are carrying out excellent work. A substantial sum is involved and detailed discussions have taken place with the providers of drug and alcohol care to ensure that all the proper regulations are in place.

I can reassure my hon. Friend that there is a direction on choice. There is also a requirement that a substantial amount of the money must be used in the independent sector—the voluntary and private sectors—and that agreements with health authorities must be in place. I believe that, given all those safeguards, no anxiety need be felt on behalf of drug and alcohol misusers, but the Under-Secretary of State—my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo)—is engaging in further discussions to ensure that all aspects are fully considered.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Apart from the £300 million shortfall identified by local authorities, do not the funding formula and the requirement for 75 per cent. of the money to be spent on independent provision demonstrate that the Government have completely abandoned one of the fundamental principles of the community care reforms—the avoidance of unnecessary institutional care? Is it not apparent that they are being prevented from developing a proper community care policy by irrelevant free market dogma? Is not their treatment of the private care sector in marked contrast to their complete ditching of previous commitments to protect drug and alcohol projects?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the position. On the day that I announced the ring-fenced money, my understanding was that, only the day before, the hon. Gentleman had said that no news on money would be available until at least the end of October or the beginning of November. We have fairly discharged that responsibility.

As ever, the hon. Gentleman, who is sponsored by the National Union of Public Employees, thinks always of the public sector providers and not of the voluntary and private sectors. We have made it clear that money must be spent by the independent providers if we are to safeguard choice. Choice always means very little to the Labour party. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman cares to listen, I am able to inform him, and others, that after consultations with local authorities we are amending the requirement relating to the percentage to be provided by the independent sector. That will now be 85 per cent. of the transfer element, but the additional 35 per cent. over and above social security money will be distributed normally and can be used in the way that local authorities choose.

Mr. Sims: Does my right hon. Friend recall the pleas made by the Social Services Select Committee, many organisations and hon. Members on both sides of the House that the transfer of funds from social security to community care should be both adequate and ring-fenced? I thank my right hon. Friend for accepting both those pleas. Is not a high proportion of the income support provided by social security already spent in the private sector? Does it not make sense, therefore, that the vast majority of the funds to be transferred should similarly be used in the private sector?

Mrs. Bottomley: As ever, my hon. Friend is extremely well informed and authoritative on these issues. The Select Committee took the view over many years that the money should be ring-fenced. We gave an undertaking not only that it would be available and be seen to be fair but that it would be transparent. Local authorities are now in a good position to take forward that policy.

My hon. Friend is also absolutely right about income support. At present, it is spent entirely in the voluntary and private sectors. That is why today's announcement is important: that 85 per cent. of the money that comes over from social security will be spent in the independent sector. However, the 35 per cent., over and above, will be spent in the way that the local authority wishes.

I think that the Labour party has singularly failed to understand the significance of what I am saying. The announcement means that a lesser, not a greater, percentage of the total amount for community care is to be spent in the independent sector. It is only the transferred money, not the 35 per cent. additional money, that is involved. I suggest that the Labour party should try to understand the policy a little better.

Mr. Blunkett: The Secretary of State has just made a statement. She has not answered the question. Her statement has changed completely from the previous position. The amount of money announced by the Secretary of State on 2 October has changed from a 75 per cent. allocation to the private sector to 85 per cent.—a very significant change in the amount that will now be available to other sectors of care. Will she confirm that, in the intervening six weeks, something has happened to change her mind? Can she tell the House what has changed her mind and why the sum has changed?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am only too happy to tell the hon. Gentleman. We have been consulting local authorities and have listened to their comments. Unlike the Labour party, which is in the pockets of NUPE, we listen to and work with local authorities. What I am trying to explain, in the most elementary way that I am able to do, is that the upshot of this announcement is that the amount to be spent in the independent sector overall will fall from 75 per cent. to 64 per cent. It is 85 per cent. of the transferred money from social security, not the 35 per cent. of extra money, that is coming through. We listen. We work in partnership. We treat local authorities fairly. Community care will be a great success.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I recognise the substantial sums of money that have been transferred to local government to deal with community care, but does my right hon. Friend accept the increasing reports from the professions that responsibility for mentally ill people should lie primarily with the medical profession and not with social services? Will she assure me and the House that there will be sufficient resources in local government to allow it, as the authority primarily responsible for social care and community care, to provide medical care to deal with mentally ill people?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend and I do not always see eye to eye on every issue, but we very much see eye to eye on the priority to be given to mentally ill people. That is why it is so important. It is one of the key areas in "The Health of the Nation". It is a targeted area not only in community care but in "The Health of the Nation". We have introduced the mental illness specific grant, which last year rose to £30 million. Above all, we have now established a task force in the NHS, led by David King, to ensure that we have a genuinely seamless service. It is no good people leaving long-term institutions without a long-term programme of care. Like my hon. Friend, I am absolutely determined to see that the standard of care for mentally ill people improves and is consistent throughout the service.

Accidents and Illness at Work

4. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will encourage health promotion departments in hospitals to distribute information on the prevention of accidents and illness at work.

Mr. Sackville: The NHS is already widely engaged in health promotion at work. Following up the commitments in the "The Health of the Nation" White Paper to develop that, we have launched the health at work initiative. A specialist workplace task force has been established to develop an action programme covering workplaces generally. That task force includes members of our wider health working group and representatives of employers, occupational health professionals, the Trades Union Congress, the Confederation of British Industry, the Health and Safety Executive, the Health Education Authority and the Departments of Employment and of Health.

Mr. Wardell: How much money has the Department made available to district health authorities and hospital trusts this year to enable them to promote campaigns to prevent accidents this year—the year of Europe—when Europe is specifically considering safety, hygiene and the protection of workers at work?

Mr. Sackville: We expect managers to spend adequately on protecting their employees. I recently launched a handbook called "Handling of Patients", produced by the National Back Pain Association and the Royal College of Nursing designed to offer good practice and to prevent nurses from the accidents to which they are so vulnerable.

Mr. Jessel: In view of the large number of nurses suffering from back pain from lifting patients, to which my hon. Friend referred, can he ask health departments to ensure the widest possible distribution of their booklet on handling patients, published by the National Back Pain Association, whose recent conference my hon. Friend was kind enough to attend?

Mr. Sackville: I attended the annual general meeting of the National Back Pain Association at my hon. Friend's request. I intend shortly to lunch with the president thereof. The matter of back pain was mentioned in our White Paper and we attach much priority to it.

Mr. McCartney: The Under-Secretary was rather complacent in his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell)——

Mr. Oppenheim: Stand up.

Mr. McCartney: I am standing up. It is not true that Conservative Members have clumped together to buy a high chair for my debut at the Dispatch Box.

The figures on occupational health are staggering: 20 per cent. of hospital accident admissions are work related, 2 million people suffer from work-related illnesses and a huge number of days are lost each year due to illness at work—a staggering 29 million. Despite that, the Government have set no targets or objectives in the White Paper. Will the Minister state clearly when he intends to introduce targets and objectives to reduce workplace injuries and matters related to occupational health?

Mr. Sackville: We attach a high priority to that. It is for that reason that the Health Education Authority has set up a workplace project covering 4 million private and public sector employees in England, including many of the health authorities' employees.

GP Fund Holders

5. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of general practitioner fund-holding practices are projecting overspends in the current financial year; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: That information is not held centrally, but I have no reason to believe that fund holders will be any less efficient in managing resources than they were last year.

Mr. Davies: Are not regional health authorities having to bale out those GP fund holders who are overspending? Is that to save the Government embarrassment over the failure of the scheme? Should not the resources be used for better and fairer purposes in the health service than baling out fund holders?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that, last year, overall savings were about 4 per cent.—that is to say, GPs came in at about 4 per cent. below budget. As a result of imprecision in the setting of some budgets—which I recognise and on which work is being done—a few GP fund holders needed to ask regional health authorities for special help and that was given, as the rules allow. Nevertheless, the fund holders' record in treating their patients is an enviable one for the rest of the profession to follow.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Are not fund-holding practices now getting value for money and, above all, obtaining treatment for patients faster, co-ordinated for the convenience of those patients?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Next April, the percentage of the population being served by GP fund holders will increase from 14 per cent. to, probably, just over 25 per cent. and, anecdotally, it is suggested that the fourth wave in the following year will be very large indeed. That reflects the attraction of the scheme not only to GPs but to their patients.

Mr. Blunkett: Would the Minister care to comment on the article in *The Times* this morning which suggests that 100 GP fund holders are to form a consortium with a budget of more than £20 million, which will aim to match the purchasing power of district health authorities? Does the Minister agree that not only does that not square with the district health authorities' accountability for health care planning and strategy but that it runs contrary to the ethos of GP fund-holding practices as set out by the Government, which is that they should buy individual contracts for individual patients? Does not this whole sorry story show that the Government's reforms are in a terrible mess? Is it not time that they agreed to start again and put patients first?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am happy to respond to the wisdom of the National Union of Public Employees. However many GPs enter GP fund-holding schemes in a given area, their share of the budget is only 20 per cent., so their purchasing power will not in any sense be comparable that of the district health authority. The Kingston GPs mentioned in today's edition of *The Times* are thinking of joining forces because, in their judgment, that is the best way to deliver the best services to their patients. If I have to choose between those GPs' judgment of what is best for their patients and the hon. Gentleman's judgment, I shall side with the GPs every time.

Mr. Paice: Is it not indicative and encouraging that many GPs, including some in my constituency, who were opposed to the principle of fund holding at the time of the NHS reforms are now applying to become fund holders because they have seen the benefits to patients of existing GP fund holders?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The fact that 600 GPs are to join the scheme next April gives substance to his remarks. GP fund holders, through their initiatives, have been in the lead in developing better services, not just for their own patients but for all patients in their community. That should be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Dental Services

6. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she intends to take in order to ensure that NHS dental services are universally available.

8. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received expressing concern about the provision of dental services within the national health service; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since 1 April this year, the Department has received some 6,000 letters from hon. Members, dentists and others about the provision of NHS dental services. In the same period, there have also been some 120 parliamentary questions on dentistry. NHS dental services remain available throughout England. Family health authorities will assist any patients experiencing difficulty in obtaining NHS dental treatment.

Mr. Lewis: Does the Minister accept that that answer will fall very flat in Irlam in my constituency, a town of 17,000 souls who do not have a national health service dental facility? With reference to choice which the Secretary of State mentioned earlier, does the Minister also accept that a pensioner in Irlam in my constituency has received a letter from her dentist after being under his wing for a long time telling her that she could no longer be treated on the NHS? She must choose whether to pay or to travel eight miles down the road to another dentist.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am very happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that the application of the FHSA to appoint a salaried dentist which was received last week was approved today. There will be an NHS salaried dentist in Irlam.

Mr. Hicks: Is my hon. Friend aware that over half the dentists in Cornwall are refusing to take new NHS patients? Does he agree that that is both confusing and annoying? When can we expect tangible evidence to correct that unsatisfactory situation and not have to depend on temporary expedients such as the employment of mobile dentistry facilities?

Dr. Mawhinney: I certainly share my hon. Friend's concern about the fact that a number of dentists in Cornwall and in his constituency have decided to withdraw from offering NHS dental services. My hon. Friend will be aware that the local FHSA has appointed two salaried dentists who are mobile precisely because the nature of my hon. Friend's constituency and others is such that they need to be able to move around. Given his concern, I will be very happy to draw his remarks to the attention of the FHSA in case it decides to make further application.

Miss Lestor: What action is the Minister taking to safeguard the school dental inspection service? Is he aware that that service is being threatened or severely curtailed in some areas which means that children will no longer have annual dental inspections? If that happens, it will have a serious effect on children's teeth in future.

Dr. Mawhinney: I hear what the hon. Lady says. However, she will also be aware that under the new dental contract there was a significant focusing of dental attention on young people and on children. I hope that she will welcome that development which should be set alongside the school dental programme.

Dame Peggy Fenner: When might we expect the results of the review on remuneration of dentists in the NHS?

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Kenneth Bloomfield has been asked to report by Christmas and I have no reason to believe that he will not be able to fulfil that request.

Tomlinson Report

7. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the time scale for the implementation of the Tomlinson report.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We will carefully consider the proposals put forward by Sir Bernard Tomlinson and his team. No decisions will be taken without full consultation with those institutions that are affected. We shall set out our detailed proposals for change in the new year.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Health Secretary confirm the report in "London Health Emergency" that in the past six months the four regional health authorities covering London have drawn up plans to axe 9,000 beds over the next five years? Is not the presupposition in Tomlinson's and the Government's thinking that London has too many hospital beds an absolute myth? Has there not been a cut of 8,000 beds in the past decade and have not hospital waiting lists in the capital increased 30 per cent. in the same period?

Mrs. Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman studies the Tomlinson report, he will see that London already has many more beds than other parts of the country. It has 3·9 per thousand compared with 2·5 per thousand elsewhere. The waiting lists in London have come down by 10 per cent. over the past year and that is an achievement.

The real point is that Tomlinson has identified a problem of long standing which has been recognised by 20 reports in the past 100 years. With 45 hospitals, 12 teaching hospitals and eight postgraduate hospitals, London must have an enormous overhead infrastructure, but does not provide the proper primary care services that are needed. It is time for us to take those decisions, which we shall do on the basis of improving health care for Londoners while safeguarding research and teaching.

Mrs. Roe: Has my right hon. Friend seen the report in last Friday's *Evening Standard* of a study conducted by two health experts which concluded that general practitioners in London tend to be elderly with large practice lists and often without adequate back-up staff? Does not that report clearly make the point that action and change are needed to improve primary health care services in the capital?

Mrs. Bottomley: I saw the report that my hon. Friend mentions. It comes from a report in the *British Medical Journal*. It recognises the point stressed by Tomlinson that London has poorer primary health care services than other parts of the country. It is absolutely vital that we invest in primary health care in London as we take forward proposals.

I give an absolute assurance that no decisions will be made until careful consideration has been given and until it is possible to guarantee the improvements in primary care that were so clearly identified by Professor Tomlinson.

Mrs. Roche: While the Secretary of State is considering implementation of the Tomlinson report, will she assure the House that members of staff who stand to lose their jobs if hospitals are closed will be redeployed, given that we have a waiting list of approximately 139,000 in London?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank the hon. Lady for giving me an opportunity to say that some of the suggestions about the number of staff who would lose or change their jobs are ridiculous, irresponsible and scaremongering.

It is untrue and devoid of explanation that figures of the kind quoted by the Confederation of Health Service Employees could seriously be considered. The figures that have been quoted are enough to alarm and worry people in the health service in London at a time when most people want to explain and reassure.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett)—I give him credit—said that the status quo could not continue in London. Editorials in *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Independent* and *New Statesman and Society* have said that change must come. Of course, the needs and interests of staff will be very much in our minds so that we can find ways to redeploy them and make the changes as easy as possible.

Mr. Carrington: My right hon. Friend will know that there is great anxiety in my constituency about the proposed changes to Charing Cross hospital. Will she assure me that any changes made to health care in west London will improve the service to my constituents, rather than diminish it?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can give my hon. Friend that absolute assurance. As has been said in many independent reports, the problems in London are of long standing and complex. Increasingly, patients now wish to be treated in their home communities. As I have made clear, a great number of specialist services need to be rationalised. We need improvements in primary care and community services. There will be no question of decisions being taken before we can be sure that they will lead to improvements in care, better use of resources and a strengthened national health service.

Ms. Primarolo: Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that she will conduct full public consultation with Londoners on the future of their hospitals? Will she guarantee that she has secured the additional funding that is necessary for primary and community care before she gives any further consideration to implementing the Tomlinson report?

Mrs. Bottomley: The House will know that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health is having discussions with the different institutions in London on the basis of the recommendations in the Tomlinson report. As I made clear at the time of the statement, it is advice to the Government and not Government policy. We shall discuss with all interested groups how we can take forward those changes to improve health care for Londoners. I give the hon. Lady and others a clear commitment that those changes are about improving health care for Londoners. That is the message from all the professional journals—from the *Nursing Times and Nursing Mirror, General Practitioner, House,* and the *Health Service Journal.* As far as money is concerned, in answer to an earlier statement, I seem to remember that the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) was busy telling people at a social services conference that money for community care would not be ring-fenced—the day before I was able to announce community care resources. People should take prophecies of doom from the Labour party with a pinch of salt.

Mr. Rowe: Will my right hon. Friend accept, from a Kent Member of Parliament who represents an area which historically has long been underfunded and whose patients have had to travel well over 50 miles for hospital treatment in London, that his constituents are exceedingly grateful that she is showing her determination to reorganise the London hospital service, so that services that have been overfunded there can follow patients out of London to areas like ours?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that my hon. Friend speaks for many hon. Members. In the past year, the rest of the country supported London health care to the tune of £50 million. Sensibly, 20 per cent. of the money in the national health service cannot continue to cover 15 per cent. of the people. I am well aware that there is great pressure outside London for us to move swiftly. We shall move only as fast as we are able to safeguard health care for Londoners, but we shall do so on the basis of the long-term interests of the national health service.

West Midlands Ambulance Service

9. **Ms. Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will make a statement on the funding of the West Midlands ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: I have no plans to do so.

Ms. Morris: Is the Minister aware that emergency calls to the West Midlands ambulance service increased by an unprecedented 8 per cent. last year, that 999 calls are being answered by the St. John ambulance service and that telephone callers are frequently put on hold? Given that crisis, how can the Minister justify the fact that some ambulance stations have to close down completely during some shifts because of cuts in staff levels?

Mr. Sackville: The performance of the vast majority of ambulance services has changed out of all recognition in recent years—the West Midlands is no exception—and they deserve the hon. Lady's support, not to be denigrated.

Residential Care

10. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on abolishing the division between residential care and nursing homes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): I have no plans to abolish the distinction. Generally speaking, residential care homes and nursing homes cater for people with different needs. That is reflected in the services and facilities that they offer.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Minister aware that neither I nor my hon. Friends are in the pocket of the organisation that Ministers have mentioned three times this afternoon, or in the pocket of the tobacco industry, as are many of his right hon. and hon. Friends? Is he aware of the broad spectrum of agreement among organisations that the continuing division between residential and nursing care is harmful? Many frail, elderly and confused people have to suffer the trauma of changing from one to the other at the most difficult time of life. When can he institute a reform to give us a reliable continuum of care?

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman seems to be unaware of the fact that there is nothing to stop a residential home from catering for its clients as they become more dependent and frail, by seeking dual registration for part or all of its facilities so that it can operate as both a residential and a nursing home, and in that way can provide exactly the continuum of care that the hon. Gentleman seeks.

Miss Emma Nicholson: As there are many of these homes locally in my constituency—in Tavistock and Bideford—does the Minister have any plans for involving families more in the care of relatives who are put into community care homes many miles away and never visited again, which is enormously unkind?

Mr. Yeo: As my hon. Friend probably knows, one of the key themes in the whole of our community care policy is to reflect the wishes of both the users and their carers in the community and families. A statutory duty now lies on the local authority to meet those wishes. On the specific point of the continued involvement of families in the future of people who go to residential or nursing homes, we have issued a binding direction to local authorities to ensure that the individual preference of persons and their families in terms of which home they go to is met. I hope that in this way it will be possible for the needs of families who may find it difficult to travel to certain parts of the country to be met in the choice of homes to which people are sent. I will, in any case, pursue the point with home owners at some of the regular meetings that we have with them.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Cox: Does the Prime Minister recall the many promises that he made at the last election that there would be no increase in taxation? Against the background of those promises, will he confirm in the House that there will be no increase in national insurance contributions, or are the people of this country to see in the very near future yet another broken election promise from an already totally disgraced and devalued Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman ought not to get himself into such a tiz. He will know the answer to his question soon enough. On the subject of income tax, I seem to recall the Labour party contesting the election on the basis of increasing tax and the shadow Chancellor saying only yesterday that the Opposition are not proposing raising income tax at this time. Some U-turn.

Sir Peter Hordern: Can my right hon. Friend give the House an assurance that, notwithstanding the efforts of Mr. Mitterrand and Mr. Delors, the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations will be brought to a successful conclusion?

The Prime Minister: We are doing all we can to make sure that the Community re-engages in negotiations without delay so that we can reach a satisfactory GATT settlement in a matter of weeks at the outside. I hope that we shall reach agreement between the Community and the United States; then the remaining aspects of the GATT round ought speedily to be determined. It is the first priority for international economies at the moment to make sure that there is a GATT agreement and no single country should be permitted to stand in the way of it.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister recall assuring the House in January 1991 that

"for some considerable time we have not supplied arms to Iraq"?—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1991; Vol. 184, c. 1102.]

How does the Prime Minister reconcile that assurance with the revelation in the Government documents produced at the Matrix Churchill trial that as late as 27 July 1990, only six days before the invasion of Kuwait, machine tools known to be intended to make fuses for missiles and artillery shells were supplied to Iraq?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that from 1985 until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait the Government operated under guidelines first set out by the then Foreign Secretary, my noble Friend Lord Howe. Since the invasion, we have operated, and we continue to operate, the full embargo to which I referred in answering the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel).

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister understand that there are two aspects of this matter that are causing grave concern to the British public? The first is that equipment was supplied to Iraq which could have been valuable to it in hostilities against British service personnel; and the second is that the truth about a secret change of policy appears to have been concealed from the House and also from the British public. Will he now set up an inquiry under the Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1992 to make the fullest investigation into this deeply disturbing matter?

The Prime Minister: Let me say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that there have been some extraordinary stories about this matter and I agree with him that they must be clarified beyond any measure of doubt.

I have asked my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to make a statement on the matter later this afternoon. My right hon. and learned Friend will tell the House that the Government will be setting up an independent judicial inquiry, which will have full access to all the papers and will be able to take evidence from all the Departments and all the agencies concerned.

EC Financing

Q2. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the issue of contributions by member states.

The Prime Minister: The European Community's future financing arrangements are currently under review. This will be one of the issues on the agenda of the European Council meeting at Edinburgh in December.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As Britain's net contribution this year will be £2·6 billion, which is about £4 per week per family of four in Britain, and as the Court of Auditors has told us that much of that is spent on waste, fraud and food destruction, will the Prime Minister advise President Mitterrand and the others that it would be wholly unacceptable to expect the people of Britain to pay a great deal more for the potential huge extra costs of Maastricht when life is so hard for everyone in Europe at the present time?

The Prime Minister: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend on the continuing need for restraint in Community spending overall. I have already made it clear that President Delors' future proposals are excessive and that we will not be able to support them. The Community, as with each individual member state, should not spend more than it can afford. It will remain our priority in the negotiations up to and including those at Edinburgh to secure firm budgetary discipline and value for money for all Community spending.

Engagements

Q3. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Prime Minister recall black Wednesday when the sharks and speculators made a real killing? Now we are approaching black Thursday with the autumn statement, when it will be the poor and needy in Wales and elsewhere who are likely to be affected as a result of cuts in public expenditure. When will the Government realise that those cuts in public expenditure will only hinder Britain's long-term recovery, or is this yet another example of a "Major" vision of a nation at ease with itself?

The Prime Minister: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman waits until Thursday.

Sir George Gardiner: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that the House hardly needs lectures from

President Mitterrand on how to organise its own business? Does he accept that when he gives his word to this House that we will not consider the Third Reading of the Maastricht Bill until after the Danish referendum, we know full well that he will keep it?

The Prime Minister: I have expressed my views on President Mitterrand's reported remarks in a private letter to the President, but I am quite prepared to state publicly that the passage of the Maastricht Bill is a matter for the British Parliament and the British Government. The crucial immediate issue before Europe is achieving a GATT settlement and avoiding a trade war. I note that in the same interview President Mitterrand described a global settlement as

"not only useful but necessary."

I agree with that; a delay on GATT really would be unacceptable. I set out the answer on Third Reading in reply to the House earlier last week.

Mr. Ashdown *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is very time consuming.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Prime Minister aware that there are at this moment more than 6,500 refugees who could be free but remain trapped in Serbian prison camps, living in the most indescribable conditions and without any kind of adequate shelter, because no third country can be found for them to go to? Does he not realise that temperatures will drop to minus 17 deg C in that area during this month? Does he not realise that the consequence of his Government's disgraceful decision to limit refugee entry from that area, together with his failure to put together an adequate programme of co-ordinated action by the European countries, will soon mean that some of those people risk paying for his failures with their lives?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman really should get his facts straight on what the European Community has done and on what the British Government have done. The United Kingdom has received more than 30,000 visitors this year from the former Yugoslavia. More than 3,000 have applied for refugee status and no one will be forced to return to the conflict zone. We fully support the view expressed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that the best solution is for the displaced to remain close to their homes, making eventual repatriation a much more possible proposition. The visa regime, which has clearly activated the right hon. Gentleman, needs to be seen in the context of overall asylum applications, and that point has been made clear by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will my right hon. Friend congratulate the British Airports Authority on its outstanding results, just announced? Will he take the opportunity to remind it that it has an obligation to ensure that regional airports, such as Humberside airport, have the opportunity of flying regional flights into Heathrow? Is he aware that failure to enable that to happen leads to business men in Humberside having to fly to Holland—to Schipol—thereby depriving British Airways of good business?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right to offer congratulations to BAA, which has had an outstandingly successful period, and I am happy to add my congratulations to his. I agree unreservedly with the balance of his remarks.

Q4. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cohen: In relation to the Matrix Churchill trial, will the Prime Minister be a little less economical with the actualité and say whether he thinks it is proper that three innocent men might have been imprisoned because Ministers tried to suppress the evidence? Has it not clearly emerged from that trial that the former Foreign Minister, now the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, knew that the sales breached the arms embargo but agreed to the deception? Should he not be considering his position in the Government, or the Prime Minister be considering it for him?

The Prime Minister: I advise Opposition Members not to go down the route that so many of them took with BCCI just a year or so ago. They would be wise to await the Attorney-General's statement. I have already said that there will be a full, independent judicial inquiry, and I repeat that to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that public interest immunity must be claimed, that it is at the sole discretion of the judge and that it cannot be waived by Ministers? Hence, all the talk in the tabloid press about a cover-up is nothing more than arrant nonsense.

The Prime Minister: Ministers have a duty to claim public interest immunity where appropriate and that duty cannot be waived. It is then for the courts to consider where the balance of interest lies, and successive Governments have acted in that way.

Q5. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Madden: What action does the right hon. Gentleman propose, through the United Nations, to stop the partition of Bosnia? Why were Her Majesty's Government prepared to breach the arms embargo to allow Iraq to wage war, but now refuse to lift the arms embargo to give the Government Bosnian forces the means with which to defend their independent country, to stop genocide, to stop ethnic cleansing and to stop the displacement of thousands of men, women and children who face death?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman would be wise not to tie his questions to allegations that are as yet uninvestigated. A few moments before I came into the Chamber, I was advised—as yet, it is not confirmed—that there is said to be a cease fire in Bosnia from midnight tomorrow. We have heard that before. If it is sustained it will be extremely welcome news, but we must wait and see whether it is sustained. The hon. Gentleman should not seek to misrepresent the Government's position.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the House and British industry fully support his efforts to force Mr. Jacques Delors and the bureaucrats of Brussels to pull their bootstraps up and get cracking to find an urgent and equitable solution to the stalled GATT round? Although the cricket season is now over, will my right hon. Friend promise the House that he will not put his bat away until that matter is sorted?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to say that I share my hon. Friend's view entirely about the imperative need to get an early GATT settlement. There is no doubt that there is no longer a great distance between the United States and the Community on the substantive issues that need to be determined. I, myself, cannot accept that it is impossible to reach an agreement that will be acceptable to both the Community and the United States. At the moment that agreement is reached, the GATT round can be concluded in Geneva without further delay. The damage of there not being a GATT round is too profound to contemplate. I assure my hon. Friend that that is a matter of primary importance to the Government and we will pursue it in each and every forum until there is an agreement.

Madam Speaker: Time's up. I call the Attorney-General to make a statement.

Matrix Churchill

3.30 pm

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Madam Speaker, with permission I should like to make a statement on the Matrix Churchill case.

As the House will be aware, counsel for the prosecution in the Matrix Churchill case informed the court yesterday that, in the light of the evidence given by Mr. Alan Clark in cross-examination, he had concluded that it would no longer be right to seek a conviction in the case; and that the prosecuting authority, the commissioners of Customs and Excise, had accepted that conclusion. Both he and the commissioners were satisfied that during the course of cross-examination Mr. Clark had given evidence that was inconsistent with a written statement that he had made in 1991 and with what he had said in an interview with an officer of Customs and Excise in September 1992.

The case raises important questions about the operation of export licensing policy in relation to Iraq during the period to which the events related. The Government will therefore ensure that a full and independent inquiry into those events is undertaken by a judge. This will encompass the operations of all relevant departments and agencies. I am glad to tell the House that Lord Justice Scott has agreed to undertake that task. The precise terms of reference will need to be discussed with the judge. It is hoped to make them available to the House later this week. The judge will have access to all relevant papers and will be able to invite evidence from anyone he thinks fit. It will be for him to decide the extent to which he sits in public. His report and evidence will be published except insofar as, in the light of his advice, publication is contrary to the public interest.

The inquiry will be set up and conducted as speedily as possible, having regard to the need not to prejudice any further criminal inquiries or proceedings. On that aspect, I should say that the Commissioners have referred the papers in the case to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Any further action is a matter for them.

Finally, it has been alleged that Ministers, by signing public interest immunity certificates, gave orders that departmental papers should be kept from defence lawyers in an attempt at a cover-up. That is a complete misunderstanding of the law in that area and thus a distortion of the truth. It is the law, expressly enunciated by the courts, that Ministers have a duty to claim public interest immunity either in respect of specific documents or recognised classes of document the production of which would in principle be contrary to the public interest. This duty cannot be waived.

Once a proper claim has been made, it is for the court to look at the papers if it thinks fit, to balance the competing public interests and to determine whether the interests of justice in the particular case require disclosure of some or all of the documents in issue. Such a claim must be made irrespective of whether it is embarrassing to the Government either to reveal or to withhold. In this case, it was at the express invitation of prosecuting counsel that the judge looked at all the material before he made his ruling.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): I welcome the judicial inquiry, but I express my concern that it will be limited to policy. Will it include the conduct of Ministers? I am also concerned that the judge will be able only to "invite" evidence. Will he be able to summon witnesses and to have them examined on oath?

The signing of public immunity certificates is a matter to be approached with care and not in a cavalier fashion. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman consider whether the exercise of the signing of these certificates has been approached in a responsible fashion? Is it not astonishing that, in the pursuit of the purported interest of the state, Ministers who signed public immunity certificates were prepared to connive at the sacrifice of the accused men and render them liable to long terms of imprisonment? On what authority was counsel for the Crown able to tell the court that the documents sought to be excluded contained—I quote a report today—

"nothing of assistance to the defence"?

That was not upheld by the court.

Since controversial matters involving defence exports certainly in my time—I as a Defence Minister had a responsibility for precisely these matters—were decided by Cabinet Committee, did the four Ministers agree together to issue the certificates? What restrictions were placed on the preparation of the case by Customs and Excise in relation to Government Departments and the intelligence services? Are those matters open to be examined without restriction by the learned Lord justice of appeal?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his welcome in this matter. I can tell him that the inquiry will not be limited to matters of policy; it will be able to look into all relevant aspects of the matter, and to invite such witnesses as it thinks fit to appear before it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Invite?"]

The question of public interest immunity certificates was, I believe, looked at with care, but that can be examined by the inquiry if it thinks it appropriate. I have every reason to think that the exercise was approached in a responsible fashion: I have no reason whatever to believe—indeed, I profoundly refute—the irresponsible suggestion of the right hon. and learned Gentleman that Ministers connived in relation to those certificates.

As to the documents which were opened by counsel for the prosecution in the case, counsel, as would have been expected in the light of the public interest immunity certificates, put the matters clearly before the judge, invited the judge to look at the documents and invited the judge, as would be his duty, then to make the ruling, balancing one public interest with another.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, in paragraph 128 of the report on exports to Iraq, the Select Committee on Trade and Industry expressed deep disquiet at the independence and authority of Customs and Excise? Is if not the case that Customs and Excise is not answerable to the Treasury with respect to prosecuting decisions, nor, unlike the Crown prosecution service, is it accountable to the Attorney-General? Is not that unacceptable unaccountability? Will he review its status?

The Attorney-General: The important thing is that the Customs and Excise is an independent prosecuting authority and it exercises its judgment independently, as the House would expect.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Attorney-General must know that to say that the judge has the power to "invite" witnesses is wholly inadequate.

What is required is an inquiry held under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921, which would allow the judge to compel the attendance of witnesses and if necessary to commit them for contempt if they decline to answer his questions. An inquiry with the powers which the Attorney-General has spelt out will be toothless and unlikely to get to the truth of the matter.

Will the scope of the inquiry include an examination of the circumstances that surrounded the Iraqi supergun affair, in which it is increasingly clear that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry was thwarted and frustrated by Ministers and Departments?

Why cannot the Attorney-General bring himself to express some sense of regret and apology to the three innocent men who found themselves in the dock?

The Attorney-General: As one with responsibilities in the area of prosecution, I am extremely conscious of the fact that the power to prosecute is an extremely invasive power, which must be exercised by any independent prosecuting authority extremely carefully. I recognise the hon. and learned Gentleman's point in that respect.

The hon. and learned Gentleman should bear in mind that an inquiry under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921 can have compensating disadvantages as well as the advantages that he pointed out. There is no reason to anticipate that any relevant witness will fail to attend the inquiry carried out by Lord Justice Scott; in view of inquiries in recent years, such as the one into BCCI, it is nonsense to suggest that Lord Justice Scott's inquiry is likely to be toothless.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I greatly appreciate my right hon. and learned Friend's readiness to come to the House so quickly and to instigate an independent judicial inquiry. It must be reassuring to know that it will be for the learned judge, not Her Majesty's Government, to decide what it is in the public interest to make public.

Why did not the three Departments of State, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry, immediately make known what was ultimately known to the court, thereby preventing the need for this unnecessary trial?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome for the speedy setting up of the inquiry. As he says, the judge will be able to decide and to give his guidance on the points that he mentioned, including publication?

As to what any Department knew or did not know at any particular time, that is a matter for the learned judge and the inquiry.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The right hon. and learned Gentleman consistently dodges the questions asked by Opposition Members about whether the inquiry will have the right to summon Ministers—because it is the conduct of Ministers that is at the heart of this scandal.

He said in his statement that the denial by Mr. Alan Clark of his participation in the meeting at the Department of Trade and Industry on 20 January 1988 was inconsistent with the truth—namely, that Mr. Clark had lied. Yet the Prime Minister, writing to me on 17 February this year after I had written to him about Mr. Clark's conduct, wrote back to me upholding Mr. Clark's denial. Did the Prime Minister make inquiries about Mr. Alan Clark's resort to untruth and then deliberately purvey his untruth; or did he simply not bother to make inquiries—a different kind of dereliction of duty?

The Attorney-General: Yes, the inquiry will have the power to summon Ministers, and I am confident that they will all attend. That is a different question from the powers under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921.

With regard to the right hon. Gentleman's second point, he clearly has not read his papers or listened carefully to what I have said, because I made no comment on whether Mr. Clark's denial was at any stage inconsistent with the truth. What I told the House, and what prosecuting counsel told the learned judge when he withdrew the case, was that what Mr. Alan Clark had said in his original statement and what he had said under cross-examination had been different. It will be for the inquiry to sort out the results of that.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I, too, am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for the announcement of the inquiry, but is there not a major ethical and moral point in the fact that a prosecution can be mounted which might take away the liberty of three business men when Ministers appeared to know that there was basis on which the trial should not proceed and that there would have been a grave miscarriage of justice if those men had been found guilty, convicted and possibly imprisoned?

Secondly, is there not a question of trust between the House and its Ministers in that, when we are told that a policy is such, it is such and there is not deviation from the honour and integrity of Government in their relations with the House?

The Attorney-General: In so far as there are questions, succinctly analysed by my hon. Friend, which need to be put and answered, it is the very purpose of announcing the judicial inquiry that they may be examined and answered.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that he continues to dodge the issue, which surely cannot be covered by the inquiry, of what he will do to put right the dreadful wrong done to the three Coventry business men who have suffered enormously and quite unjustifiably? What will happen to the case that apparently continues against BSA Tools Ltd. and its chairman and owner, Mr. Keith Bailey? Does that go on? Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us anything about those companies that allegedly settled before the matter went to court?

The Attorney-General: The answer to the second question is no. I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman about the second case to which he referred, but I can look into the matter and write to him.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, as I emphasised to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) earlier, the process of prosecution is invasive. It is not to be taken lightly, and it is to be examined carefully and independently of Government by the independent prosecuting authority. But if there is a prosecution, which subsequently fails or is withdrawn for any particular reason, representations can be made, but it has never been

[The Attorney-General]

the policy for there to be formal compensation in those circumstances. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and the House generally know that.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): On behalf of my constituent, Mr. Peter Allen, one of the men acquitted yesterday at the Old Bailey, I welcome the announcement of the independent judicial inquiry under the chairmanship of Lord Justice Scott. Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that it is not unheard of for prosecutions to founder, but will he also accept that this is a unique case in which the understanding of Mr. Alan Clark now appears to have been fundamentally at odds with that of Customs and Excise which initiated the prosecution?

Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, as a direct result of the conflict, my constituent has spent the past two years out of work and under the shadow of a sentence of imprisonment, accused of doing no more than he understood he was being encouraged to do? What guidance is given to Ministers to ensure consistency in interpretation of trade sanction regulations, and what steps will be taken to acquaint the prosecuting authorities with that advice?

Finally, what steps will be taken to draw the attention of Customs and Excise and the Department of Trade and Industry to the financial consequences of their actions for my constituent, who has lost heavily as a result of the matter? Is he not entitled to some sort of compensation?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend has raised four points. First—yes, although the word "unique" is always difficult to use, this case involves special circumstances. That is why the inquiry is being set up: so that those circumstances can be looked into carefully, impartially and independently.

Secondly, let me say this to my hon. Friend, and to other hon. Members who have said, "What about an apology?", and that sort of thing. I hope that I have made it clear already that I recognise what an invasive action prosecution of anyone is. I fully recognise, and I sympathise—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House. knows that these are very serious and important matters. *[Interruption.]* Order. When Back Benchers are putting questions and Ministers are attempting to answer, we ought to have order in the House. It is only within the framework of order that we can proceed at all.

The Attorney-General: As I was saying, I fully recognise the pressures under which prosecution puts any defendant. I am sure that the House will understand that.

My hon. Friend's third point concerned guidance. The question of guidance will be very much a matter for the inquiry, and one that the inquiry can look into—both what was given and what perhaps ought to have been given, if they were different.

Finally, my hon. Friend asked about financial compensation. As I said a moment ago, there is no formalised system of financial compensation in these circumstances. It is one of the facts of our constitution that prosecutions must be looked into very carefully and independently, and must be decided on; but then, as a matter of law, that is that.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman not now give a full apology to those concerned, and stop hiding behind the framework of the law? Will he also ensure that the whole inquiry is held in public? I understood him to say in answer to the last question that witnesses would now be "summoned", not invited, and I believe that that is absolutely necessary. I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman that, when the Select Committee on Trade and Industry looked into the matter, we found that people were disappearing and could not be traced. We want everyone to come forward, including those who profited from the deal—the Savoy mafia, for instance. It has even been said that the former Prime Minister's family benefited financially.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman, like other hon. Members, has raised the question of the form that the inquiry will take. I think that I can set his mind at rest —as much as is humanly possible—by saying that there can be no question of any Minister who has been requested to appear before the inquiry not appearing. There are, however, disadvantages in holding an inquiry under the 1921 Act, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman would agree if he looked into the matter.

As I have said many times, I understand the point about the pressures that prosecutions bring. That is why I have emphasised that they must be looked at carefully, impartially and independently, so that such pressures are not brought without the most careful thought.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): First, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921 presents difficulties in relation to whether a prosecution can take place after the evidence has been given? Secondly, Mr. Alan Clark gave evidence on oath. Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, within the context of the judicial inquiry that has been announced, no person—be he a Minister or otherwise— will be immune from having to give evidence on oath, so that the same will apply to him as applied to Mr. Alan Clark? Had he given evidence that was contrary to the truth, he would have been guilty of perjury.

The Attorney-General: I agree that there are difficulties with the 1921 Act, one of which my hon. Friend has identified.

The question of form and procedure in the holding of the inquiry is, to a considerable extent, a matter for the learned judge who will undertake it, and I will not comment further.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Why should the House of Commons have to wait for a judge for the answer to a very simple, straightforward question: on what date of what year did No. 10 Downing street and other senior Ministers first know about the Matrix Churchill situation? It is a very simple question with a factual answer that Parliament deserves to hear.

The Attorney-General: For all the hon. Gentleman's comments, I suspect that that question will require very careful examination. If the House were to be offered a very simple answer, as the hon. Gentleman said, it might well not be satisfied. I suggest that a full and independent judicial inquiry is what the House is entitled to, and is what the hon. Gentleman should look forward to.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that this is a very important issue and that we welcome the judicial independent inquiry under Lord Justice Scott? Is it right, however, that this honourable House should divert its attention from the regeneration of our commerce, trade and industry and many other matters? Would it not be wise for hon. Members to concentrate on the running of the country and to leave these important inquiries to a judge and an independent tribunal that has been set up to find the truth?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is right—that it is because of the importance and complexity of the issue that this type of inquiry has been set up, and that it is because it is someone who can set aside time and apply a judicial mind to these issues that a very senior judge has been invited to hold it.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): To revert to the experience of the three men who were prosecuted, why will the Attorney-General not simply say, "Sorry"?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman invites me to make comments about the prosecution decisions of an independent prosecution authority. That prosecuting authority took its decisions, difficult as they were, very carefully. I have recognised, as a matter of principle, that these decisions are extremely invasive. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman can take it from what I have said that I know that nobody should be prosecuted lightly, and that if anybody is prosecuted unnecessarily, then they have suffered hardship—and that I regret.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement, and particularly the judicial inquiry. Can he confirm that it is for the judge to decide whether the publication of further documents is in the national interest?

The Attorney-General: Yes, I can confirm that. An inquiry of this nature involves the judge looking into documents for which, just as in the court case, public interest immunity, as a matter of law, has to be claimed. The learned judge will no doubt be motivated and governed by the same principles when he makes his detailed inquiry and gives his advice as to what should be published.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Attorney-General aware that, apart from the legal and administrative matters to which he referred, the real issue is a political issue? Why was it that Ministers supplied arms to a regime that had already used chemical weapons against the Kurds, then sent our troops in to fight an army that had been armed, in part, by British manufacturers, and then, when the war was over, tried to get a big contract to sell more tanks to Kuwait? Is it not a fact that the international arms trade is a greater danger to the peace of humanity than either the AIDS epidemic or the drugs trade? Is it not time that Ministers took responsibility for what they clearly did, which was to put profit above human life in promoting the arms trade?

The Attorney-General: With respect to the right hon. Gentleman, what is clear is that he is certainly prejudging the issue, which is to be looked at in detail and independently.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Although I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement of the appointment of Lord Justice Scott, does he not recognise that there are grave reservations about his announcement that not all of Lord Justice Scott's report will automatically be published? Does he not also recognise that, in recent years, there has been a tendency, going back to the Security Commission's report on the Bettaney case, for appendices not to be published, appendices that subsequently were leaked and were discovered only to contain matters of political embarrassment—nothing that could ever really be described as not in the national interest?

The Attorney-General: I should be surprised in the extreme if Lord Justice Scott did not publish something simply because it was thought to be of political embarrassment. My hon. Friend is probably in as good a position as anybody to know the sensitivity of the matters that the learned Lord Justice will have to consider, whose independent advice will offer guidance on what should be published.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Attorney-General accept that there is an urgent need, in this inquiry or elsewhere, for clarification of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility for the policy and conduct of Departments? Does he understand that there is a growing feeling that no one ever accepts responsibility in this Government under any circumstances? Will he give a definition of what constitutes ministerial responsibility?

The Attorney-General: There could be no better way of examining whether ministerial responsibility should be pinned in any particular area than to have a detailed and independent inquiry. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will wait its outcome.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the full and independent inquiry will be widely welcomed outside the House? Does he further accept that it is a matter of great concern that the only country in the middle east to which we do not sell arms is the only democracy in the middle east?

The Attorney-General: I recognise and am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome for the inquiry, and I note his point.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Can the Attorney-General assure us that Lord Justice Scott's terms of reference will be drawn wide enough to encompass allegations of other instances where Ministers may have been flexible in interpreting their roles in the arms embargo, in particular in relation to International Military Services and Astra. Unless that is so, we shall not be able to see whether there is a pattern to this sordid affair.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman is asking about the width of the terms of reference, and I think it is already clear from what I have said that they will be widely drawn.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Although I appreciate the very critical points that have been made, will the Ministers confirm that the terms of reference will be wide enough to include the impossible problem that is

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

faced by the British Government and industry when sanctions are imposed but other countries openly, blatantly and massively break them? For example, the German Government had 200 firms selling chemical weapons and extended Scud missiles in Iraq. Will the Attorney-General ensure that the terms of reference are wide enough to acknowledge that Britain has been the mug of the sanctions game time and again? We want sanctions to be properly imposed rather than inquiries into individual instances of this sort.

The Attorney-General: I am sure that the terms of reference will be quite wide enough to enable those important surrounding points made by my hon. Friend to be given proper consideration.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not the reality of the matter the fact that, for some time, the Government gave the impression to all and sundry that they were not selling arms to Iraq? Now the truth is out. To what extent does the House expect Ministers to continue in their positions? When do Ministers of this squalid Tory Government resign?

We have an example here of at least three Ministers knowing that three men in court were likely to be sent down the line, yet they sat by, hanging on to their seats, ministerial cars and all the rest, hoping to Christ that they would not have to face the music. Ministers should now decide to resign, but the Attorney-General comes along and sticks up a judge—probably one of their Tory friends—instead of having a proper inquiry. The result is that the whitewash and cover-up will continue.

The Attorney-General: The longer the hon. Gentleman continued, the less I thought he was interested in an independent impartial inquiry into anything. He opened his remarks by asking about the reality of the matter; the purpose of the inquiry is to discover the reality of the matter.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Is it not the case that, contrary to the impression that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) sought to convey, the vast majority of armaments sold to Iraq in the 1980s came not from this country but from socialist France and the communist countries of eastern Europe?

The Attorney-General: I have noted my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Did Mr. Alan Clark meet officials or Ministers at the Ministry of Defence or the Department of Trade and Industry before the trial?

The Attorney-General: Any actions by Mr. Alan Clark when he was a Minister, or by other Ministers, are the subject of the inquiry.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Further to an earlier question, may I make a correction? There is another democracy in the area, and that is Iran. The recent United Nations report showed that Iran was the wounded party and not the initiater of the war during——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Lady that hon. Members should be asking questions on a statement, not making statements themselves.

Miss Nicholson: Will the terms of reference of the inquiry be wide enough to offer the European Community potential alterations of rules? Some of the evidence that I have gleaned during my recent visits to Iran and Iraq has shown that France was indeed exporting chemical weapon components to Iraq during the period covered by the statement and the inquiry.

The Attorney-General: It will be for Lord Justice Scott to decide how far any questions concerning European rules are relevant to the subject of his inquiry.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is the right hon. and supposedly learned Gentleman fully satisfied that, from the Government's point of view, the judge who has been put up is, in that classic phrase, "one of us"?

The Attorney-General: I think that, on reflection, even the hon. Gentleman will find that comment unworthy of him.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Attorney-General aware that one of the most disturbing aspects of the case is that, if the judge had decided otherwise regarding the documents in question, the defendants might well have gone to prison—including Paul Henderson who, it should be remembered, was willing to risk his life for his country and is proud of having done so? Yet Ministers signed documents that would have sent him to prison in Britain. Could there be a greater contrast than that between the honour and integrity of the judge in the court case and the record and reputation of Ministers, who were apparently quite willing to send innocent people to prison and who—if they have any honour left—should certainly consider resigning as quickly as possible, and long before the judicial inquiry?

The Attorney-General: I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman wishes to distort the position, but I believe that he deeply misunderstands it, and consequently fundamentally distorts it. Once he realises that, I think that he will wish to withdraw the remarks that he has made.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will Lord Justice Scott be able to spend all his time on the inquiry, because, although it needs to be done fully and completely, we should like the report as soon as is humanly possible?

The Attorney-General: I know that Lord Justice Scott is free to begin in the very near future, and I have no reason to think that his conduct of the inquiry is likely to be in any way impeded by any other duties.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that, on 31 January 1991, I called in the House for the setting up of just such a high-level inquiry into arms sales to Iraq

"so that never again will our forces be faced with an enemy armed partly by ourselves"?

The Prime Minister refused an inquiry, and replied:

"for some considerable time we have not supplied arms to Iraq for precisely that reason."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1991; Vol. 184, c. 1102.]

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure me that the terms of reference for this inquiry, which are still to be settled, will be wide enough to establish why that answer was different from the truth?

The Attorney-General: I am not at all sure that the answer was different from the truth at all, but I think that I can give the right hon. Gentleman the assurance that the terms of the inquiry will be wide enough to enable all his concerns to be carefully looked into and evaluated.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Attorney-General said that he expected that Ministers, having been invited to appear at the inquiry, would not refuse to do that. That does not mean to say that they could not necessarily refuse. Will that also mean that civil servants and others will be able to attend—and will be compelled to attend?

The Attorney-General: I do not anticipate that any relevant witness will refuse to attend. The reason that I frame my answers in this form is that, if we go to different 1921 Act rules, one has disadvantages which I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would wish to have.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Following on from that question, why was the Attorney-General surprised earlier when someone mentioned the connivance of Ministers? Is it not at least clear from the trial that, as late as November 1989, a Minister from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who is now in the Cabinet, a Minister at the Ministry of Defence who has now resigned and another Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry were conniving, colluding together and conspiring to act in entirely the opposite direction to Government policy?

In the light of that, does the Attorney-General accept that the difference between the inquiry that he has announced today and one held under the 1921 Act is that those Ministers or their successors cannot be obliged to attend and answer questions? Is the Attorney-General announcing a judicial inquiry today not in a spirit of openness, but precisely to prevent and pre-empt an inquiry under the 1921 Act which would force them to turn up and answer questions under oath?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman completely misunderstands the framework. What I have said to the House—I repeat this clearly to the hon. Gentleman—is that I am quite satisfied that any relevant witness, including Ministers and civil servants, will give their evidence. I cannot imagine how they could refuse without calling upon themselves the utmost condemnation. However, the hon. Gentleman should not prejudge the issue. It is for the inquiry to look into the very points that he has raised and then give its independent view.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the Attorney-General agree that this is a classic example where, if the rules in the DPP *v.* Ward with regard to disclosure had been upheld, justice could have been served better? It is not time that the Attorney-General's guidelines on disclosure extended to all branches, parties and prosecuting authorities in a way that is most effective and efficient, so that innocent people can never again be put at risk before the courts of our land? It is not good enough simply to say that one regrets it: it is a disgrace and a shame on our society. It is a test of our judicial system which luckily had a judge in it prepared to stand by the rules and to see fair play done.

The Attorney-General: I am absolutely surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who understands these matters better than some, should phrase his question like that. There is no question of the requirements of the DPP *v.* Ward having been anything other than fully complied with, but if the hon. Gentleman believes so, he just does not understand what he is talking about. The point is that there will not be a full inquiry into the matters and the substance of the matters which underlie the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): My right hon. and learned Friend has confirmed that Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are an indpendent prosecuting body. That may be a unique power of Government, in that it does not fall under the Attorney-General's Department. Will the terms of reference of Lord Justice Scott's inquiry be wide enough to discover whether the prosecuting power of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise should come under the Attorney-General and his Department?

The Attorney-General: I see no reason, if Lord Justice Scott should think that that question was relevant for him to answer, why he should not give guidance about it. However, fundamentally his inquiry is to look into the facts of the matter and the way in which it was handled.

Mr. John Morris: Is it not astonishing that the Attorney-General has not acknowledged that the prosecution went appallingly wrong and that there is no acknowledgement that the Crown prosecutor, learned counsel, could no longer accept the evidence of a former Minister? Who will decide what is to be published—the Government or the judge? As the Attorney-General has repeatedly said that prosecution is invasive, on what basis was counsel for the Crown able to tell the court that the documents that it was sought to exclude contained nothing of assistance to the defence?

The Attorney-General: The case was prosecuted by experienced and responsible leading counsel, who examined the issues extremely closely, as I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will accept.

The prosecution had to be withdrawn, and it was proper that it was withdrawn. The prosecution was withdrawn on the advice of the leading counsel because evidence which was in his possession in a statement was contradicted in the witness box. Thus, part of the important foundation of the prosecution case had altered. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will fully recognise that, in those circumstances, it would not have been proper to proceed.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked who on the inquiry would decide the issues to which he referred. I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman realises that the point of having an independent inquiry by a learned Lord Justice is so that the Lord Justice will decide the issues [An hon. Member: "But will he be allowed to publish what he likes?"] I have said it about five times.

Leading counsel for the Crown presented, as it was the Minister's legal duty to do, the public interest immunity statements, and expressly invited the learned judge who was trying the case to read the documents and exercise his independent judgment according to law as to where the balance of public interest lay. That is what he did.

Mr. Kaufman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your assistance. You said that the matter was extremely important. When the Attorney-General was

[Mr. Kaufman]

asked whether Ministers could be summoned to the inquiry, he said yes. He then went on to say that Ministers would be invited to attend and he was sure that they would not decline.

It would be wrong for the House to move on to further business before the Attorney-General clarifies whether Ministers will be summoned and have no right not to attend or whether they will be invited to attend with the right not to attend.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair. *[Interruption.]* Order. I am in charge here.

The Attorney-General: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I shall clarify the position. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) would undoubtedly wish to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the 1921 Act to which I have referred many times.

My response to his point of order and the factual matter that he put into the ether is that Ministers can be ordered to attend by the Prime Minister. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, any Ministers so ordered—the Prime Minister has just told me that Ministers will be so ordered —who do not attend, which I find inconceivable, would be unlikely to remain Ministers for long if they did not obey such as order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you confirm that when an hon. Member intends to raise a matter in the House about another Member it is the courtesy of the House that he should inform the Member involved in advance? The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) named me yesterday on a matter of privilege. Do you also agree that, as the hon. Member derives his evidence from a Murdoch newspaper which he normally would despise, and as those sentiments are about as sincere as Colonel Sander's sentiments for chickens, the matter is bogus? If I need an hon. Member to defend me, I will not seek help from the whippersnapper opposite.

Madam Speaker: I know full well that the hon. Lady can defend herself on every matter, and I can tell her and the House that I do not make my rulings on what the papers say.

Mr. Benn: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I would like your advice on how the House is left following today's statement. Is it the case that no further questions can be put or answered on the many issues that have come up in the questioning, on the grounds that it is sub judice? I hope that you will not answer today, because it is an important question.

If a Minister can set up a judicial inquiry and no questions can be put on the matter for the next 18 months, on the grounds of the sub judice rule, parliamentary accountability will disappear overnight. Will you reflect carefully on that matter and give us guidance, because I regard it as potentially a great threat to the accountability of Ministers to the House of Commons?

Madam Speaker: It is my understanding that the sub judice rule does not apply to inquiries.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that hon. Members' points of order are not points of frustration, because I see numbers of hon. Members rising whom I was not able to call. I am not prepared to prolong this.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you give me some guidance? The Attorney-General has left Opposition Members, at least, completely baffled as to the next stage in the procedure. Given that his terms of reference for the judicial inquiry were that it will be full, impartial and independent, can you use your good offices to bring the Attorney-General back here when he has drawn then up?

Madam Speaker: Regrettably, the hon. Member credits me with more authority than I have.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman was called during the statement. Is it a point of order for me?

Mr. Dalyell: Further to the point of order raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), Madam Speaker. This morning, the Table Office accepted two identical questions from me—one for the Prime Minister and one for the Secretary of State for Defence —asking on what date they were first alerted to the Matrix Churchill situation. In the light of the answer to my right hon. Friend, are we saying that there is no need for Ministers to answer such questions, even if they remain on the Order Paper, on the grounds that the matter is sub judice, because that raises deep questions——

Madam Speaker: Order. It is quite the opposite. As I have already said, the inquiry is not sub judice. The hon. Gentleman has told me and the House that his questions were accepted.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you assist me further? If, as we have been told, the sanction against Ministers who refuse to give evidence is that they would lose their jobs, what sanction would the House have over former Ministers who decline to give evidence? Is there any way in which you can assist me on that matter?

Madam Speaker: The inquiry is not being conducted by the House, and therefore I should have thought that the House had no authority over former Ministers.

Mr. Bermingham: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Perhaps you could assist me. I listened to the statement and to all the questions and answers, but I remain puzzled about our policy with regard to the shipment of machinery, which is capable of making munitions, to various middle eastern countries. Perhaps the relevant Minister—be it from the Department of Trade and Industry, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Prime Minister or someone else—could get up and tell me their departmental policies.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members must not ask the Chair to attempt to interpret Government policy in that way.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I appeal to you, in your capacity as the defender of Back Benchers' rights, to recognise that a matter arises from this debate which calls for a statement to the House. I have examined dozens of questions and answers that I have received since 1987, and it is clear that the answers given to me by Mr. Alan Clark and other Ministers were untrue. Can the wrong that has been done to the House be undone by a statement from the Leader of the House and from the Government—a statement in which they will go through all the untruthful answers of the past four years and give us truthful replies?

Madam Speaker: I have no authority to instruct any Minister to come to the Dispatch Box, but the comments made by the hon. Member have obviously been heard by those on the Treasury Bench this afternoon.

Mr. Litherland: It was stated that the Prime Minister could instruct any Minister to attend the inquiry. I ask your guidance, Madam Speaker. Who can instruct the Prime Minister to attend the inquiry and make available his knowledge of this situation?

Madam Speaker: The points of order that hon. Members are now raising are by no means a matter for the Speaker.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): In relation to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), can you clarify whether it is not a fact that nothing that has been said this afternoon would preclude him from referring the matter to the Committee of Privileges?

Madam Speaker: If any hon. Member wishes to make any reference to the matters of privilege, he or she should, in the normal way, write to me.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): It will be within your recollection, Madam Speaker, that, three years ago, the then Attorney-General came to the House and announced a judicial inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings, and that, once it became clear that the judge in charge of that inquiry, Sir John May, was not willing to participate in a whitewash, the inquiry was nobbled. No Attorney-General has since come to the House to explain the fate of that inquiry. In order that we may know how seriously to take the inquiry just announced, could we first of all hear a statement from the Attorney-General about what happened to the last one?

Madam Speaker: I have already told the House that I have not been informed that any Minister is seeking to make a further statement today.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Can you help me by making it clear whether officers of MI5 and MI6 will be under a compulsion to tell the inquiry whether they advised the former Prime Minister of her son's arms dealings in this area and his involvement in the shipment of munitions to Iraq?

Madam Speaker: Certainly not; that is not a matter for the Speaker.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau, Gwent): Would the Attorney-General care to explain the links between the Government and the firm, Allivane, which supplied equipment to Iraq and Iran at the time of the Iraq-Iran war?

Madam Speaker: These are not points of order. Hon. Members are attempting to prolong the debate.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

LEGAL AID AND ADVICE

That the draft Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Andrew MacKay.]*

Question agreed to.

Bail (Amendment)

4.27 pm

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to confer upon the prosecution a right of appeal against decisions to grant bail; to reverse the presumption in favour of bail in certain cases; to make other provisions relating to bail; and for connected purposes.

I am very glad that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, is able to be in the Chamber this afternoon.

This is the second time that I have sought to change the criminal law. Having practised at the Bar for 15 years, I take particular interest in these matters. In 1987, I wrote a pamphlet which was published by the Bow Group and which urged Parliament to give the Attorney-General a right of appeal against over-lenient sentences. I was very glad that this was enacted in section 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, and I trust that the Bill for which I seek leave today will receive similarly favourable treatment from Parliament.

My Bill seeks to amend the law because our constituents are seriously concerned about offences which are being committed by people who have been arrested and then released on bail by magistrates. We read about such cases every week in our newspapers. The largest number of such cases relate to burglaries of dwellings and car thefts and it is the same group of people who are committing the same type of offence again and again. But the problem exists even in the most serious cases.

Hon. Members will recall with deep sadness and regret that Mrs. Anna McGurk was recently raped and murdered in Gloucester by a man who had already been arrested by the police for rape and had been let out on bail by magistrates, against the objection of the police. The House should take particular note of the fact that the murderer had been required by the magistrates to reside in a bail hostel as a condition of his bail.

My Bill would seek to make two changes to the law. First, it would give the prosecution a right of appeal to a judge where bail had been granted by magistrates against police objection. At present, the police can do nothing except watch the arrested man walk out of court. For police officers who spend their lives apprehending criminals on our behalf and at great personal risk, that must be very demoralising. If the situation were reversed, and bail had been refused, the arrested man could apply to a judge for bail. My Bill would redress the balance in these matters between the defence and the prosecution.

The Scots are ahead of us in this matter, as in many things; it is already possible for the prosecution there to appeal if bail is unreasonably granted, and we should have the same rule in England and Wales.

Secondly, my Bill would reverse the burden of proof in the case of persons who had already been convicted of committing an offence in the past 10 years, while on bail. I believe that those people have forfeited the trust that bail implies. I do not say that they should not get bail at all, but it should be for them to prove that they should be given bail, rather than for the police to prove that they should not.

It may be argued that my Bill would increase the prison population and the cost of the prison service. I believe that it can be argued, however, that gaol is cheaper than bail. Bail hostels are not cost-free, and it is certainly not cost free to allow such persons to be at liberty to rape and murder our constituents, to burgle their houses and to steal their cars.

It is the very first duty of any Government to protect their citizens not only from external attack but from internal attack by criminals within our country. I trust that this Government will discharge that duty.

In the interests of protecting all our constituents from crimes committed by persons on bail, I seek leave of this honourable House to bring in the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Michael Stephen, Sir Anthony Grant, Sir Trevor Skeet, Mr. Michael Shersby, Mr. Anthony Steen, Mr. Edward Garnier, Mr. Roy Thomason, Mr. Richard Ottaway, Mr. Mark Robinson, Mr. David Congdon, Mr. Hartley Booth and Mr. Roger Evans.

BAIL (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Michael Stephen accordingly presented a Bill to confer upon the prosecution a right of appeal against decisions to grant bail; to reverse the presumption in favour of bail in certain cases; to make other provisions relating to bail; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 February and to be printed. [Bill 80.]

Orders of the Day

Education Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [9 November], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Before I call the Minister, I should tell the House that there will be a time limit on speeches between 6 pm and 8 pm.

4.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Nigel Forman): In the debate yesterday we heard a great deal of nonsense from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and other Opposition Members about the allegedly centralising motives and characteristics of the Bill. Of all the charges that could be levelled at us—precious few have any validity—the charge of centralisation is the most absurd.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his brilliant opening speech yesterday, and as several of my hon. Friends also pointed out during the debate, Labour has wilfully misunderstood and misrepresented the thrust of the Bill. Not for the first time, Labour is confusing means with ends. The means provided in this measure certainly involve the use of central power exercised with the full backing of parliamentary statute. But the ends achieved will be greater local choice and local autonomy at the level of individual parents and schools. We are confident that this framework of truly local choice will bring managerial benefits for head teachers, participation benefits for parents and other governors and—most important of all—educational benefits for the children concerned.

I am glad to be able to say that, even since yesterday, two more applications for grant-maintained status have been approved by my right hon. Friend.

The Government published the parents charter and have consistently sought to return the power in education to where it belongs—to parents, teachers and governors of schools.

Our policy, in the Bill and in other previous measures, is all about enfranchising ordinary people, not about protecting outdated trade union or bureaucratic practices. This principle was true of the Housing Act 1980, which the hon. Member for Dewsbury fiercely opposed; it is true of our policies for wider pensions and share ownership; and it is true of the Bill, which places new opportunities in the hands of parents, teachers and governors so that the people most closely involved with our schools—

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the main Labour spokesman on this issue, the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), not to be in her place on the Opposition Front Bench for a debate of this nature?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Whether an hon. Member is in the Chamber is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It was not a point of order.

Mr. Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member may seek to intervene in the debate, but I cannot take a point of order on what was not a point of order.

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forman: Yes.

Mr. Davies: I appreciate the concern of some Conservative Members who may question the absence from the Chamber of my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). I understand that she is on the telephone to the Secretary of State for Wales, trying to persuade him to come here to take part in the debate.

Mr. Forman: I was explaining that we have been seeking to enfranchise ordinary people and not to protect outdated trade union or bureaucratic interests. I said that that principle was true of the Housing Act 1980, which the hon. Member for Dewsbury—who, as it has been pointed out, is not in her place—fiercely opposed. It is true of our policies for wider pensions and share ownership and it is true of this measure, which places new opportunities in the hands of parents, teachers and governors, so that the people most closely involved with our schools can truly develop a sense of ownership towards their schools and the education provided for the children in them.

The parents charter made it clear that our policies involve giving parents important rights to complement their important responsibilities. For example, parents have a right to choose between available schools, which will bring financial pressure to bear on less effective schools and increase standards for all; parents have a right to good information about schools so that they can make informed choices in the best interests of their children and keep school performance up to the mark; parents have a right to good information about how their children are doing at school so that they can form a genuine partnership with the teachers and staff *[Interruption.]* I am pleased to see the hon. Memberr for Dewsbury in her place.

Parents have the right to influence the management of their schools through serving as governors and voting in ballots on grant-maintained status; and parents have the right to be heard when things go wrong, meaning that appeal and complaints machinery is required by law.

All those rights, which were denied to parents for generations, are now enjoyed by parents, thanks to Conservative Governments and the series of reforming Education Acts from 1980 onwards. The Bill builds on those achievements and will ensure that, as the new framework emerges, those rights are preserved and enhanced.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): The Minister said that it is important for parents to be fully informed about the proposals. Will he join me in congratulating West Glamorgan county council on providing fair but forceful information that persuaded the parents of Gowerton comprehensive school to vote overwhelmingly not to go for grant-maintained status? Will he endorse how the county council provided that information?

Mr. Forman: The important point that lies behind the hon. Gentleman's intervention is that the information published in such cases should be fair and impartial. That applies as much to local education authorities as to those who support grant maintainance.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Is my hon. Friend aware of the progress that has been made at Hendon school since it became the first school in London to become grant maintained? Is he aware that, when it was under local education authority control, it was undersubscribed and that it is now heavily oversubscribed? Is he further aware that the headmaster has now been able to spend much more on books and teaching materials than he could when the school was under local education authority control?

Mr. Forman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks because they underline a general point that I wish to make to the House. The latest senior chief inspector's report on grant-maintained schools for the academic year 1991 gives the following gratifying conclusion. The independent senior chief inspector says:

> "Standards of work in grant-maintained schools were rather higher than they were in the maintained sector as a whole and many of the schools had been able to improve the quality and extent of accommodation, equipment, books stocked and other learning resources through the use of capital grant and a redeployment of the current grant now within their control."

That makes the point clearly that, once schools go grant maintained, many educational benefits flow from it.

The Bill will clarify parents' rights and responsibilities, for example, in cases of truancy, and extend parental rights where children have or may have special educational needs. I shall return to those two important topics in a few moments, but for now I wish to emphasise to the House that the Bill, far from being a measure to impose a pattern of education on England and Wales, will enable a new system to evolve and will enhance choice and diversity. Developments under the aegis of the Bill will be driven by popular demand, by parents freely voting in school-based ballots on whether to go grant maintained.

It is a travesty for Opposition parties to misrepresent that process as undemocratic when they must know that the turn-out in ballots for grant-maintained status is typically a good deal higher than in local government elections. Indeed, the average turn-out in grant-maintained ballots is some 60 per cent., whereas the average turn out at local government elections is 40 per cent.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): Does not the Minister recognise that the intention behind the Bill is that one generation of parents in a school should take the irrevocable decision on whether the school should become grant-maintained? That is in sharp contrast to the democratic processes in education at present. In many local authorities the debate about the future of schools has been conducted year in, year out by an informed and educated public. Are not the proposals a denial of democracy?

Mr. Forman: Our proposals are much more democratic than many of the carryings on in local authorities, particularly some Labour-controlled authorities where the elected representatives get notoriously out of touch with their local electorate.

The Bill is truly an enabling measure to create a sensible evolutionary framework within which parental choice and institutional diversity can thrive and grow. By contrast, the Opposition once again appear to argue for drab uniformity, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said yesterday, and are the leading apologists for the bureaucrats in town and county halls throughout the land.

However, such are the vicissitudes of politics that we on this Bench are prepared to offer a small prize—only a small one in the week of the autumn statement—to the first of my hon. Friends who guesses correctly the date on which the Opposition do another of their U-turns and accept our policy of enabling and encouraging the emergence of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): Is the Minister aware of the comments made by Professor Brian Cox, a former guru of the Tory party, on the excellent "North Westminster" programme on BBC on Sunday, when he commented on the Government's proposals? He expressed concern about the effect that market forces are having on education and said:

> "It will harm children from poorer homes, in difficult areas. That's the place where this kind of emphasis on choice will do most harm."

He went on to add:

> "middle class parents may be able to choose and move about a little bit but the local authorities have been responsible for helping children where the parents lack money and often lack initiative to know how to help their children."

That is what an adviser to the Tory Government said. What does the Minister think about it?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the Minister continues, may I point out that interventions should, by their nature, be short. I address that remark to both sides of the House equally.

Mr. Forman: There was a time when the Conservative party wholeheartedly approved of the thrust of Professor Cox's advice. I regret to say that he seems to have lost touch with the educational realities of today. By that, I mean that one of the great things about grant-maintained schools is that they provide ladders of opportunity for children from disadvantaged as well as advantaged backgrounds. One has only to look at certain examples, such as Small Heath school in Birmingham, to see the validity in what I am saying.

As for the Liberal Democrats, the prize which I am offering to my hon. Friends must be even smaller because of that party's habit of going round and round in circles and ending up what I would describe as politically giddy. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) is in his place. He was against the proposals in April, for them in May and his party is against them now. It would be interesting to know which way that weathervane will turn next.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): I thought that I had responded to the accusation made in the Secretary of State's opening remarks on that point. He referred to an article that appeared in a local newspaper in my constituency. I hope that the Minister will now accept that that newspaper reported only the first half of my remarks, which are totally consistent with the policy document to which he subsequently referred—that is, that the Liberal Democrats would like to see more power and autonomy given to individual schools. But the other part of the document was that it was within the context of strategic planning——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the rule about interventions applies to all parties, even minority parties.

Mr. Forman: In the light of that orgy of special pleading, I have two suggestions to make to the hon. Gentleman. First, he should put his entire remarks in the Library of the House of Commons, which has become an important practice these days. Secondly, he should resign his consultancy for the grant-maintained school.

Mr. Foster: May I respond to that clear accusation? It will take me a second, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I hope that I shall have an opportunity to make the position clear.

During the two and a half years prior to becoming a Member of the House, I worked for a major international consultancy organisation. During that time, my firm applied for audit of a number of educational organisations and, on a few occasions, my name was attached to those applications as the educational consultant. The last time that my name was involved in such ways was more than two years ago. I do not continue to provide any consultancy of an educational nature for that organisation, nor have I done so for some two years. I hope that the Minister will accept that that is the case.

Mr. Forman: The hon. Gentleman has made his position clear and I pay tribute to him for that.

I want to say a few words about the important and continuing role of local education authorities under the terms of the Bill. There has been a lot of self-serving and misleading talk about this, mostly from Opposition Members, many of whom have backgrounds in local government as elected officials or as employees. We will not abolish LEAs in the Bill; we will not even abolish local education committees, as the hon. Member for Dewsbury was implying. Rather, we are allowing local authorities to organise themselves as they see fit and to evolve in the most effective ways in order to enable them to concentrate on those tasks which they can perform best and which they are best placed to perform. In education, that means carrying out important continuing functions in the realms of special educational needs and school attendance.

On special needs, which I hope can be approached in a relatively non-partisan spirit in the Chamber and in Committee, part III of the Bill illustrates the citizens charter in action. It reinforces the statutory framework for the involvement of parents in their children's education. It embodies three basic principles: first, that parents should have a clear and comprehensive set of rights; secondly, that parents should be able to judge the action of local education authorities against a statutory code of practice; and, thirdly, that, if dissatisfied, parents should have a simple, straightforward means of appeal to an independent tribunal.

Thus, parents will have a right to ask local education authorities to assess their child if they believe that he has special educational needs, a right to know the name of the officer with whom they will deal and a right to make written and oral representations. If the authority decides to issue a statement of special educational needs, parents will have new rights over the choice of the maintained school that they wish their child to attend. Subject to certain reasonable conditions, the authority will be obliged to comply with that preference. If parents wish their child to attend a non-maintained or independent school, they will have a right to make written and oral representations to that effect. Once their child has a statement, parents will have a right to request a reassessment.

The code of practice will enable parents to judge whether authorities are fulfilling their duties. It will set criteria against which authorities will decide whether to assess a child and, subsequently, to issue a statement. At the same time, regulations will govern the manner in which authorities carry out assessments, setting, in particular, statutory time limits. We shall issue a clear guide for parents, so that they can understand authorities' duties and judge their performance.

Under the Bill, parents will have new rights of appeal. There will be a new, independent special educational needs tribunal. Local authorities will no longer sit in judgment on their own actions. Parents may appeal to the tribunal against an authority's refusal to assess their child, a refusal to issue a statement or a refusal to reassess their child. Parents may also appeal to the tribunal if the authority declines to name the maintained school of their choice or the non-maintained or independent school for which they have made representations. For the first time, parents will have the right to put their case in person to an independent body or to ask a friend to do so for them. The tribunal will take full account of the code of practice in reaching its decisions. Those decisions will be binding on the authority.

The Government believe that all parents should be involved in their children's education. We are determined that parents of children who are most in need of help should have every opportunity to make their voices heard and their choices met. The Bill gives statutory force to those principles.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: In regard to what the Minister said about special education, will the Bill ensure a continuation of the process towards full integration of children with special needs into other classes and prevent retrogression to the "sin bin" syndrome whereby those with special needs are lumped together in one group and not integrated as much as possible?

Mr. Forman: The hon. Gentleman is making good points and is underlining the direction in which policy is moving. That thrust of policy is continuing. A few years ago, 14 per cent. of such children were integrated in ordinary schools; I understand that 35 per cent. are now integrated. The hon. Gentleman was right to make that point.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Following on from that, can my hon. Friend assure me that there will be no compulsion, because many parents of children with special educational needs want them to be in special schools? In one case, my local authority, Kirklees, tried to force the issue against great opposition. Can my hon. Friend assure me that the Government approach will be flexible?

Mr. Forman: If parents are concerned, my hon. Friend should be aware that that is why we have made provision in the Bill for a tribunal specifically to consider such representations.

On school attendance, part IV of the Bill makes provision for enforcing regular school attendance on the part of children of compulsory school age. The Government set great store by ensuring that children go to school and stay there throughout the school day. Regular

[Mr. Forman]

attendance is of vital importance if children are to benefit from the opportunities that education offers them. Children who stay away from school are more likely to grow up unhappy and unfulfilled and to leave school much less qualified than they might otherwise have been. Worse still, such children may sometimes be drawn into a life of crime.

The prime responsibility under the law for seeing that children attend school regularly rests with parents, but schools must also regard maximising attendance as one of their most important tasks. They should take particular care to ensure that registers are properly maintained and that all instances of unjustified absence are pursued with vigour. From this autumn, all maintained schools will have to publish their truancy records—a powerful incentive for under-performing schools to do better.

It is also important that local education authorities should use their legal powers to bring before the courts parents who have failed to ensure that their children go to school. Part IV of the Bill therefore consolidates and updates existing provisions scattered across a number of Acts—provisions which are concerned with the means by which local education authorities enforce the legal responsibilities of parents in respect of school attendance, the extent to which parental choice may be taken into account when LEAs are issuing school attendance orders, the rights and obligations of the schools named in such orders, and the machinery for dealing with those parents who choose to flout the law and put their children's future at risk. As such, I hope that this part of the Bill will command the support of all parts of the House.

On the important subject of failing schools, I also hope that we can reach a measure of bipartisan agreement, because for too long education authorities of all political persuasions have been tempted to sweep these problems under the carpet and have taken action only when an inspector's report has forced the issue into the open and it has been unavoidable. It is not good enough to fail large numbers of pupils in this way. We intend to tackle the problem urgently and the Bill will give us the extra means of doing so.

Under the passage of the Education (Schools) Act 1992, there were no systematic arrangements for identifying schools which were failing their pupils. The Bill moves forward to build upon that framework. It provides for clear procedures to remedy deficiencies in failing schools. The Education (Schools) Act provides for the regular and rigorous inspection of all maintained schools. There will be independent inspection of the quality of teaching and the standards achieved every four years. Every report will be published and made available to parents of children at the school. The report will highlight the strengths and the weaknesses. Schools will have to publish a plan of action to tackle the weaknesses identified by the inspectors and report on progress to parents every year. It is healthy that they should do that every year.

Where a report identifies very serious weaknesses in many aspects of teaching in a school—in other words, where the school is "at risk"—we shall ensure that deficiencies are remedied as quickly as possible so that the education of the children in the school is improved. That will be done by requiring the governing body to draw up an action plan. That plan will go to the local authority for comment and for proposals for it to play a greater role if it thinks the action proposed by the Governors is inadequate. The LEA will have a new power to appoint additional governors and enhanced power to withdraw delegated functions. Once delegation is withdrawn, the LEA would regain control over staffing matters, which should help the authority to take firm and effective action to address the problems of the school. The sort of firm and effective action which tends to be most effective is changing the head teacher.

The Secretary of State will see the plans from the governors and from the local education authority. He will then have an opportunity to consider whether the plans provide a clear basis for improving the performance of the school. If so, the school and the LEA will be allowed to put the plans into effect, and their progress in taking the necessary remedial action will be closely monitored. However, if my right hon. Friend judges that the action plan from the governing body and the supporting plan from the LEA would not result in improvements within a reasonable period, he could use the power in the Bill to bring the school under the management of an education association immediately. Equally, if the monitoring process showed that insufficient progress was being made, he would also be able to use this new power.

Education associations will provide a remedy for failing county and voluntary schools, but should a grant-maintained school be identified in an inspection report as being at risk, my right hon. Friend will have the power to replace all the first governors of the school. That would secure a majority on the governing body and thus achieve the same remedial purposes in the GM sector as in the LEA-maintained sector.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way to me on this important matter, which he calls performance. Given the freedom of governing bodies in LEAs and the freedom of which the Minister boasts for grant-maintained schools, and the advice that can be offered them, what additional skill does he think the education associations will be able to provide —they are presumably not statutory bodies—that would not be available to the local education authority or to the governors? He should also bear in mind that GM schools will have advice from the Department.

Mr. Forman: The associations would be set up under statute, under the rubric of the Bill. More to the point, we now have the possibility of injecting into failing schools the right sort of leadership and teaching skills—the right people to lead a school out of trouble. Schools get into trouble because their leadership has failed to come up to the standards required. This is how education associations will be able to help all failing schools, except grant-maintained schools, the approach to which I have already described.

We have received positive responses to our proposals for action in the case of failing schools, and I have every confidence that the House will support them wholeheartedly. No one wants failing schools left in disarray. We have to be able to step in to remedy problems in schools when their local authorities or their governors may have failed them. We owe as much to the children in such schools. They have only one chance of a school career. We must therefore do everything possible to see that they make the best of their talents and opportunities, especially if the school in which they find themselves is shown by the inspectorate to be at risk in this way. Nothing less will do for my right hon. Friend and my other ministerial colleagues.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Has the Minister given any consideration to providing governors with the power to remove a chairman who the governors believe is not acting in the best interests of a school, or a power to enable them to recommend the removal of a serving governor whose behaviour is unsatisfactory?

Mr. Forman: That is an interesting point, to which I do not have the answer. I shall invite my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools to deal with it when he winds up the debate.

Finally, I should like to summarise as succinctly as I can the case for GM schools, as they are central to the purposes of this Bill. They are popular with parents. They encourage increased parental involvement. They are directly accountable to the local community. They have control of their own budgets and they can manage their own affairs. They can secure value for money and redirect resources to premium educational purposes. Above all, they are characterised by a new and positive ethos. Andrew Adonis, writing in the *Financial Times* earlier this week—he is a Liberal councillor and, on this issue, no friend of the Government—had this to say:

> "A visit to most grant-maintained schools reveals an extra sense of pride and commitment among the staff at running their own show entirely free from local bureaucrats."

So at least a few members of the Liberal party have seen the light.

The framework set out in the Bill allows for flexible and evolutionary development. The pace of change will be determined by the outcome of parental ballots on GM status. The Bill is about conserving the best and reforming the rest.

The Bill rests on foundations laid down in previous years. It contains a range of provisions based on the philosophy set out in the White Paper—a philosophy that emphasises that structural and other reforms are pointless unless they are aimed at improving the quality of what is provided in the classroom. It is our conviction that the best way of achieving quality within the framework of the national curriculum is to increase parental choice and institutional diversity. That means not only greater autonomy for schools but greater accountability to parents and the community.

We have made great progress in recent years in reforming our education system. Our White Paper set out our vision; once implemented, the Bill will help us to realise that vision. As we approach the next century, our education system will be characterised not by uniformity but by diversity, not by bureaucratic power but by parent power, not by levelling down but by levelling up. Our system of education will be much the better for that. The Bill is one more vital stage on our long journey towards a really well-educated and trained society. It is a real investment in human capital, and I hope that the House will support it in the Lobby tonight.

5.5 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): The Government have had 13 years and they have not managed to do much yet.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) on what I understand is his first performance in an education debate. I am sure that he will be glad to have that ordeal out of the way. This is my first opportunity to take part in an education debate, too. *[Interruption.]* Before the Secretary of State gets too excited, I shall come to him in a moment.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I have to leave shortly.

Mr. Davies: The right hon. Gentleman had better stay for the latter part of my speech. I have some genuine thoughts to offer him.

I take issue with the Minister's speech on two points. First, he was unwise to suggest that Opposition Members who have been members of local authorities or education authorities, or who have worked as teachers or as education officers, should be disqualified from taking part in debates on education. I should have thought that the House needs a little more expertise. The Government have been getting into a mess not only over education but in many other disastrous areas, and they should welcome a little more expertise among their own ranks as well.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: In a moment. The Minister is on thin ice when he suggests that we are not qualified to contribute to the debate. I looked at "Dod" to discover what the Minister's interests were: they certainly had nothing to do with education. He is interested in economic policy, foreign policy, environmental issues and European issues. It is a pity that he is not interested in education, but I hope that as time goes by he will become more interested in it——

Mr. Forman *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I promised to give way to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) first. I understand that the Minister was a minor functionary in a Back-Bench education committee, and I will give way to him later.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman has referred to Members serving in local government. As one who served in local government for 17 years, may I tell him that what I saw there convinces me that this Bill is right?

Mr. Davies: I am not quite sure which authority the hon. Gentleman served on——

Mr. Marshall: A Labour-controlled authority.

Mr. Davies: If so, the hon. Gentleman was not educated as well as he should have been.

Mr. Forman: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should not rely so exclusively on "Dod"—he should look at other sources as well. He would find there that, before becoming a Minister, I had been involved in the world of education in one capacity or another, usually part-time because of my responsibilities as a Back Bencher. For many years I taught at Essex university and in other universities. I taught for the Workers Educational Association; I took four degrees; and I know a little bit about the world of education. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw his remark.

Mr. Davies: All I can say is that it did not show in the hon. Gentleman's speech.

However well experienced the Minister is, he is no Secretary of State for Wales. If the Bill is so important,

[Mr. Davies]

why was the Secretary of State for Wales not on the Front Bench this evening to open the debate on behalf of the Welsh Office? We know that he does not have a mandate in Wales and that the people of Wales did not vote for him or for the Bill, but the Secretary of State has responsibility for education in Wales and the least he could have done was come to the House to answer to the Bill to which he is a signatory.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): There is a simple explanation for the absence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He has been attending a funeral today.

Mr. Davies: In that case, I accept without reservation the Secretary of State's absence. However, he was absent throughout yesterday's debate, apart from the closing speeches. I do not know the domestic arrangements to which the Minister referred, but I understand that it was never the Secretary of State's intention to speak in the debate, whether or not there had been a bereavement or other demands on his time.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman made a handsome statement about my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and greeted him on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box; my hon. Friend made an excellent first speech. The hon. Gentleman said that he, too, was making his first speech in his new capacity and we agreed that this was a momentous moment. Therefore, we started off in a nice bipartisan way. Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that it might be fitting for him to apologise to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, whom he traduced as having no educational experience—a man who has been a university lecturer? The hon. Gentleman really should try to put things right.

Mr. Davies: I have seen such behaviour before. For the past four years I have been shadowing the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is something of an excitable individual, and I am seeing exactly the same behaviour this evening. There may be an explanation for it. It is relevant to the Bill——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been following the debate closely and so far we do not seem to have heard much about the Bill.

Mr. Davies: I have the option of exercising my usual courtesy in giving way to Conservative Members who wish to intervene, or desisting. If I wished to desist, I am sure that they would rise on points of order, making life difficult for you, Madam Deputy Speaker. However, it is important that we come on to the Bill.

It is as well to consider the attitudes of the Secretary of State for Education which have been demonstrated this evening. He is fond of tut-tutting in moral indignation about the state of our society, and that is the belief which lies at the heart of the Bill. In April this year, having just taken up his office, he wrote in an article in *The Spectator*:

> "Dwindling belief in redemption and damnation have led to loss of fear of the eternal consequences of goodness and badness."

The Scotsman commented on that, saying:

> "But he clearly sees a relevance to his new portfolio as Education Secretary since he wants schools to play a part in restoring the fear of damnation among the young. Rather alarmingly for a Minister responsible for science he also holds scientific advance in part responsible for loss of admonitory faith. His sincerity is not to be doubted, but his logic assuredly is."

For a Minister who is charged with the development of education policy to allow for the full provision of citizenship for our young people and for the development of the potential of our young people as they progress through the education system and to create a system of education which meets the social and economic needs of our country, the right hon. Gentleman is alarmingly out of touch. He shows himself to be an unbalanced and irrational Minister.

The Minister's faulty logic can be seen in the Bill. We are told that this is the cap on the progress of 13 years. Since 1979 we have had 17 major pieces of legislation and countless pieces of secondary legislation, but where is the progress? Where do we look in our education system to see the brave new world which, time and again, we have been told would be created by that legislation?

There is much need for reform, but the Bill is not the jewel in the crown. If there is need for reform in our education service, it was identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) yesterday when he referred to the £1·5 billion underfunding in the education system. We can see it in Wales, where capital expenditure on school buildings has been cut by 35 per cent. since 1981. *[Interruption.]* The Minister of State will have a chance to correct me if he wishes.

There is a need for reform. We want decent buildings and an end to overcrowding. In Wales during the past 10 years, the teacher-pupil ratio in junior schools has worsened. We need a Government who will stop denigrating the teaching profession, stop centralising and start working with the local education authorities to allow them to get on with the job. None of that is contained in the Bill and that is what makes it, at best, an irrelevance and, at worst, an appalling interference with the good practice that has been developed by our local education authorities.

Sir Wyn Roberts: On a factual point, I do not know where the hon. Gentleman got his figure for a decrease in capital allocations, but there has been a real-terms increase in capital allocations of 21 per cent. since 1986-87. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that, as I said last night, in the current year there was an underspend by local education authorities in Wales on the capital side of 15 per cent. There was also an underspend last year and the year before.

Mr. Davies: The Minister is making two substantial points. The Minister knows as well as I do that on the underspend I was quoting the period from 1980 to 1991, the period during which the Government had been in control of the education budget. It is perfectly reasonable for me to use that period and it is unreasonable to the Minister to apply those figures from 1985 to 1991. I am afraid that he will not get away with that trick.

The second suggestion is that there has been underspending by local authorities. I discussed that very matter this morning with the treasurer of my local education authority. He explained to me the difficulties in meeting the revenue contributions to capital expenditure because of the cuts and the capping for which the Government are responsible. If there is an underspend, it is nothing to do with an over-provision for education. If the Minister is saying that we do not need to spend money on our schools, I suggest that he visits schools in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea or the valley communities.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Or Hemsworth.

Mr. Davies: I cannot ask the Minister to go to Hemsworth. We cannot allow a Welsh Office Minister to interfere in the affairs of England. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that.

The Government have allowed precious little opportunity for debate and public consultation on the White Paper and I am clear that that was done deliberately and cynically to prevent there being any real debate. But even within that limited time there was universal criticism from schools, educationists, local authorities, trade unionists, parents, teachers and everyone involved in the education system.

A *Times* editorial summed it up very well on 29 July, stating:

> "The government is dismayed at Britain's poor education record and has responded as governments always respond. It has blamed everybody but itself, and decided to nationalise the schools . . .This is one of the most dramatic extensions of Whitehall power seen since the war . . . This is a devastating vote of no confidence in local democracy . . . Nationalisation will make schools more not less uniform . . . The government has not thought through its search for 'diversity, parental choice, specialism and standards' in the resulting school system."

That criticism, expressed by Simon Jenkins—then editor of *The Times*—reflects very well the plethora of condemnation that has come from every part of the country.

Mr. Forman: I think that, for the sake of completeness, the House should be acquainted with the mature and considered view expressed by a *Times* leader on 31 October. That leader stated:

> "If the bill seems to have conflicting motives—centralising control of the curriculum where it preaches greater diversity, for example—it is because the political manoeuvring of the education establishment has left little alternative. The interlocking influence of the schools inspectorate, the colleges of education, the teaching unions and the council education officers who dominate the staffing of state schools present a skilful variety of different faces when threatened with change."

That is the real view of *The Times* today.

Mr. Davies: The Minister must accept that he cannot rewirte history—much as he would like to do so, and despite his ability to interfere with the teaching of history in schools. The fact is that in July, when the White Paper was published for consultation, *The Times* was vociferous in its condemnation.

Mr. Forman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: If the Minister wanted to use the conversion of *The Times* in support of his case, he should have done so during his speech. He chose not to do so, however, and I chose to cite the view expressed by *The Times*—under its then editor—when the document was published, when the issue was open to consultation and when the Government were seeking the views of the public. As far as I am concerned, that is the record, and the record must stand.

Given that the Government have presided over 13 years of what has been at best a mediocre performance, and given that their proposals have been condemned by all who have the best interests of education at heart, why on earth are the Government introducing the Bill? What do they intend to do?

We can identify three developments. First, there is the desire to control—a theme which has run through many of the policies of the present Government and their two predecessors. By that, I mean the view that Whitehall knows best; that, if powers can be taken away from the centre—from the pluralistic institutions of our society—we shall have a better form of government. Secondly, there is an anti-local government ethos, principally because local government has stood out against the Government's centralising tendencies. Thirdly, and most worrying of all, the Bill paves the way for the reintroduction of selection in schools, and, I believe, for the reintroduction of market forces in the education system.

The Bill is a recipe for chaos, and I think that the Secretary of State knows that. Last night, when challenged about the way in which the policies would affect surplus school places, the right hon. Gentleman said:

> "We must also deal with the removal of surplus school places . . . The money wasted on maintaining many of those places should be available to spend on children and their teachers, to whom I am most grateful. I guess that many of them would be glad if some of the money locked up in surplus school places was available in the classroom."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 635.]

Those are perfectly acceptable and sensible sentiments. Unfortunately, however, the system of grant-maintained schools is being deliberately abused by the Welsh Office to undermine the very process of rationalisation that is taking place in Wales.

Two clear examples are Cwmcarn and Brynmawr schools, both of which have been earmarked for closure by Gwent county council as part of a proposed rationalisation programme. Both were small and had declining rolls, and it was considered necessary to secure the future of the other schools in the catchment area. I know that it is difficult for the Minister of State to come to terms with this, because he does not really know where the schools are.

His ignorance is clearly shared by the Secretary of State for Education. Last night, when my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) was making the same point, the Secretary of State suggested that the two schools were in my hon. Friend's constituency. He subsequently had to apologise from the Dispatch Box, with the immortal words, "I am not very good at geography." That is something of an admission, coming from a reader in geography at the university of Oxford. However, we are concerned not with the Secretary of State's knowledge of geography, but with his knowledge of education. His proposals are destructive and damaging.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: Let me give another example first: it relates directly to the Minister of State, and he may wish to respond.

About 12 months ago, I had a conversation with the Minister—not a confidential conversation—about a school in my constituency, Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni. It is a Welsh-medium school. The building is very old; the comprehensive school had moved out, and the building had become surplus to requirements. It was sub-standard accommodation, decrepit and with holes in the roof. Mid Glamorgan county council, however, is striving bravely to provide Welsh-medium education there.

[Mr. Davies]

I said to the Minister, informally, "Wyn, we really do have a problem at Ysgol Gyfun. The building is dilapidated and outdated, and the form of education provided there is unacceptable in the 20th century." The Minister replied, "Tell it to opt out." Of course, in the Minister's eyes, that made absolute sense. Tell the school to opt out; then it will go to the top of the list. It will receive preferential treatment, priority treatment.

That is all very well for Ysgol Gyfun, in which I have a particular and passionate interest, but what about the other schools that will be prejudiced as a result of such priority treatment? The example of Ysgol Gyfun illustrates very well the fact that some individuals in my constituency stand to benefit, while other schools in Mid Glamorgan will lose resources and suffer as a result. Moreover, if the Minister gives Ysgol Gyfun additional resources, the peculiar way in which our local education authorities are financed—education resources are not hypothecated, as they are in England—means that Mid Glamorgan's social services, such as provision for children and the elderly, will be cut.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is precisely because schools under local authority control do not receive all the resources that they could receive—in terms of both revenue and capital —that I recommended such a course. As for Cwmcarn, a grant-maintained school, it is the constituency of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). If that school should have closed, why did the right hon. Gentleman— then Leader of the Opposition—put the strongest possible case for its retention?

Mr. Davies: I know where Cwmcarn school is. I taught a couple of miles up the road at Newbridge school. I know, too, that that school is in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn, who was then the leader of the Labour party. If that school had not been in the Islwyn constituency, I also know that it would not have been granted permission to opt out. That decision had nothing to do with the educational merits of Cwmcarn school. It was an act of deliberate malice to try to embarrass the leader of the Labour party.

The Minister of State properly referred to the question of funding. Let me take this opportunity to put a direct question both to him and to the Under-Secretary of State for Schools, who is to reply to the debate. Can the Minister of State give a guarantee that any funds that are made available for schools such as Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni will be additional to the expenditure currently being made available to Mid Glamorgan county council? Is that new money? Can the Minister answer that question?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I cannot do so.

Mr. Davies: I know that the right hon. Gentleman cannot do so. That is why I asked him the question.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that I cannot anticipate the statement that we are to hear on Thursday.

Mr. Davies: I think that we shall all find that Thursday is a day for bad news.

The Minister is encouraging schools to opt out. He knows that money is not available and that the additional resources, which will be accelerated by means of the Bill, will be taken away from people who are already underfunded. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Schools who is to reply to the debate will deal with a subject that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers). It has been the subject of considerable press speculation. I understand that 65 local education authorities in England are overspending on the basis of their standard spending assessments to the tune of about £524 million. In addition, 43 local education authorities are spending £311 million below their SSAs. Can we have a clear and unequivocal statement that——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): No, the hon. Gentleman cannot have it.

Mr. Davies: I got an answer even before I asked the question. The Minister shows himself to be a man of considerable talents. If we cannot have the answer, how on earth can the Government give the assurance that they give at the moment, which is that schools stand to benefit financially if they opt out? Notwithstanding Thursday's proposals, the Minister tells us that the Government can give no guarantees.

For those local authorities that are spending above their SSAs, the problem is that the calculation that will be used to provide schools with additional resources will be based not on the SSA but on the current expenditure of the local education authority. That means that it will have more money than if the calculation had been based on the SSA. We are told, however, that in two years' time the formula will revert to the SSA. That must provide a clear warning signal to any school that is considering opting out that it will be offered a financial inducement and a bribe now, but in two years' time, however, it will find that the promised money is not forthcoming. That is before the cuts that we know will be announced on Thursday. The Minister cannot give an answer.

One of my constituents wrote to the Secretary of State for Education on 20 August. She had been a school governor. She is a parent and is very much involved in her local community. She urged caution on the Government and pleaded with them to think of the implications and to consult widely before introducing these reforms. She received a reply from the Department for Education on 18 September. It said:

> "Dear Mrs. Davies"—

She is no relation—

> "Thank you for your letter"

concerning the White Paper "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools"

> "of 20 August to the Secretary of State about the above. This is, however, a matter for the Welsh Office . . . and I have passed your letter to them to reply to you direct."

My constituent had not received a reply from the Welsh Office by 19 October, so she contacted me and asked me to take up the matter with the Welsh Office, which I did straight away. A few weeks later I had a reply from the Secretary of State for Wales, which said:

> "Dear Ron, Thank you for your letter of 19 October on behalf of Mrs. Davies . . . I am sorry that Mrs. Davies has had to wait so long for a reply. We do not, however, have any record of her letter being received from the Department of Education."

That is a fairly good illustration of the extent to which the Welsh Office is involved in decision making—that an individual who makes a formal submission to the Secretary of State for Education urging caution in response to the consultation document has the courtesy of a reply from the Secretary of State for Education but does not even receive an acknowledgement from the Secretary of State for Wales. Apparently, the Welsh Office cannot even find her letter.

Even better is to come. The Secretary of State for Wales tried to reassure Mrs. Davies by saying:

> "Within these arrangements"—

regarding grant-maintained schools—

> "there is nothing to prevent LEAs continuing to provide advice and services to all schools, even those that have decided to become grant maintained."

That is a completely misleading and dishonest statement. As grant-maintained schools opt out of local education authority control, the ability of LEAs to provide a central core of services will be diminished by each and every opt out. Apart from the local education authorities being subverted, the whole capital expenditure programme will be subverted. There will be top slicing. The cream will be taken off. The ability of local authorities to deliver their statutory requirements, in terms of attendance and transport, will be undermined.

As my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) made clear last night, the ability of local education authorities to make provision for special needs will be undermined. Their ability to maintain establishments for outdoor activities will also be undermined. The provision of peripatetic teachers for services that cannot be provided in all schools will be undermined as schools opt out. The advisory service that seeks to improve and maintain the quality of teaching in the classroom, will be undermined because of the undermining of local education authorities.

Welsh-medium education in Wales will be undermined, too. I shall give the Minister two examples. I have already referred to Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni. If that school were to decide to opt out, parents in the Rhymney valley who wish their children to have a Welsh-medium education will have no option. They will be able to send their children to an opted-out school or they will be denied Welsh-medium education. That is no choice. I know that the Minister of State has actively encouraged Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni to opt out. If it does, the provision of Welsh-medium education in Mid Glamorgan will be undermined.

I know that my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in Gwynedd are concerned about the way in which the opting out of schools will undermine and destroy the cohesive fabric of Welsh education as it has developed in the county of Gwynedd.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): My hon. Friend is making an absolutely excellent speech—*[Interruption.]* —far superior to the speech that we heard yesterday from the Secretary of State for Education. Does my hon. Friend agree that the educational psychology service will also be undermined? As schools opt out, local authorities will need fewer educational psychologists and therefore will be unable to provide that service to opted-out schools. Special educational needs will be affected by opting out.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is correct. That is why parents are voting increasingly against the proposals— most dramatically in the case of Gowerton in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell). Recently they voted against the proposals by about three and a half or four to one. There was no bribery or persuasion. The information was presented to the parents and they came to a balanced judgment.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): My hon. Friend perhaps underestimates the fact that, when local authorities find themselves in this dilemma, as did West Glamorgan county council in the case of Gowerton comprehensive school, they sometimes shift towards delegating a much larger proportion of their budget to local schools that are not grant-maintained. The threshold for the retention of core services could be diminished so much that their retention, which is so important if the family of schools is to be retained, is fundamentally undermined. Local education authorities must ensure that they do not delegate too much of their budget to non-grant-maintained schools, or that will happen.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend makes his case very powerfully and persuasively, and in so doing raises a further point. I wish that the Minister of State, Welsh Office would consult the Under-Secretary of State for Education and give us an answer. Hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies are concerned about the local government reorganisation. I am aware of the delays that might result from the reorganisation in England, but the Secretary of State for Wales has told us that there will not be a commission for Wales or any delay because the Government will move immediately to a pattern of unitary authorities. That has peculiar circumstances and consequences in Wales, because the central debate is about what form of local authority will be best equipped to pick up the residual responsibility that is now discharged by the local education authority. As yet, we do not know.

We have the prospect of the Bill going through Parliament, but at the same time the Secretary of State is sitting on the proposals that will determine the form of local government in Wales that will have to operate it. It is a nightmare for those involved in local authority planning, especially local education authority services. I plead with the Minister of State, Welsh Office to consider that matter and the enormous worry that is being felt by those in local government in Wales and to ensure that when the Under-Secretary of State for Schools replies he will be in a position to give a considered answer to the point.

Mr. Forth: Does not the hon. Gentleman see that it is his rather pathetic and craven adherence to the thought that only an LEA or local authority monopoly provider can possibly make any education provision that has got him into the box that he is in? The more flexible people are prepared to be and the more that schools are prepared to look beyond their LEAs for the provision of services, the more flexible and certain that provision is likely to be. That applies as much, or more, in Wales as anywhere else.

Mr. Davies: Let me concede straight away that the Government won the last election, have a majority in the House and have every right to put this legislation through the House. I question their right to legislate for Wales, but I shall concede that point for a moment. The Minister must recognise that the number of schools that have opted out in Wales can be counted on one hand. He said that local government reorganisation will take effect from 1995. The prospect of anything more than a dozen or a couple of dozen schools opting out will not be a reality for four or five years.

Mr. Forman: No.

Mr. Davies: All the experience tells us that, and the Minister should consider it.

In the meantime, those who plan local education authority services must decide what to do next year. Those who are considering how the new local authorities will operate after 1995 must know on what basis they will discharge services, or does the Under-Secretary think that that can be put to one side—"Local authorities are redundant so we need not worry and, hopefully, a trust will come along, organise a ballot and do it themselves"? That was implicit in the casual, dismissive attitude of the Under-Secretary.

Education in Wales is now endangered. It is doubly endangered by the Bill and the spectre of local government reorganisation, which the Government are making a hash of, and they are refusing to tell the Welsh people what will happen.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Davies: The Under-Secretary cannot add anything; I have made the point. I ask him to consult the Minister of State, Welsh Office, who is clearly on unsure ground with local government in Wales. Perhaps when the Under-Secretary replies to the debate he will give a more balanced reply.

Mr. Patten: Why will the hon. Gentleman not let the Under-Secretary respond? He is frightened.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The class is getting too restless.

Mr. Davies: If there is one hon. Member at whom the Secretary of State cannot throw that accusation, it is me. If, however, you, Madam Deputy Speaker, deem it appropriate to allow him to rise to the Dispatch Box, I clearly must accept it.

I want some answers from the Minister that will allow those responsible for planning education in Wales to carry out their task on a reasonable and coherent basis. The Secretary of State for Education and his cohorts are interested only in making cheap education points, and I am afraid that it will not wash.

Let me come to my final point——

Mr. John Marshall: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. At the beginning of the debate, you asked for speeches to be kept relatively brief. We are now hearing the final point after 40 minutes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman was not listening carefully enough. I was referring to interventions.

Mr. Davies: I know that the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) has some difficulty with his attention span, but he was the first hon. Member to whom I gave way. Perhaps he should bear that in mind.

The Bill has been presented as a reforming measure which will offer choice and diversity in our education system. It will do nothing of the sort. It will lead to divisiveness and competition and will set school against school, community against community and provider against provider. That is of no benefit to parents, children or the proper development of education in this country. To many Conservative Members, that will be an unpalatable truth. It will become increasingly clear that it is the truth as the Bill proceeds and as our education service degenerates into chaos. I am convinced that it will not be too long before that chaos is reversed, either by a Government U-turn or by a Labour Government.

5.49 pm

Sir Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): I shall try to set an example of brevity, because many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

In common with many colleagues on both sides of the House, I spent many years in local government. I do not share the enthusiasm of those who seek to condemn it for all that is ill in the education system. For a period in my career, I was privileged to be chairman of the Convention of Local Education Authorities, and I would defend much of what local education authorities were able to achieve. In fact, much of the innovation in education came from them.

One must recognise that time has moved on, and that things that perhaps were possible in slightly happier days when there was much more consensus between local and national government are now no longer possible. It would be foolish of anyone to refuse to accept that that change has taken place.

Perhaps that is best exemplified by the way in which Secretaries of State of all political persuasions have fought with their Cabinet colleagues for their share of resources, so that what they see as the priorities for education expenditure are passed on to our schools.

Increasingly, the argument has turned on whether the money fought for at national level is being properly targeted in our schools. I have concluded, somewhat reluctantly, that the drawing of a much clearer line between funding determined nationally and resources available to be deployed by individual schools is long overdue. I propose to confine my remarks, therefore, to what I regard as the logic of the Government's own position.

I share the reservations expressed by many bodies, including the National Association of Head Teachers, over the difficulties that will probably arise—let us be frank—in the difficult period of transition from local education authorities to funding councils. We should consider that matter extremely carefully.

It would be much better, and in the logic of the Government's position, if each school had a clearly defined sum of money. Rather than allowing a somewhat woolly withering on the vine, we should say that, at a certain point—perhaps when 50 per cent. of schools have become grant-maintained—schools should go over to grant-maintained status completely. That would end the uncertainty once and for all.

The transition could become unnecessarily expensive and unduly bureaucratic. I should not want my right hon. Friend's hard-fought battles for education expenditure to end in such a dissipation of funds. I want all the money that my right hon. Friend can wring out of the Treasury to be spent in our schools, and I ask him to consider those points carefully during the passage of the Bill, which I regard as an opportunity.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to special educational needs. The hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) and I are both members of the Select Committee, and share an interest in that subject. I have been heartened by the attention that has been paid by hon. Members on both sides of the House to that aspect of education, which is especially important.

Like the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), I was a member of the Committee that considered the Education Act 1981, which became known as the Warnock Act. Members of that Committee attached a great deal of importance to special educational needs, and recognised the need to ensure that children with special education needs are dealt with properly and equitably within our system.

I warmly welcome the assurances given by the Minister in his opening speech. In the past, I have been critical of the Government for skating over the problem of special educational needs, and I believe that there were some deficiencies in the Education Reform Act 1988. I am therefore delighted that the Government are attacking the problem in the present Bill.

The Secretary of State knows that the Select Committee is considering a particular aspect of special educational needs, and I ask all hon. Members, including my ministerial colleagues, to accept that, as we discuss the new arrangements, we should not lose sight of the fundamental principles that were debated during the passage of the Warnock Act. Although we agreed that we should move much further towards integration—I welcome the figures that we have heard this afternoon—the Committee recognised the need, which we did not regard as one that would go away, for special centres of excellence to deal with the areas of greatest need.

Last Friday, I visited Rowan Park special school in my constituency and saw for myself the work that is being done with children whose need is so great that no one could realistically expect them to be integrated into mainstream schools. I talked to a teacher who told me that, that very day, one little boy with severe communication problems had said the word "duck" for the first time. Hon. Members may not think that that is a great achievement, but that child had previously been totally incapable of communicating, even by using eye contact, even though he could understand much of what was placed before him. When shown a farmyard scene, he volunteered the word "duck". The teacher said that it was the highlight of her week.

Special needs arouse much emotion, but we should nevertheless consider the matter coldly and objectively, which means ensuring that schools have the resources to cope with special needs because they cannot be dealt with on the cheap.

On a more general and slightly philosophical note, I remind the House of what the Minister said in his opening speech about the Government's desire for quality in the classroom. That desire is shared by all hon. Members, regardless of their views on how best such quality can be achieved. We should be aware that the reforms—the national curriculum and the delegation of budgets to schools, which have been warmly welcomed by many in our education system—need to be constantly reviewed to establish whether what is being achieved in schools measures up to the Government's expectations. The Committee stage will present us with an opportunity to consider that.

The Under-Secretary of State who will wind up the debate knows of my long-standing concern over the effects, in many our our schools, of formula funding. I welcome the assurance given to the Select Committee by the Secretary of State that, in their review of formula funding, the Government would consider all those important matters, because we cannot deliver an improvement in educational standards purely and simply by passing legislation.

We must be aware that improvements in standards are delivered by teachers who stand in front of classes. I am delighted at the increasing emphasis that my right hon. Friend is placing on that concept, thus giving the lie to the suggestion that all Conservative Members do is knock the teaching profession. That profession alone is capable of implementing the Government's reforms.

We therefore cannot refuse to listen to the fears and suggestions for improvements that are being made by those eminently qualified practitioners. We are talking not about people who mismanage their budgets but about people who find themselves having to make decisions that go against the interests of the qualitative improvements that the Government seek. It would be quite wrong if we did not take the opportunity afforded by the Bill's passage through the House to consider those matters.

The Bill contains much of merit, and continues with reforms that many of us believe to have been long overdue. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to consider this, however: it sometimes pays to look at what is actually happening as a consequence of such reforms. We should not be afraid of saying that some changes are necessary, but that need not deflect us from our central purpose, which is to ensure that our children have the best education that we can give them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, I remind the House that there will be a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 pm and 8 pm.

5.59 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): The press release which accompanied the publication of the Bill on 30 October boasted about its impressive vital statistics—200 pages, 252 clauses and 17 schedules. However, it did not point out the extremely short consultation period between the publication of the White Paper "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools" on 28 July and the publication of the Bill. That is surely one of the shortest consultation periods ever in relation to the significance claimed by many hon. Members for the Bill.

The White Paper had a remarkably short gestation period if it was to be, as was claimed, the crowning feature of more than a decade of Conservative education legislation. The White Paper never looked like a consultative document. The time scale and the features on the face of the Bill suggest that it was never intended to be such a document.

Therefore, the Bill bears the flaws evident throughout the White Paper. The aims of the White Paper—for the best education for every child—were blameless. Indeed, the Prime Minister put his name to those flawless aspirations. Unfortunately, the proposals that followed had little evident relevance to the achievement of those aims.

The White Paper had five great themes—quality, diversity, parental choice, autonomy and accountability. Of those, only the first has direct relevance to the aims set out in the foreword. The rest are, at the best, diversions.

[Mr. Edward O'Hara]

My first reaction to the White Paper on 28 July was that, if the Secretary of State truly sought to clothe his aims with substance, then the emperor had no clothes. After further reflection and reading of the White Paper, I changed that image. I imagined one of those naked men that we sometimes see in variety shows dancing on the stage with balloons concealing their nakedness. The balloons were the proposals which diverted the reader's attention from the original aims of the Bill.

Let us consider the themes of diversity, parental choice, autonomy and accountability and see how they relate to the delivery of quality education for every child. In itself, diversity does not guarantee quality. Diversity in an education market is predicated on variations of quality for the consumer to choose between. In the White Paper and the Bill, grant-maintained schools are regarded as superior institutions in that education market.

Diversity of the kind envisaged in the Bill is a narrow distortion. It is diversity of schools that vary within parameters that have been tightly drawn by the Secretary of State. Diversity does not guarantee parental choice. For example, some parents would like schools to offer an education different from the parameters laid down from the centre by the Secretary of State. Some parents would like teaching of reading, course work and activity learning of types proscribed by the Secretary of State. There is no parental choice for those parents.

There is another way in which parents will not necessarily exercise their choice in an education market as envisaged in the Bill. If grant-maintained schools are over-subscribed, particularly if they become specialist schools—hon. Members have referred to that danger in the proposals—the choice will belong to the schools and not to parents. So much for parental choice.

Parental choice in itself will not guarantee quality. Parents differ, from being positively hostile to education, through apathy and incomprehension to being over-zealous in what they demand and expect from schools. If the Secretary of State stands by his statement in the White Paper that parents always know best, are parents always right? If they are not, when, how and by whom will that be determined?

Nor is autonomy a guarantee of quality. It is dangerous for grant-maintained schools to be subjected to such little regulatory control as is envisaged in the Bill. Similarly, the principle of accountability in the Bill is a sham. The funding agencies for England and Wales are accountable to no one but the Secretary of State.

There is no local accountability, but the agencies are to have sole responsibility, or shared responsibility with local education authorities, for provision, distribution and management of school places. That is a matter of intense local significance. It is difficult to see any connection between that and the delivery of quality education to every child in every school in an area. In short, there was a mismatch between the impeccable aims of the White Paper and its proposals. That mismatch is carried through into this deeply flawed Bill.

The White Paper and the Bill are all about administration, and contain nothing about delivery of quality. They contain nothing about funding except proposals for bureaucratic structures the funding for which is to be found from savings on surplus places in schools. If those savings could be found, the money would be better spent on resources and teachers to fill the schools that are delivering education to our children. There is nothing in the White Paper about teachers—the people who are to deliver that quality education. The White Paper and the Bill are an empty sham.

I want to refer to the grant-maintained sector, because the expansion of that sector is central to the Bill's purpose. Every line of the Bill is based on the presumption that grant-maintained schools are superior, although there is no evidence yet to support that contention, but there is accumulating evidence of the problems into which such schools can run. It is all the more regrettable that, in default of that evidence, the Secretary of State is so determined to simplify, extend and accelerate the process of opting out.

The removal of the second ballot would make it possible for ambush tactics to be used. A vote might be taken at a thinly attended meeting at the end of a long agenda, with no counter-balancing opportunity. It is reprehensible that that situation should be made possible. Important decisions like a ballot to opt out should be taken coolly, and ratified in the light of full and informed debate.

There is scope for argument about the curbs on LEAs campaigning against opt-out proposals. We believe that the LEAs defend the legitimate interests of the community at large against a pressure group with selfish, narrow interests. The Government choose to view them differently, and to distort their purpose and practices. There may be some argument about that, but there is no argument about the inequality of curbing LEAs and at the same time supporting and encouraging governing bodies which want to campaign the other way. That is but one example of the more than even-handed treatment given to grant-maintained schools.

The Bill is weak in what it has to say on provision in grant-maintained schools for pupils with special educational needs. It now offers them the opportunity to apply for change of character at the point of opting out. I could recount a long list of more than even-handed enticements to schools that opt out, but I am aware of the time constraint.

I warn schools to beware, because there is the potential for discord and chaos in the suggestion that primary schools might opt out in clusters and that resources may be distributed inequitably between those clusters when those primary schools may still be in competition in the market.

We must also be aware of the big black hole of the future funding formula for grant-maintained and maintained schools to which my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) referred earlier.

There is not adequate time to refer to the potential for chaos in the division of responsibilities between funding agencies and local education authorities. Funding agencies are weak bodies. They have no responsibility for quality control, unlike their counterparts created by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. There is a potential for disputes and discord between funding agencies and local authorities. Such disputes must always be decided by the Secretary of State. We can guess which way the Secretary of State will make his decision in a dispute between funding agencies and local authorities.

This is a Bill of missed points and missed opportunities. The dangers in it——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the 10-minute rule is strict.

6.10 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton) has had experience on local education authorities. I spent 10 years on local education authorities and was on the Association of Metropolitan Authorities education committee. I agree with my hon. Friend that not all local authorities are bad.

The Bill recognises—it is a difficulty that the Labour party does not seem to be able to address—that if standards in the classroom are to be raised, it will be done by encouraging the partnership of parents, teachers and pupils, on which all good education depends. The best way to encourage that partnership is to ensure that parents have a direct and intimate investment in their own schools. Grant-maintained schools and their popularity are all about that process of empowerment.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): Will the hon. Gentlemen give way?

Mr. Coombs: I shall not give way because I have only 10 minutes.

I welcome the streamlined procedures for grant-maintained schools in the Bill. I recognise the importance of education associations when things go wrong. I recognise that it is important for the Government to take action against truancy and to strengthen the moral curriculum of schools.

It is curious that the Labour party seems to have abandoned parents and parental choice. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said yesterday, on 10 June the previous Opposition spokesman on education, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), appeared to move towards parents when he said that Labour must not appear to be in a position of opposition to those parents who would like greater control over their own schools.

It is curious that the Labour party should be against the parents and schools given that the last survey showed that 88 per cent. of grant-maintained schools had an increase in the number of pupils following the change to grant-maintained status and 82 per cent. had an increase in the books and equipment that they were able to produce for their children.

Graham Lock, the headmaster of Audenshaw high school, a grant-maintained school in Manchester, said:

> "It is a bit of an insult for Labour to say to the same people who want to take power over these schools that they are entitled to vote for the Government but they are not fit to vote for the way they want these schools to be run."

Mr. Byers: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member to mislead the House? Audenshaw grammar school is not in the Manchester local education authority area.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Matters of fact are not matters for the Chair, fortunately.

Mr. Coombs: I said that Audenshaw school was in Greater Manchester. Progress has been made at grant-maintained schools in areas of the country that one would not regard as wealthy, such as Small Heath school and Baverstock school in the middle of Birmingham. One must examine the views of parents who send their children to those grant-maintained schools.

I shall give a few examples. Mr. Sultan Mohamed, whose daughter turned down a place at one of the city's grammar schools to go to Small Heath school, said that the reason why Small Heath school gave a thorough education was that

> "the school belongs to the community. You automatically feel part of it. I like the home/school contract. It binds both parties into supporting each other."

Mrs. Pickerill, whose child goes to Baverstock school—the Labour party should listen to this—said:

> "I used to be for the council. But it doesn't work. I've come right round. We've only taken back what's ours by right. Now we've made something of the school, much more than they ever did."

As has been shown by the paranoid reaction of the Labour party to the Bill and grant-maintained schools, it is curious that Labour Members should object to a meeting that I have arranged in my constituency on 27 November merely to give information to schools and parents on which they will be able to ballot. Such paranoia is shown by various Labour-controlled local education authorities, which, in the guise of giving objective information to schools that want to think about opting out and balloting, give schools biased information. Birmingham education authority gave what it called essential information on grant-maintained status and opting out to parents of children at Hampstead Hall school. The information said:

> "No existing grant-maintained school has been able to demonstrate that opting out has improved or maintained the educational standard of the school."

What absolute bunkum. The authority need only examine the improvements that have been made in Baverstock school and Small Heath school in its city.

In the past four years, examination results have doubled at Baverstock school and trebled at Small Heath school. Truancy at Baverstock school is 0·04 per cent.; previously, it was appalling. Truancy at Small Heath school is only 1 per cent., which is considerably lower than the city average. In 1982, attendance at Baverstock school was 81 per cent. Under grant-maintained status, attendance is 95 per cent. at Baverstock school and 93 per cent. at Small Heath school. Under grant-maintained status, the number of staff at Baverstock school has increased by eight and a half and at Small Heath school by six. Baverstock school can now boast a sixth form of 92 pupils. Small Heath school has been able to reinstate its sixth form. Those statistics show the significant improvements that have been made in two inner-city schools that have changed to grant-maintained status.

I shall make some comments on other aspects of grant-maintained status. First, it is extremely important that the Education Assets Board makes a sensible decision about Great Barr school. If we are to encourage relationships among local education authorities, local authorities and, ultimately, grant-maintained schools, it is absolutely crucial that grant-maintained schools must not take assets with them in perpetuity.

Secondly, it is crucial for the Government to guarantee capital programmes for the schools that have achieved grant-maintained status. I have heard rumours in one of the major cities not too far from the west midlands that a deputy chairman of education has visited certain schools that are thinking of becoming grant-maintained and said that the new roofing programmes would go by the board if the schools did something so stupid as to go grant-maintained.

[Mr. Coombs]

Thirdly, it is absolutely crucial to step head teacher training in not simply administration but management development at grant-maintained schools. I know that the Westminster college in Oxford and the community education development centre which is based in the west midlands are keen to help with such training.

Fourthly, it is vital that we move to a system whereby all parents, irrespective of how obtuse and prehistoric their education authorities are, have the opportunity to ballot regularly on the grant-maintained schools option. I shall certainly table amendments to the Bill to allow that to happen.

In the Bill, there are significant advantages in respect of statementing. In my own local authority of Hereford and Worcester, one girl was asked for a statement on 23 March 1991. She is dyslexic. A week ago, I heard from her mother, who said, "I regret that I'm no further forward with the LEA, who are still procrastinating." I hope that the special education procedures within the Bill will be amended so that time limits are laid down to ensure that local education authorities act expeditiously.

I welcome the parts of the Bill that relate to religious education and the ethos of schools. I should have liked the Bill to take up the measures suggested by the children's legal centre, putting into effect much of Lord Elton's report on discipline in schools. I shall table amendments to establish procedures to ascertain pupils' views on matters affecting them and to establish an accessible complaints procedure.

Apart from that, the Education Bill encourages choice——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman of the time limit.

6.20 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): The Government obviously intend effectively to eliminate local government powers over school education. The White Paper puts it explicitly, describing the Secretary of State's hope

"that over time all schools will become grant-maintained".

Responsibility for such services as educational psychology, welfare and home-to-school transport will remain with the LEAs "for the time being" and it is anticipated that the private sector will step in to provide museums, the library service, peripatetic music teaching and the like. However, that massive and deeply significant removal of local government powers is to be carried out with what I can only describe as the illusion of parental consent. The White Paper states:

"It is right that the route to GM status should remain the parental ballot."

In Wales, it is clear that if it were left to the volition of parents, the grant-maintained movement would never get off the ground. Unlike England, where about 300 schools have become, or are becoming, grant-maintained, in Wales there are only three. As has been established, two of those were set up as a result of the LEA's decision to close them in an attempt to deal with a Government-defined problem of surplus places.

If the Welsh Office's approval of those schools' applications had any logical basis, it was that the competitive environment—market forces—free of any regulation was more likely to solve the problem of surplus places than strategic planning by a body charged with that responsibility. That would be perfectly consistent with the Government's ideology. Yesterday an hon. Member citing the work of T. S. Eliot spoke of the beneficial effects of friction between schools. That was the authentic voice of Thatcherism—an ideology which still affects policy formation, after it has lost all intellectual conviction.

It is clear that leaving education to market forces is inconsistent with the provision of a comprehensive and just public education system. It would not work. Strategic decisions concerning the provision of places have to be taken and someone has to take them—some body has to take them. The White Paper and the Bill show that the Government clearly recognise that. The only serious remaining questions are, what decisions need to be taken by a body other than the schools, and what sort of creature should that body be?

The Government's answer is that it should be an unelected quango—the Schools Funding Council for Wales—rather than local education authorities. According to the Bill, the funding council will be able to assume that role partly when sufficient schools have opted for grant-maintained status and completely when 75 per cent. of pupils are educated in such schools. The key question is, how do the Government propose to shift from A to B and at the same time maintain the illusion of parental consent? There are two answers. First, they will seek to create a climate in which schools and parents perceive an inevitable and increasing momentum towards the break-up of the existing system and thus wish to be considered pioneering and abreast of the times, rather than dilatory. Secondly, they will undermine the will of local government to continue as strategically significant bodies and providers of support services.

The Government intend to reorganise local government in Wales so that, in 1995, there will be about 23 unitary multi-purpose authorities. They will be small and inexperienced compared with the county councils. Many will be run by a new generation of councillors. How much stomach will they have to assert their position as strategic bodies, knowing that the thrust of Government policy is to remove that function?

As soon as 10 per cent. of pupils are in grant-maintained schools, the national funding council will share the responsibility for securing sufficient places, being able to propose enlargement and changes in character in grant-maintained schools and the establishment of new schools. What will be the state of affairs in that twilight zone between two regimes? The Association of County Councils describe it thus:

"The ACC believes that placing concurrent duties for providing sufficient school places on LEAs and the proposed FAS will be confusing and a recipe for costly duplication . . . The ACC is also concerned at the fragmentation of responsibility . . . which will led to a complex superstructure and the inevitable emergence of an extensive and costly regional bureaucracy over time."

At that stage, local councils will be free to divest themselves of their strategic role if they so desire, and they will no longer be statutorily obliged to establish an education committee.

In the confusion of joint responsibility, as services to schools are increasingly provided by the private sector, and knowing the Government's intentions, the pressure on councils to hand over responsibility to the funding council will be considerable. If they do so, and if they are no longer able to provide services to schools, what reason will any school have for not going for direct grant status? That is probably what the Government think will occur. I subscribe to the conspiracy theory, rather than the cock-up theory, although in the case of this Government there is no contradiction between the two.

One thing is sure, a central agency—even the agency in Wales—will not be able to deal properly with local issues and their infinite variety, so

> "the funding agency will need to be able to gather local information to perform some of its functions . . . will be able to set up regional offices as the number of grant-maintained schools grows."

I do not know what size the region served by the offices will be, nor, perhaps, does anyone, but it is clear that at some level there will be a regional and/or a local bureaucracy. The key difference will be that the bureaucracy will not be democratically accountable. The present bureaucratic procedure will be duplicated without democratic accountability.

The schools funding council for Wales will be accountable only to the Secretary of State for Wales. If anyone tells me that he is subject to democratic accountability, I must tell them that if democracy had its way in Wales any proposals to reform school education would be radically different from those in the Bill. It is worth bearing it in mind that the Secretary of State will have the power to bypass his own quango. If the funding agency does not set about the task of closing schools with a will, he will be able to propose such closures.

The loss of democratic accountability at the local level —the only level at which we have democratic accountability in Wales—is a desperately serious matter. The Welsh joint education committee believes

> "that the creation of more nominated, unelected bodies is a threat to the health of the democratic process in Wales."

It is as serious as that.

Let us consider the consequences. Democratic accountability breeds a tradition in public servants of responsiveness, sensitivity to public opinion, respect for the elected representatives of the people and courtesy towards people. For a time after its loss, the tradition, the attitude of mind, the habits, will survive, but with the loss of direct democratic control the erosion of that tradition will proceed apace. Among the results will be arrogance, insensitivity, corruption, inefficiency and an educational system that will serve best the needs of the influential and the powerful——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Mrs. Lait.

6.30 pm

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): It has been of great interest to me to learn so much about Welsh education today and yesterday. It is also of great interest to me that the degree of comment on the Bill from the Opposition benches has been at the lower percentage end and there is an overwhelming feeling of ritual. I do not think that much has changed after 13 years. Indeed, I am reminded slightly of the Bourbons: they have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak because I am conscious, that I come from a constituency in East Sussex which, as was mentioned yesterday, has no grant-maintained schools. I can understand why some teachers find it very difficult to leave the safe and cosy world of education and try to take on a more competitive edge. After all, they have left school, gone to college and gone back to school. I pay a tribute to East Sussex education authority and I would like to associate my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) with these comments. It is a good local education authority. It was at the forefront in delegating budgets. It has always given a lot of authority to its head teachers.

The councillors of East Sussex maintain that they take a neutral stance on these issues. That translates, I sometimes think, into the comment by my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), that they should be fair and impartial.

I want to comment briefly on a memo that was sent by the county education officer to the schools in East Sussex just after the publication of the White Paper. Making a completely fair and impartial point, he said:

> "the White Paper is actually very encouraging to us in East Sussex . . . We still have everything to play for".

When schools indicate any interest whatsoever in going grant-maintained they get another letter from the county education officer. This includes comments such as:

> "the White Paper . . . shows for example that East Sussex secondary schools would receive around £300 less per pupil if they were funded at the level of the government's standard spending assessment, as is proposed . . . in the White Paper";

and

> "Governors might also have concerns about how admission levels will improve if you have to rely only on first preferences."

The letter goes on:

> "There has been no discussion with the authority as to our view of the advantages and disadvantages for"

your school, and also says:

> "It seems to me odd, to put it no higher, that you consulted with a pressure group with no knowledge about your school and simply committed to opting out, but not with the authority which has been supporting you."

That is not a requirement at the stage that this school has reached.

It is therefore of great concern to Members in East Sussex that this impartial and fair education authority is perhaps not being as impartial and fair as it could. It stands behind the phrase "parental choice". I recently came across its definition of parental choice as it relates to enrolment. It includes pins and a rubber band on a map, and those of us who know anything about rubber bands know that they can extend, but not in East Sussex.

On the subject of special schools, we have one special school in Hastings which is in the maintained sector. It is responsible to Lambeth. Those of us who have any knowledge of the Lambeth education authority can only have sympathy for the school. Over the last few years the school's roll, which was full at 36 pupils, is now down to 19. Parents are not told that this school is available to them. With increasing evidence of further exclusions, plus, as so many hon. Members have said, statement procedures taking so long, it is clear that children who would benefit from attendance at residential special schools are falling through the net. This is particularly true of the school in Hastings and other residential special schools that Lambeth controls. Children are better reintegrated into the system having had the opportunity of education in these special schools.

I very much hope that, when the Bill is being considered, it will be made clear that parents will be fully informed of the options their children have of going to special schools, so that they can choose which way to go

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forward. It will also help the schools if they can go grant-maintained and sell their services. We welcome the independent tribunal, but we wish to see, either on the tribunal or able to give evidence to the tribunal, an expert who knows the child who is being considered personally.

There is also the issue of non-maintained special schools, of which there is one in Brighton for deaf children. There is a considerable worry that, yet again, parents are not given information about services available. Some local education authorities appear to think that these schools are infinitely more expensive than their own, which is palpably wrong. I should therefore be grateful if, in Committee, we can look at this situation to ensure that the high quality of education provided by these non-maintained special schools can be continued, and that parents clearly understand that they may use those schools if they think they are best for their children.

I also want to mention the problems of rural schools in which problems are encountered because the catchment area is not as large as it might be and rolls are not complete. This makes it very difficult to provide the education that one would wish, particularly in secondary schools. I know that schools can now extend their catchment areas to include more children, but it is a real problem that they do not necessarily have access to the number of pupils they need to be able to run the school as effectively and efficiently as they wish.

This is a very good Bill, which deals with quality and excellence in education that we as a Government have been pursuing in the last 13 years. I very much hope that, in Committee, we shall be able to deal with the issues that I have raised.

6.40 pm

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): I preface my remarks by saying that it would perhaps have been a more healthy debate had the hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton), for whose views on education I have a great deal of respect, had been piloting this Bill through. We would then have had a much saner debate over the last two days.

Yesterday, the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman)—she is not present, so I am forced to be extremely polite about her—said that schools in Lancashire had had to opt out because they were starved of funds by Lancashire education authority, and added:

> "Schools in Lancashire will benefit enormously from the fact that, from now on, the Lancashire education authority's funds, which have been massively misdirected, will now go into those schools."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 648.]

According to *Hansard*, six secondary schools out of 110 have opted out of the Lancashire education system. Of those six, four have opted out in an undisguised attempt to preserve their grammar school status and to enhance their selection procedures and their desire for total selection. The fifth of those schools was in the aided sector and could not afford its share of a necessary £200,000-plus rebuild. The Government promised it that, if they opted out, they would get that money, but, having done so, they have received only half of it. They would have got that amount in any case.

Five other comprehensive secondary schools in the non-aided sector have held a ballot and decisively rejected the opt-out opportunity.

Secondary schools in Lancashire receive per capita funding in line with the national average. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy statistics show that Lancashire spends well above average on sixth form provision. Therefore, the grammar schools which I have mentioned have significant income advantages over other schools in the county.

I cite all that information not simply to score some points against the hon. Member for Lancaster, which is an easy thing to do, but to demonstrate that the hon. Lady, in common with the Conservative Government, operates by promulgating myths. Often, what the Government say bears no resemblance to any truth, even as shown in their own statistics. However, simply by reasserting over and over again that certain authorities are such-and-such or that such-and-such an activity is taking place in schools, the Government hope that, eventually, those myths will stick in the public mind—and perhaps they do.

The hon. Member for Lancaster referred to underfunding, but, out of a total budget of £300 million, Lancashire schools hold £23 million in their balances. They have been encouraged to do so by the local authority, of which I was until recently a member, because that local authority is wise enough to know that, as a result of the new dispensation, schools need to hold reserves and to gather funds for building and refurbishment projects. Therefore, the charge of underfunding is not true, either.

Why does the hon. Member for Lancaster make such claims about Lancashire? Simply because it has been led by Labour since 1981 and because a handful of Lancashire Tory Members—not all—have sought for years in this House to portray it as an extreme authority. They have attacked it with a million terminological inexactitudes and, over the past decade, have inflicted a great deal of damage on that county. However, their attacks have failed, because the people continue to return a Labour administration, largely on the basis of its education record.

Lancashire is typical of many local authorities of all colours and of none, because, over many years, it has developed a highly sensitive network, which depends largely on local knowledge and traditional relationships. Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris) made a superb speech, which said it all. She highlighted the quality of local authorities and demonstrated that they were subject to smear after smear from central Government. Those smears are not confined to Labour authorities.

It is true that Labour local authorities and others have opposed the education legislation to which the Government have subjected them over the years, but the test is how those local authorities implement it in order to serve their people and to protect them from the absurdities in much of that legislation. It is okay for the Government to push through their 17 changes, but who has to implement them? Who has to institute the consultation, the phasing-in procedures, the guidance, the advice and support, particularly the support for the local management of schools? Who has to provide the governor support units, which, in my authority, have made many friends.

The vast burden of the many Tory changes to the education system has been shouldered by local authorities and schools, not by burgeoning ministerial bureaucracies in London, and certainly not by the Secretary of State and his hon. Friends. They will project this rag-bag of a Bill out into the world and leave it to fend for itself, and they will watch the system collapse into chaos.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State said that the Bill was about choice, but I must tell him that, in Lancashire, 95 per cent. of secondary school children and 98 per cent. of primary school are given their first choice of school. That is happening in an authority which has central administration costs of 3·7 per cent., while the central administration costs of its potential schools budget stand at 1·63 per cent. In Kent, those costs stand at 3·78 per cent.

I should like the Secretary of State to tell me whether there is anything in the Bill that suggests that that level of choice satisfaction will be maintained for parents in Lancashire, given the nonsensical creation of a two-tier system. I should also like him to tell me what private businesses or commercial enterprises, never mind opt-out schools, could operate on central administration costs of 3·7 per cent.

The drive towards grant-maintained status has been patently rejected by most schools, most boards of governors and most parents. It has nothing to do with education, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said, everything to do with a desire to emasculate local authorities and to centralise control. Imagine what would be said in the press and by Conservative Members if a Labour Government implemented such a centralising Bill.

The bribes have not succeeded, and now procedural and organisational changes must be made to make the process more weighted and slanted. Pressure is put not only on Labour authorities, such as Lancashire, but Conservative ones. The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) mentioned East Sussex, and I am sure she is aware of the comments of Mr. Frank Keen, the chair of education in West Sussex, which has no opted-out schools:

> "I am a Conservative. We are a Conservative LEA and it gives me no joy to say that they"—

the Government—

> "are using all sorts of immoral bribes to persuade schools to go with the dogma"

Exactly so. One does not have to think any further about the implications of the Bill.

All that pressure would be understandable if the case for GMS had been proved. Perhaps all those schools are good, but where are the statistics and inspection reports to demonstrate that they are better than they were before they opted for GMS? The only evidence quoted by the Minister who opened the debate was a Mr. Adonis who said that the school he had visited was "smashing". Apparently Mr. Adonis is a Liberal—with a name like that perhaps he should be the leader of the Liberal party.

The consultation between publication of the White Paper and the Bill has been selective. My local authority and the regional branches of the teachers' unions have complained that their comments have not been heard.

6.50 pm

Mr. David Faber (Westbury): I am glad of this opportunity to take part in the debate and to welcome the Bill. I thank the Government for giving two days to the subject, thus enabling more hon. Members to take part.

We have come a long way down the road of better education since 1979, and throughout those years the Government's principal objectives have been to enshrine in the education system the essential qualities of choice, diversity, accountability, greater responsibility for schools and, above all, higher standards.

The Education Reform Act 1988 created grant-maintained status, since when the spread of GM schools has moved to the heart of our education system. My right hon. Friend said yesterday that 340 schools had either applied for or been granted grant-maintained status, and I understand that about another 150 are in the pipeline.

When I made my maiden speech to the House in the summer, I referred to the outstanding success story of schools such as St. Augustine's in Trowbridge in my constituency. Grant-maintained status means more money, but that is not the whole story. Schools can at last have control over their total budgets, and freedom to spend and manage their affairs as they see fit. GM schools are popular with parents, as shown by the increased number of applications for places, and parental involvement is greater from the moment of the initial ballot. Above all, GM schools have freedom over and responsibility for their own destinies.

The Bill will streamline the process by which the next generation of GM schools will make that transition. The ballot procedure will be speeded up, and strict limits will be placed on the sums that can be spent by obstructive and destructive LEAs campaigning against schools balloting for GM status. Those measures should help to combat some of the scandalous extremes to which some local authorities will go in trying to block applications by spreading misinformation and, sadly, often by spreading threats.

I welcome the decision taken by my right hon. Friend last week to write to all LEAs reminding them of their responsibilities and legal rights. I hope that he will not hesitate to use the full force of his powers against any LEA which deliberately seeks to mislead or, worse still, to intimidate parents.

I urge the Minister to consider carefully an issue that I have raised with him—the ability of some local councils hostile to GM status to continue to influence adversely some schools, even after grant-maintained status has been granted. The most obvious area is that of planning.

Aloeric primary school in Melksham in my constituency received GM status last summer, but it was recently surprised when its annually renewed planning permission for mobile classrooms was refused for the first time in its 20-year history by the local Liberal Democrat-controlled planning authority. I am happy to say that the decision was subsequently overturned on appeal, but it has left a nasty taste and, I fear, bodes ill for the future.

A crucial cornerstone of the Bill is the funding agency that is to be established as a statutory body to take over funding responsibilities from the Department of Education. The agency will rightly be responsible for decisions such as the payment of grant and financial monitoring, while at the same time having increasing responsibility for the provision of sufficient school places.

A common concern expressed by LEAs and those opposed to the Bill—the matter was echoed by my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton)—revolves around the transitional phase from overall LEA control to financial control by the funding agency. I believe that the Government have the transitional period about right. With 10 per cent. of pupils taught in grant-maintained

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schools, responsibility will be shared. Once 75 per cent. are taught, the LEA will lose the power to determine local places.

LEAs will increasingly be encouraged to act as the provider of certain services. They will continue to control non-grant-maintained schools, school transport, educational welfare and, most important, special needs education.

Clause 244, by which LEAs will be allowed to continue selling services for two years after the funding agency takes over, is causing some controversy. The thinking behind the clause is sound. Total dependency on an LEA should be discouraged, as that is the whole point of opting out in the first place. A market should be encouraged and allowed to develop in the private sector to assume those responsibilities.

Given that the two-year period will not begin until the number of grant-maintained schools is so high that it puts control beyond the LEA, they should have time to develop to a degree where private companies can then draw on their expertise and even their personnel.

However, I have some sympathy with LEAs which will be prevented from selling what may be, even after the two-year period is up, the best and most competitive services. That could be a disadvantage to some grant-maintained schools, and I am concerned lest some schools think twice about applying for grant-maintained status because of that barrier.

I do not claim the expertise of some hon. Members of special needs teaching, and I read with interest the *Official Report* the two excellent speeches made in the debate yesterday by my hon. Friends the Members for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning). But I have long taken an interest in special needs education in my constituency and, like hon. Members in all parts of the House, I am proud to serve as President of my local Mencap branch.

I am also vice president of the mid-Wiltshire dyslexia group, and I am fortunate to have in my constituency an active branch of the excellent Portage project. Some hon. Members will be acquainted with that project, but I hope that many others will gradually become fully acquainted with it.

I particularly welcome the fact that, under the Bill, the assessment of children and their statementing will continue to be the responsibility of the LEAs. It is crucial that the obligation to identify and assess the need is strictly adhered to, so that all children have every opportunity.

I am concerned about the provision of special needs teaching. In Wiltshire, with Department of Education approval, the LEA has introduced a scheme for delegating money within the locally managed system formula to secondary schools for children with moderate learning difficulties. The Minister will know that that innovative scheme is much in line with the recommendations of the recent Audit Commission report, "Getting the Act Together".

But in spite of that scheme, the strains on Wiltshire's special needs budget remain severe. There are two central problems. I urge the Minister to consider the vague definition in the Education Act 1981 that a child has a learning difficulty if he

"has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his age."

That definition is repeated in the Bill. Demand is growing daily, as, understandably, parents become more aware of the problems and expect more from their LEAs. More pressure groups are being formed, especially in areas of moderate learning difficulty such as dyslexia, and there is increasing recourse to the law.

At the heart of the problem is the assumption in the 1981 Act—still prevalent today—that only 2 per cent. of all pupils need statementing. In Wiltshire, the true figure is now nearly 5 per cent., the highest in the south-west, up from an accurate figure in 1983 of 1·8 per cent., and it is rising constantly.

Our children have only one chance to obtain a good education. It is our duty in government to ensure that we guard that chance jealously, so that all children go on to become members of a better educated generation. We in west Wiltshire are fortunate. We have many excellent schools, grant-maintained and locally managed. We have dedicated teaching staff and increasingly experienced school governors prepared to give generously of their time. I pay tribute to them all. We have seen the merits of the education reforms of the last 13 years. I hope that many others will reap the benefits of the proposals in the Bill.

6.58 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): On 3 June I received a letter from the Secretary of State about grant-maintained status for schools. He informed me that at that time there were more than 260 approved GM schools in England and that the number was increasing rapidly. Yesterday he told the House that there were 340 and we were told today that it had increased to 342.

So in five months there have been 80 new GM schools. That reveals the reason for the Bill. It shows clearly that the measure is born out of the failure of the Conservatives to attract the number of GM schools that they anticipated. If we continue at the rate of 16 a month, which is 200 a year, it will take all four and a half years available to the Government—if they last an undeserved further four years or more—to achieve about 1,200 GM schools. That would give them just 5 per cent. of all schools. Clearly, the forecast level of 500 by the end of March puts the rate up to 320 a year, which is still below the Government's expectation. The Government have therefore changed the rules so that they can say that they expect, in the year from 1993-94, a further 1,000 schools to go grant maintained.

Grant-maintained schools are a disruption of the educational system for no good purpose. They are the antithesis of community because they make it impossible for neighbouring schools to share facilities and for schools to share their facilities with the wider community. They make extremely difficult the wider strategic planning framework in which education must prosper. It is essential that educational provision can be planned for all children in a particular area. If schools are taken out of the system and isolated, so that it becomes difficult to put the jigsaw back together, that is a form of disruption.

The Bill's funciton is to challenge local authority responsibility and to upset established structures. Naturally, that is not the stated aim, but it is the probable result of the Bill's enactment and implementation.

I am concerned about how the process is being pursued. Yesterday, the Secretary of State was pursuing it with unwarranted arrogance. The way in which he refused to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris) was unfortunate, given his earlier responses. But when he followed that by walking out when my hon. Friend spoke, it showed a degree of personal rudeness which, from a Secretary of State for Education, is an extremely bad example to young people watching how the House is considering the system by which they are educated.

I am also worried about the Government's intolerance and direction on this issue. Why is it that, when local authorities put forward their views on the Bill, they are accused of unfair propaganda and curbing measures are taken, yet when the Secretary of State does the same thing, there is no condemnation?

Next week, the Secretary of State has called a meeting for head teachers in the north of England at the Hilton hotel, Garforth, in my authority—the city of Leeds. He has not told Leeds education authority that he will be meeting in Leeds to discuss educational issues. When it found out about that and suggested that it might meet him, it received no response to the invitation. A headmaster in my constituency asked to go to that meeting, but was told that he could not because there was not sufficient room —the space was already full.

How much has the meeting in Leeds to do with the Secretary of State's undoubted disappointment that Leeds has no opted-out schools and has had no applications for opting out, and that there is not even a ballot in sight? The answers by the Under-Secretary of State for Education in today's *Hansard* show that 322 schools in Leeds are eligible to follow that procedure, yet none of them has.

A schools commission has been set up in Leeds. It is run independently from the authority by 20 people: five head teachers; five governors; five members of the city council —only two of whom are members of the controlling Labour group; the leader of the Conservative group; and the education spokesman of the Conservative group. Every school in Leeds belongs to that schools commission. It has already agreed a parental choice-led system and abolished catchment areas throughout the city. It has agreed plans for the reduction of 3,000 secondary places and 2,500 primary places, most of which will be in place by 1994. It has agreed the closure of certain schools that are educationally, socially or financially unviable. Furthermore, it is producing a plan for the entire area, which shows strategic direction for that authority, and its plans are for 91 per cent. of funding to be devolved.

Will not the Government congratulate the city of Leeds on bringing forward such a comprehensive plan, put together by head teachers, governors, members of the authority, a small group of external people who represent race relations interests in the city, and the Churches? That is a model of a system that seeks planning for the whole authority. My argument against grant-maintained status is that it disrupts the coherence of plans which, ultimately, can only be bad for many of those whom we represent.

Why are the Government so keen on subsidiarity when it means devolving powers from Europe to nation states, but have such a hostile view of subsidiarity when it means moving from central Government to local government? Why does the Secretary of State need 44 additional powers whereby he can give direction?

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gunnell: I have only half a minute left, but I shall give way to the Minister.

Mr. Forth: We are pushing the concept of subsidiarity to its limit in devolving power to schools, not to local education authorities.

Mr. Gunnell: The Government are not doing that at all. The Secretary of State is taking powers to correct anything that he considers is going wrong in local decision-making.

I regret that the debate has focused entirely on structure and organisation rather than on what is really happening in education today——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's time is up.

7.8 pm

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): This important Bill builds on the excellent reforms that we have put in place in recent years. We are already seeing some of the benefits of the introduction of a national curriculum and standard assessment tests, with improved GCSE results.

What has been depressing about the debate is that it is based on a Bill introduced after a White Paper called "Choice and Diversity". It is abundantly clear that the Opposition have no conception of choice and diversity. They believe in a system in which all schools are the same—children go to their local comprehensive or nowhere. The Conservative party believes in a rich diversity of provision.

I am pleased that my constituency contains a city technology college, and Croydon has another technology college for the performing arts. It has just been announced that Edenham high in my constituency is to become a grant-maintained school. I hope that in the borough of Croydon we will see a continued growth in the number of grant-maintained schools.

We wish to see a system with a variety of schools. I do not mind whether they are voluntary aided, grant-maintained, assisted places, grammar schools or whatever. We are not afraid of diversity; it is clear that Opposition Members are. Everything they have said has been about fear of change in education. As I listened to some of their statements about grant-maintained schools, I could well understand why too few schools in Labour-controlled areas have opted out because of the disinformation that is being spread.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) talked about grant-maintained schools being a process of centralised control. How can it be centralised control when those schools manage the totality of their own affairs without the interference of the local education authority?

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) implied that the process of going grant-maintained was compulsory. What could be further from the truth when schools have to go through a democratic balloting process? The hon. Member for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) said that grant-maintained schools involved privatising the educational process. How can they involve privatisation when grant-maintained schools are state-funded schools which run locally?

The grant-maintained process is not privatisation: it is giving power to those who run the schools. It removes the dead hand of local education authority control where too many local education authorities interfere far too much in the running the schools. It is a logical extension of the very

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successful reform of local management of schools, whereby 85 per cent. of expenditure has to be devolved to the schools.

I welcome that extension. It is popular. Yes, it has been slow to take off in some areas because of the opposition of local education authorities. I was particularly grateful for the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) about some of the barriers to grant-maintained status that are put in the path of schools.

If I have any criticism of the Bill, it is that perhaps we need to go further in removing the barriers to schools becoming grant maintained. When the Bill goes into Committee, perhaps we should consider an annual ballot of parents, because the existing procedure, and even the procedure suggested in the Bill, is a recipe for not ensuring that enough schools at least have the opportunity to decide whether they wish to opt out. I should like to see such an improvement.

Turning briefly to the funding agency, given the growth in the number of grant-maintained schools, it is right to have a body that is responsible for the distribution of funds to the schools. It is very important that we severely circumscribe the role of the funding agencies so that they do not become surrogate local education authorities. I very much welcomed the comments of the Secretary of State yesterday when he made it clear that they would have a limited role.

Clearly the funding agencies should have a planning role in regard to the number of places in an area. Percentages are laid down in the Bill. My only plea on the percentages is that we should look carefully at the higher cut-off point for control to pass totally to the funding agencies. There is a case for arguing that that percentage should be lower to ensure a smoother transition to an improved regime of managing numbers in schools.

There is great doubt about the future role of local education authorities. I was pleased to be a member of an LEA for nearly 16 years. Many LEAs do a good job, but that is not true of all of them. That is one reason why I have very few qualms about taking some powers away from them. That is the quid pro quo for giving more control and power to the schools.

One important point, which I welcome very much, is that, apart from responsibility for school attendance, transport and the psychology service, LEAs will have a key role in special education. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), in an excellent speech last evening, outlined the real importance of special education. Many of us recognised that the Education Act 1981 was a landmark and a great step forward. Regrettably, there has been a tendency for too many LEAs not to implement that legislation properly by taking far too long to issue statements for pupils with needs. Even when they issued statements, they made them so meaningless as not to lead to the right provision for the children.

The report of the Audit Commission was particularly useful and relevant. I am delighted that most of the recommendations in the report have been included in the Bill. That is a great step forward, which will lead to improved special education.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge) *rose*——

Mr. Congdon: I will not give way, because I have only 10 minutes.

The education system must respond to parental choice. While it is important to allow popular schools to expand, I welcome the proposal to deal with failing schools. For too long local education authorities have allowed schools that are not up to the job to continue to deliver third-rate education to the children. Even if there had been inspections by local inspectors, the schools had usually succeeded in making sure that the real difficulties went uncovered.

The Education (Schools) Act 1992 provided a firmer and stronger basis for inspection. The proposals in the Bill extend that by introducing a concept of educational associations. As has already been said, one difficulty is that youngsters have only one chance to get an education. We cannot afford to allow schools to continue to deliver third-rate education for too long.

Truth and reality in education are that a school depends very much on the quality of the head teacher, the leadership that is given and the quality of senior staff. It also depends crucially on the ethos of the school. Much research has shown that if a school has high expectations and the right ethos it will achieve high results.

I make a brief comment about surplus places; of course, it is right to take action to reduce some of the 1·5 million surplus places, but we must be careful not to reduce them too far. We need some surplus places to provide for parental choice.

In conclusion, the Bill builds on previous legislation——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.18 pm

Mr. Greg Pope (Hyndburn): Education Bills are a common occurrence under the Conservatives. I sometimes wonder if they have taken Labour's election slogan, "Time for a change", and made it the motto of the Department for Education. Sadly, it is change for change's sake. We have had city technology colleges, assisted places, the national curriculum, changes to the national curriculum and more changes to the national curriculum. All that has achieved is to make education an ideological playground. Now we have this Bill of 255 clauses and 17 schedules, with no doubt many more to come before the end of the Committee stage. The sum total of that is to increase the sum total of the powers of the Secretary of State for Education.

It is not only the Opposition who believe that the Bill is a centralising measure. No less a journal than *The Times*, hardly the most left-wing of papers, said in a headline on the day after the White Paper that preceded the Bill was published: "Ministers to seize control of education." So *The Times* knows the real purpose of the Bill. So do hon. Members and so, I suspect, do parents.

The Government are committed to privatisation, yet the Bill is as important an act of nationalisation as anything in the 1945 to 1950 Parliament. The Government profess the virtues of subsidiarity to our European partners; yet the Bill vests power not in the lowest tier of authority but at the highest level, with the Secretary of State. The proposed funding council will be non-elected and unaccountable. I fear that it will be underfunded, like many other bodies for which the Government are responsible.

Parents do not welcome the Bill. They know the truth about the education system, although the Government try to hide it—they know, because unlike most Ministers, they send their children to schools in the public education system.

One of the central tenets of the Bill is the idea of increasing the number of grant-maintained schools, which have been a disastrous flop. Only about 300 schools have opted out, despite the financial incentives to do so. Now we see the pathetic spectacle of the Secretary of State for Education sending out begging letters to the head teachers in every school in England, pleading with them to opt out. The head teacher in my constituency who gave me his copy of the letter told me that he did not need it any more: head teachers get enough junk mail offering them new-fangled designs which are of no use to school children.

I shall try to speak about special educational needs in the non-partisan spirit that the Minister advocated earlier. I welcome the powers in the Bill to tell GM schools to accept excluded children and to name GM schools in school attendance orders. Those are both constructive ideas. The problem is that they are bright spots in an otherwise gloomy Bill. More than anything else, this is a bill of missed opportunities in special education. It fails to answer the central question of who is responsible overall for special education.

The Bill makes it clear that LEAs are responsible for statements and statemented children, but it does not make clear who is responsible for special educational needs overall. As far back as the Warnock report, the Government have always accepted the estimate that about one fifth of pupils will require extra help with special needs at some point in their school careers, but only 2 per cent. of children will require statements. I hope that the Minister will tell us who is responsible for the other 18 per cent. of children who may need help at some point but who do not warrant a statement.

A great deal of work is done by educational psychologists with this larger group of 18 per cent. In particular, they work with children who have emotional or behavioural difficulties—difficulties not mentioned in the Bill. Unless all 20 per cent. are covered by legislation, they will not be protected. They should all be included in the Bill to ensure that LEAs and psychologists can continue to protect and enhance the education of children in the wider group.

Why are no incentives offered to schools to take children with special needs but who may not be statemented? Some schools will not take children with behavioural difficulties because they believe that they might affect truancy rates, which will then be published. Some schools will not take children with learning difficulties because they think that they may affect their published examination results. We must offer incentives to schools to take non-statemented children with special needs.

Why does the Bill place no duty on agencies such as social work and health departments and LEAs to work together? Such duties were given in the Children Act 1989. We have heard a great deal about delays in the statementing process. They are not always the fault of the LEA; they could be the fault of the social services department or the health authority. If the Bill placed a duty on all those agencies to work together, we could cut some of the delays. Some of the most vulnerable children are those who are most likely to have special needs and to need help from these agencies.

Why do the Government provide no target for the training of educational welfare officers to ensure that they become qualified social workers? I have the impression that the Government think that truancy can be solved by nabbing the truants. That simplistic approach helps no one —the problem is more complex than that. It would be much more sensible of the Government to invest in training educational welfare officers and ensuring that they were qualified. In the end, truancy is more likely to be a symptom than the root problem. Hence we need to deal with it in a skilled and professional way.

Why has one of the central thrusts of the Children Act been ignored in the Bill? I refer to the right of a child to be consulted about its own future. This would be an ideal opportunity to bring special needs policies in line with the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, article 12 of which states:

> "Children's views should be considered on all matters and administrative proceedings relating to them."

We live in a society in which a child can take legal proceedings to divorce itself from its parents, yet children cannot have a say in deciding whether to agree to be assessed or in the sort of educational provision that would be best for them.

The Bill gives the Secretary of State 44 new powers, but it gives no new powers or rights to children. It reflects the long-term tendency of Ministers to take away powers from local people and elected local authorities and to give them to Ministers and their civil servants.

The Bill will fail to arrest declining standards in public sector education. It will fail to restore public confidence in the public education system. Worst of all, the Bill will fail to protect the most vulnerable children, those with special needs, and that is disgraceful.

We now spend less on education as a proportion of our national wealth than we did 13 years ago under a Labour Government. That is the root cause of the crisis in our schools. Nationalisation, centralisation, or however Ministers dress up this measure, it will not improve the education of a single child.

7.27 pm

Mr Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): The hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) referred to an editorial in *The Times*, but as he said, it appeared the day after the launch of the White Paper, when the *Times* staff had not had time yet to read it. Once they had read it, they changed their tune.

This is not a measure of nationalisation. As far as possible in a state-funded system, the Government are creating semi-independent schools with a large degree of autonomy.

I should like to offer the Bill a positive welcome. I hope that it will not be too long before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State introduces another Bill, this time to abolish the student unions' closed shop. It is high time the Government allowed students the freedom to decide whether to belong to a student union—or to the National Union of Students. I look forward to the day when my right hon. Friend presents that legislation. I take it from the fact that he is nodding that he intends to do exactly that.

[Mr Graham Riddick]

I welcome the measures in the Bill to reduce the incidence of truancy, and I am sure that making parents more responsible for their children's attendance at school is the right approach.

I support the Secretary of State's additional power to intervene where individual schools are not properly providing education for their children. I welcome the way in which the Government are encouraging schools to specialise. However, such specialisation should not, and I am sure will not, in any way detract from the delivery of the national curriculum.

I particularly welcome the general thrust of the Bill. It is designed to encourage diversity among schools, to extend parental choice and to channel resources away from administration into education.

However, if I have one criticism of the Bill, it is that it is simply not radical enough. It does not go far enough. If the Government believe that grant-maintained schools are the most effective way of maximising educational opportunities for our children, we should bite the bullet and legislate so that all secondary schools become grant-maintained by a certain time—perhaps by the end of 1994 or the end of 1995. We should thereafter be looking to extend grant-maintained status to all primary schools.

I have no doubt that grant-maintained schools provide a better quality of education, because they introduce real competition into our education system. We should not be ashamed of that. We should be shouting it from the rooftops. Competition is good in every other sector of life and it will be good in education. Competition drives up standards. Competition between schools would force schools to deliver what parents want for their children, not what the schools think those children should have. Competition between schools forces head teachers and their staff to ensure that academic standards are high, that extra-curricular activities are available and varied and that there is proper discipline and a proper spiritual and moral culture within the school.

That is what parents want. Where there is true competition and choice, parents will choose those schools which provide the highest standards. In a competitive environment, some schools will decide to specialise and that will increase choice. Therfore, the Government should go further than the Bill allows and ensure that all parents have access to a grant-maintained school for their children.

As Conservative Members know, that is complete anathema to the education establishment. It believes that competition is vulgar. Head teachers talk about the need for their schools to "co-operate", whatever that means. It really means that they do not have to compete. Some teachers become governors at other schools in order to block those schools taking on grant-maintained status. Local education authority administrators do everything in their power to maintain their power over local schools. The teachers' unions argue for the status quo. It is not surprising, therefore, that many parents feel somewhat overawed in the face of the conspiracy against grant-maintained status by the education mafia.

I am sorry to say that the combination that makes up the education establishment is clearly present in and around my constituency. I regret that no schools in my constituency have taken on grant-maintained status. I hope that they will and that the Government will act to ensure that all those secondary schools do become grant-maintained, so that parents in my constituency can enjoy the benefits of grant-maintained status—high standards, more choice, more diversity and greater discipline in schools.

Moreover, teachers and head teachers would benefit from having more control over the running of their schools. No longer would they have to respond to the dictates of the LEA. They would feel that they had a real stake in the schools in which they were working.

In a slightly less controversial vein, I come to special education. When I intervened earlier on my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, he gave me some reassurance on the point that I now want to touch on. We should be careful how far we push the drive for the integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream schools. That is the direction in which, dare I say, the education establishment, as well as my right hon. and hon. Friends, are going.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): That is not true.

Mr. Riddick: It is true. The hon. Gentleman clearly disagrees, and I accept that, but the accepted wisdom is that it is better for children to be integrated into mainstream education. However, there are times when a child will lose as a result of such integration, perhaps because he or she cannot cope with a new environment or because the mainstream schools simply cannot deliver the sort of special education that the children need.

When my local council, Kirklees council, issued a document last year to force through integration at a far greater pace, many parents expressed concern and opposition to the plans. I have a number of special schools in my constituency, and my experience is that they have achieved remarkable results in drawing out the full potential of individual children with special needs.

One of those schools, Royd Edge school in Meltham, is being forced by Kirklees council to become a day school as opposed to a residential school, much against the wishes of many parents. I therefore voice that note of caution, which I hope my right hon. and hon. Friends will take on board.

My second concern relates to independent and non-maintained special schools. Concerns have been voiced to me by a friend who is a governor of Chailey Heritage school in Sussex, and also by the headmaster of Holly Bank school near Mirfield, just outside my constituency.

I have visited Holly Bank several times, and I know that it provides a wonderful service for many children with severe disabilities. I think that I am right in saying that there was no mention of those schools in the White Paper. There is a real concern that LEAs will simply stop using the services of such schools if the LEAs suffer a financial penalty, and there is certainly concern that they will suffer a financial penalty. I hope that my hon. Friend will address that point when he replies.

The Conservative party is the only party with any radical ideas about how to improve Britain's education system. The Labour party is interested only in protecting vested interests—the teachers' unions and local education authorities. Labour's hostility to grant-maintained schools is a disgrace. The Labour party remains wedded to the outdated and discredited notion of equality, where the lowest common denominator is dominant.

It is the Conservative Government who are forcing through changes to improve Britain's education system. We believe in diversity, choice and high standards, and I am delighted to lend my support to a Bill which will provide all those things.

7.37 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): The Education Act 1944 was an inspiration to teachers who felt that it was an opportunity to raise standards and to increase advantage and possibility for children. It was a real opportunity for educational reform.

The so-called reforms of the Government have the opposite effect. They have demoralised rather than inspired teachers. Local management of schools, based on the average teacher's salary, threatens the most experienced and valuable teachers in schools. Primary school teachers have been forced to put their children through the hoops of standard assessment tests. Classes are getting larger, and the lack of money for supply teachers means that classes have to be split up when teachers are away. All those things, coupled with the increased proportion of administrative work to teaching time, are demoralising teachers.

The White Paper fails to recognise that teachers are the linchpin of the education system. It says that parents are the experts, and I am not denigrating the expertise of parents, but I do not like the expertise of teachers to be brushed aside as of no importance.

Although the White Paper concentrates on the role of parents, it fails to deal with their concerns. My advice surgery, like those of some of my hon. Friends, has revealed those concerns very clearly. One that arises again and again is the need for parents and children to benefit from the provision of nursery education, but the White Paper says nothing about that.

The same applies to discretionary grants for students; to clothing grants for parents on low incomes; to adult education, which is being whittled down to nothing, while LEAs are left short of money and forced to cut all provision except that which is a statutory obligation; and to schools for children with special educational needs. Parents fear that good schools for children in that latter class are closing down, and that the money and expertise are not being invested in mainstream classes.

If anything can be said to be of paramount importance in education, it is the need for stability. Since the Government began to introduce education Bills, however, instability has become chronic in London. First we saw the wanton destruction the Inner London Education Authority—a much maligned organisation which provided a good standard of education in the inner city, against dreadful odds. It pioneered research into education, and the philosophy of education, and it raised the cultural level in many spheres. I remember the last concert that it organised in the Albert hall: children and adults from every ILEA area gave a brilliant performance, and I was reduced to tears by the thought that it would all be destroyed—along with the other avantages provided by a unitary authority, in art, drama and other spheres.

The local education authorities then took over in London. They tried to establish new methods, depending very much on the old ILEA divisional offices but trying to build up the schools. They were then faced with the problems posed by local management of schools. Now we have opt-outs and funding agencies. As the Government exert pressure on schools to opt out, the LEAs will be given less money and less control over planning. That is a recipe for turmoil and chaos.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) in the Chamber. He intervened to mention Hendon school, which he presented as a shining example of grant-maintained status which has now increased its numbers. The hon. Gentleman, however, did not tell the whole story. Barnet borough council—a Conservative body if there ever was one—tried to do away with its surplus places by amalgamating Hendon school, which was formerly a grammer school in a middle-class area, with Whitefields, formerly a secondary school on a council estate.

Whitefields was on the larger site; it had the more modern building and the better facilities. Hendon school parents, however, did not want their children to go to Whitefields—not on your nelly. They fought it, and they were allowed to opt out. Their grant is at the expense of Whitefields'.

Mr. John Marshall *rose*——

Mrs. Gordon: The hon. Gentleman has had his chance.

As a result, the disadvantaged children on the council estate have been further disadvantaged. I am very glad that the hon. Gentleman raised the matter; I might not have thought of it otherwise.

Mr. Marshall *rose*——

Mrs. Gordon: No, I will not give way. I have waited for two days to speak for 10 minutes, and I think that it is unreasonable to expect me to give way now.

All the organisations that have written to me are worried about what the Bill will do for children with special educational needs. Mencap asks this about the funding agency:

> "How can a system operate coherently and efficiently if one body retains responsibility for children with special needs"—

the LEAs, that is—

> "while another body is responsible for funding the schools which provide the education?"

That puts it in a nutshell.

So-called reforms—I cannot mention the Government's reforms without putting them, as it were, in quotation marks—such as the publication of league tables will disadvantage children with special needs who have not been statemented, and children who are learning English as a second language. Grant-maintained schools that want a high position on the league tables will be reluctant to take such children, although they may give other reasons.

Many hon. Members have pointed out that children have only one chance in the education system, and that a single experiment can affect their whole lives. The Government should have been more prudent: they should have waited to see how the funding agency worked in higher education before establishing a similar agency for schools. Given that if only 10 per cent. of schools were to transfer to grant-maintained status, the Government should have devoted much more serious thought to the process. They should have worked out what would happen when a conflict arose over plans.

For instance, an LEA might feel that a sixth form school should be set up rather than a primary school, or vice versa, and the funding agency think the reverse. It

[Mrs. Gordon]

would have been more prudent to arrange pilot schemes at an earlier stage of the so-called reforms for SATs and all the other alterations. The Government's chopping and changing has driven teachers to distraction: they have been completely demoralised by the way in which policy has been made on the hoof.

The Secretary of State said a good deal about democracy. He said that helping, forcing or persuading schools to become grant-maintained would give parents more of a say. I think that that diminishes democracy. It takes control from elected bodies on which parents can have some influence—by voting, demonstrating or going to see their councillors—and centralises it, giving the Secretary of State more and more powers. He himself says that the Bill gives him 44 new powers.

If the Secretary of State wants to give more power to parents and the community, why does the Bill not mention the representation of teachers, parents and the local community on the funding agency and the education associations? Real power—control over funds, sackings and other changes—will be in the hands of appointed quangos that are directly responsible to the Secretary of State.

The Bill takes another step towards the introduction of the market in the education system. Teams of inspectors have already been set up, to price the job and establish what profits can be made. Next will come the establishment of education associations. Recently, I spoke to a dedicated teacher whom I have known for some years. Every year, he takes a group of children over to France on the exchange system, and in the past he has always been able to discuss the arrangements with an LEA adviser. Now the school at which he works has become grant-maintained, and he has realised with a shock that, if he wants advice, the school will have to pay a fee. That has upset him very much, and he does not feel too good about the changes in the system.

I am not easily shocked, but I was shocked by what I was told by an American I met recently. He is a nice man. He told me that, following his retirement, he had become very involved with a residential school for mentally handicapped children. Originally, he had been a volunteer, but he had become so involved that he was now employed by the school. When I asked him what he did, he said that he was an investment agent or broker: he persuaded people to take shares in the school. I was shocked. I asked, "How can people take shares and profit out of"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. We may hear further information on another occasion.

7.48 pm

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): One of the most surprising aspects of yesterday's and today's debates is the fact that Opposition Members clearly do not believe in diversity. They also oppose parental choice, and they have not even dealt with the whole issue of standards. Yet those are the very matters which are important to parents and children. I join other Conservative Members in welcoming the Bill, which builds on the Education Reform Act 1988 and will continue to promote parental choice and high standards.

Let me declare my personal interests in the Bill. I have two young children who will be affected by it, and until the end of last year I was the governor of a large comprehensive school—one of the first in the area to have a delegated budget. For the past five years, until the spring, I was a councillor and a member of a local education authority. That was Sheffield city council, a Labour-dominated local authority.

I know from personal experience there just how undemocratic and unresponsive to the needs of parents and children that local education authority was. I witnessed too often the wishes of parents and governing bodies being overruled, not for financial reasons but simply in order to preserve a set of ideas held by a handful of councillors elected on a low poll—ideas which had little to do with the good education of children.

I do not condemn all education authorities, because of that experience, but I know where I place my trust for good education—with the parents, the governors, the teachers and the school communities. That is how to deliver locally a good education service. However good a local education authority may be, it will seldom be able to plan well for the needs of an individual institution or school, yet it is to a particular school that parents look to give a good education to their children. If a school is to meet the needs of the children and the community that it serves, it is far more likely to be able to do so if it controls its own affairs—that is, if it is a grant-maintained school.

Sadly, Sheffield's education authority campaigned against grant-maintained status. It tried hard to dissuade parents with children at one school from voting in favour of becoming grant maintained. Although just one school was considering making an application for grant-maintained status, the education authority sent a leaflet to every household in the city and tried to dissuade them from voting in favour of grant-maintained status. I saw at first hand the overt and covert hostility of that campaign.

I welcome the proposals that are directed towards limiting the amount of money that education authorities can spend on publishing information on grant-maintained status. I welcome, too, the strong stance that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has taken regarding the content of that information. One has to take into account also the innuendos—the drip feed of half-truths that happens all too often.

When the White Paper was published an article appeared in a local newspaper that relayed the contents of a report to the Derbyshire education authority. The article said:

> "Education experts have warned Derbyshire schools not to opt out—because they are so well off under education authority control."

If you believe that, you will believe anything. The article continued:

> "And last year Derbyshire spent 15 per cent. above its SSA on education—the highest overspend of any education authority outside London."

Not surprisingly, the education system—or chair as they are still called up there—was in favour of the report, but a report such as that is designed to deter, worry and put schools off considering grant-maintained status. That worry was greatly reduced when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education announced that schools would not become worse off by seeking grant-maintained status. He confirmed that in his speech yesterday.

It is worth looking more closely at some of the assumptions that are made regarding SSAs. Some of them have been referred to by Opposition Members. It is often erroneously believed that, if an authority spends over its

SSA on education, that money goes into the schools. A recent investigation by schools, including those in my constituency, showed that, at best, only between 2 and 3 per cent. of the 15 per cent. overspend of Derbyshire education authority arrived in the schools. A further investigation by the same schools showed a massive difference between the funding of one school compared with another.

I draw the attention of hon. Members to the words used by one school about that investigation. It said:

> "Despite our outstanding success, we are the poor relations under local education authority control."

Not surprisingly, therefore, more schools, even in Labour-controlled Derbyshire, are seeking grant-maintained status.

To take the matter a little further, since we have heard so much about a handful of pressure groups, about the theoreticians and the attitude of remote local education authorities, may I commend to hon. Members the views of a school that is seeking grant-maintained status. It said that a yes to grant-maintained status would give it greater autonomy and financial control, the ability to implement plans, the ability to plan its maintenance schedules and to do it on an accurate cost prediction. It said that it would also give it the ability to manage. The school would be managed directly by the local community, through the governing body. Those are the issues that are important to education and to standards in schools.

It is sad that there has been so much fudge and mixture of fact and fiction that is so often used by those whose principal objection to schools seeking grant-maintained status is that it will reduce their own personal power base. I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement that only one resolution by a governing body will be necessary before parents are consulted on grant-maintained status. However, to revert to Derbyshire county council, it has ensured that there are no Conservative governors in local education authority schools. When Erewash borough council became Labour-controlled last year, it did the same. Such acts show the unpleasant aspect of unwarranted intervention.

The consequence for schools is that they have lost the benefit of many experienced governors. In addition, it has led to political blockage on the governing body regarding grant-maintained status. If a governing body does not even consider grant-maintained status, it denies choice to the parents. Whether to apply for grant-maintained status is still a matter for the parents, but that choice has been denied to them.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) in asking that consideration should be given to promoting further the rights of parents and to ensuring that the governing bodies of every eligible school consider grant-maintained status each year.

The local government review will have an impact on my authority, as it is one of those in the first wave of the review. Derbyshire county council is unlikely to continue in its present form. Few, if any, will mourn its passing. The local education authority will also cease to exist in its present form. Even fewer tears will be shed about that. Nine district authorities are making bids for unitary status. That may be the final shape of the education authority's area, but the number may be fewer than nine. Smaller unitary authorities mean that services are brought closer to the people. In the changing circumstances, however, there is a particular need to ensure that education money goes into the schools to benefit the children of my constituents and others in the county, rather than towards rebuilding a series of smaller versions of the local education authority which will soon cease to exist.

At some point between the announcement of the outcome of the review and its implementation, I hope that, in the best interests of the education of children in the area, it will be possible for all eligible schools to consult the parents on whether to seek grant-maintained status.

High standards are important to parents. The drive towards higher standards is the theme which runs throughout the Government's education programme. I have not yet heard Opposition Members talk about standards, yet it is good standards which make schools popular with parents——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The 10-minute rule restriction is now lifted. May I ask hon. Members to respect Madam Speaker's wishes for short speeches?

7.58 pm

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): I am tempted to make the speech that I wanted to make, which would have taken far longer than 10 minutes, but I know that a number of hon. Members want to speak in the debate and I shall therefore exercise self-discipline.

Thank you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a rare occasion for two former chairs of the Council of Local Education Authorities to speak in the same debate in this Chamber. I follow the hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton), who spoke earlier. I hope during my speech to reflect on my experience as the chair of the Council of Local Education Authorities.

There can probably be no greater condemnation of 13 years of failure by the Conservative Government than the fact that, in the past two days we have had to consider the 17th measure affecting education. The previous 16 have failed our children, as will the 17th. We have had a period of constant change, of experiments and of gimmicks in our schools, with our children acting as the guinea pigs.

It has been a period of permanent revolution of which a Maoist would be proud, yet our education system is not meeting the needs and demands of the 1990s. In *The Sunday Telegraph*, David Sainsbury, chairman of Sainsbury, said:

> "For the top 10 per cent. of people education in this country is superb."

But the Government have plans.

> "For the bottom 40 per cent. the system is appalling."

I agree with that. Unfortunately, the Bill fails to address the underlying weaknesses of our education service. If enacted, it will make matters worse. It will result in the creation of an education underclass of disappointed and disillusioned parents, bitter and rejected children and failing and blighted schools. That is the Government's vision of education into the 21st century.

Although the Secretary of State calls the Bill a landmark piece of legislation, he will not take it into Committee; he has handed it to his Under-Secretary.

The great failing, which is not mentioned in the Bill, is the chronic under-investment in education. The White Paper and the Bill make it clear that there will be no new money for education. Correction: there will be some new money, not for education but to fund bureaucrats in the funding agency. We need the resources.

[Mr. Stephen Byers]

The Government's record in the past 12 or 13 years shows that the increase in education spending is lower than the average for other areas of Government spending. Had the same percentage of total Government spending on education in 1991 matched that of 1980, education would have had an extra £1·5 billion. Local education authorities in England and Wales calculate that there is a £4 billion backlog of capital works to school buildings. The Educational Publishers Council says that the lack of investment in books is now at crisis levels. The Department for Education's evidence to the school teachers' pay review was that between 1990 and 1991—just one year—the number of qualified teachers in England fell by 4,287, with obvious consequences. In England, the pupil:teacher ratio worsened from 16.94:1 in 1990 to 17.22:1 in 1991—the first time that the ratio had worsened in England since 1964. What a catalogue, which condemns the Government and the priority that they attach to education.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) challenged Ministers—it is a challenge that they need to take up—about the funding of grant maintained schools, especially in local education authorities that spend above their education standard spending assessment. When the Secretary of State launched the White Paper, he said that he would base his common funding formula on the Government assumption of what should be spent on education—the standard spending assessment. He used Birmingham as an example. We heard much about Birmingham yesterday. Indeed, I thought at one stage that we were debating the Education (Birmingham) Bill. At least today's debate has managed to move to some of the other 115 local education authorities in England and Wales.

Ministers must make it clear what the funding arrangements will be, because there are 65 local education authorities spending more than £500 million above their standard spending assessment on education. Perhaps there will be good news in the autumn statement on Thursday and we shall be told that education will have a real increase of £500 million, but I doubt it. Without it, the message is clear to schools thinking of applying for grant-maintained status: extra annual resources will not be available, and the Government's silence on the issue speaks volumes.

The philosophy underlying the Bill follows the philosophy that underlay the Education Reform Act 1988. The Government say that the Bill's purpose is to bring the discipline of the marketplace into the schools sector. I should have thought, given what the market did to the nation's economy on 16 September, black Wednesday, that we would have learnt the lesson that the market does not have the interests of the nation at its heart, yet our schools are to be subject to it.

We are told that grant-maintained status is the mechanism that will raise standards and offer parental choice. Let us look at the facts. We have heard about Labour local authorities blocking, and being obstructive in, ballots to opt out. That does not explain why the local education authorities in North Yorkshire, East and West Sussex and Suffolk—all Conservative-controlled—do not have a single grant-maintained school in their areas. There is a better, clearer reason why schools opt out of local authority control. There is a common thread running through those local education authorities—they are Conservative-controlled and spend very little on educating their children.

Mr. Congdon: Nonsense.

Mr. Byers: The hon. Member says, "Nonsense." I do not want to confuse his prejudice by giving him some facts, but Lincolnshire, which has the third largest number of opted-out schools—23—and is Conservative controlled is 101st out of 108 local education authorities in spending per pupil. Conservative-controlled Kent has the highest number of opted-out schools—35. Where does it rank out of the 108 local education authorities on spending per pupil? Conservative Members are keen on league tables. Kent comes 108th.

Mr. Congdon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Byers: I should like to do so, but I am under a time constraint.

The message is clear: opting out has been given a massive vote of no confidence by parents in Conservative-controlled, low-spending local education authorities.

The other thread that runs through the Bill is the centralisation of our education service. There is no doubt that the Bill promotes the most dramatic extension of Whitehall power that we have seen since the war. The funding agencies, unelected and unaccountable, will have wide-ranging powers to determine the amount of places that schools will make available within a local authority area and the grants that might be made available to grant-maintained schools. Already, parents up and down the country are being denied choice: they cannot select the school to which they want their children to go.

There is a paradox at the heart of the Bill: on the one hand, the Government want to take out surplus places; on the other, they want to extend parental choice. How can we reconcile the removal of 1·5 million surplus places with the extension of parental choice?

The Bill will lead to the merger of the National Curriculum Council and SEAC—the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council. Both examinations and curriculum will be controlled by 10 to 15 people appointed by the Secretary of State. I am deeply concerned at the notion of such political control, not just over what is taught in the classroom but over how it is examined and assessed. The Secretary of State has already determined that Shakespeare must be taught to all 14-year-olds—and not just Shakespeare in general but "Romeo and Juliet", "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Julius Caesar" in particular. Why have those three been chosen? Given the problems in the Conservative party at the moment, I can understand why a play about the death of a leader may be appropriate. But one might make other suggestions. Given our debate last Wednesday, might not it have been appropriate to include "Much Ado About Nothing", for example?

At the beginning of the White Paper, there is a quote from John Ruskin's preface to "Unto this Last". If the Secretary of State had read on, he would have come to what I believe is a better quotation on the basis of which to direct our education service:

> "Government and co-operation are in all things the laws of life; anarchy and competition the laws of death."

I agree with that.

There is a powerful case for the reform of our education system, but that reform should be carried out on the basis of consensus rather than competition and of partnership rather than patronage. We need an education system that values all our children. What the Bill does is to turn the clock back to the dark days of selection. All it offers the children of our country is a future made up of all our yesterdays. It fails our children, and that is why we will oppose it both in the House and outside.

8.12 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) referred to last week's shenanigans. Last week, I was unable to support the Government, so I am delighted to be able to speak tonight in full support —or, at least, broad support—of a Government measure which will extend diversity and choice for many British children, British parents and British schools without reference to any Europeans.

During yesterday's debate, reference was made to the schools to which Conservative Members send their children. I should like to place on the record the fact that I have four children, three of whom are at local authority schools and one of whom has yet to reach school age.

To promote higher standards, it has been necessary to give attention to structures and organisations within and around schools, and I think that ever fewer people now maintain serious objections to such planks in our structure as local management of schools. We find example after example of extra teachers taken on on a part-time or full-time basis, of repairs, alterations and building improvements carried out and of curriculum developments that were not possible—not even dreamed possible —before LMS.

Equally, with the national curriculum, and testing to make it effective, new frontiers have been opened. There are still residual doubts about the wisdom of testing at age seven, often because summer-term birthday children have spent only a short time at school by the time they reach that age. But good schools were monitoring seven-year-olds in any event and I feel sure that, given that most children enjoy the testing anyway, the remaining doubts will disappear as the years go by.

When I visit schools, I often wish that those who, because they have no children or because their children are no longer of the relevant age, have no direct contact with primary teaching as it now is, could see the basic spelling, reading groundwork and number work that go on. The best schools always did it; now all schools should do it. When the present generation of primary schoolchildren reaches the jobs market in a few years' time, we shall all notice the difference in their numeracy and literacy.

The hon. Member for Wallsend mentioned my local authority of Suffolk where, with the exception of the Church schools, we have a three-tier system, with schools for children aged five to nine, nine to 13 and 13-plus. That means that the high schools are testing key stage three children of 14 on their middle school work. That forces better and closer public co-operation with the feeder middle schools, but the incompatibility of the key stage ages with our school ages needs to be borne in mind when judgments are made on high schools in league tables. I have visited schools in my constituency that have piloted testing and have talked to staff and pupils who have experienced tests. On science alone, I have a whole page full of detailed concerns and will bring those objections and worries with me to the Standing Committee.

I want to mention detail, because that will allow me to welcome the formation of the new school curriculum and assessment authority. That should sort out the overlap and examine teacher work loads, especially on the adminstrative side, as well as bringing a much-needed new coherence to testing and exams.

Perhaps even more important, I hope that the new authority will consider the impact of testing on the delivery of the national curriculum. We are talking of a large number of school teaching days effectively wiped out so that tests can be conducted. We must strike a balance between testing and teaching and set both in the context of a limited school day and of the amount of work with which both teachers and pupils can cope.

All Conservative Members give high priority to individual choice. That is why I no longer accept the view of many of my hon. Friends, who want instant, compulsory self-governing status for all schools. Parental and school community choice, with good example, good practice and good work the only pressures, should be the driving force. A comparison could be made with the employment law reforms since 1979. My predecessor, Lord Prior, always maintained that, if one takes one step at a time, it sticks because it works. He was labelled "Pussyfoot Prior" for that, but in that at least he was right.

Let me add a rider to those remarks. In rural areas, and even in some large town areas, choice in schools is a phrase to which we may give lip service, but it is contradicted by reality. A family without transport or with limited transport in a rural area has no choice of school—any more than they have a choice of doctor's surgery, church, shops or pub.

The clustering of schools suggested in the Bill will be an excellent means of bridging some of the gulfs that will always exist in rural areas. The idea of having one governing body, one head and a shared bursar may well be a helpful step on from the co-operation and the sharing of specialist teachers that we already have in some areas.

What of the concept of squeezing out surplus places? Of course they are a drain on resources and some hard bullets have to be bitten, especially in rural areas. Let us be sure, however, that all apparently surplus places are, indeed, surplus. To my mind, a small teaching area between two or more classrooms in primary and middle schools may, technically, be surplus to requirements, but, in practice, it is a valuable teaching resource, which is already there, in use, heated and lit. We should beware of any numbers formula that limits school building size and provision to consideration of bottoms on seats.

Conservative-controlled Suffolk is one of the few authorities with no grant-maintained schools—and none have yet balloted for such status. Hon. Members may say that that tells us all that we need to know about grant-maintained status. They are entitled to that view. It also says much about the authority, by which I was employed as a teacher. I visit its schools regularly and often and I know that Suffolk offers a real and developing service to its schools. I know, too, how it has developed in response to our reforms in the past 10 years. There is loyalty which consists of more than clinging to nurse for fear of something worse.

I do not oppose the stripping out of LEAs in principle, but, as with all our legislation, we should be wary of making law for the worst cases. I do not want us to risk throwing out the best with the bad to get the law right. Let us by all means devolve funding to the schools, but there

[Mr. David Porter]

will come a point at which LEAs are left with insufficient funds to keep together the excellent teams that they have gathered. That is a danger. Perhaps our reviews of local government—quite apart from the Department for Education and the Bill—will effectively end the LEAs as we know them, but, while the Bill is in Committee, we should consider carefully whether to write into it a definition of the new model LEA which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State described to me so graphically in the Select Committee a few weeks ago.

We must listen to advisers and to heads, always remembering that not all the best teachers naturally become heads. Let us listen to teachers with a good track record. If primary teachers tell us that reports are too intense and that they often miscue what primary teaching is really like, including the daily contact of primary teachers with parents and not just once-a-year contacts through reports, we should take note of what they say.

I admire my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for rushing on, but I urge him to carry with us as many people as we can. We have heard the perception of many Opposition Members and teachers that we have diminished choice, quality and parental influence in favour of centralist control. We perceive the opposite, and we must overcome their view by practical experience of the facts.

When I first taught years ago, anyone could attend an interview one day and be before a class the next. The hon. member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) referred to Inner London education authority schools. I was one on supply in an ILEA school and, because I had been there for several weeks, I was part of the furniture in the staff room. The only job I was given one day by the deputy head was to telephone area office and ask for a supply teacher to teach 4C because there was no one upstairs to teach that form.

Those days and the teaching passengers of the 1970s have gone. Teachers have worked hard to build foundations with the blocks that we have given them. At times, that had the apparent chaos of a building site in Sarajevo. Many are bewildered not just by the speed of our reforms, but by the reforms of our reforms. Many are politically opposed to us. However, I believe that the profession in general has done us proud in setting up the foundations.

Fortunately, the Bill seeks to build on those foundations. It does not sweep them away and start within a new plan. The profession deserves our praise and thanks for what has been achieved and it now deserves our encouragement to build higher. Let us keep the skies as clear of confrontation as we can. Let us not change the rules any more than we have to and let us stop that unprecedented deluge of paper which has almost drowned the profession, so that teachers can get on and deliver the education that we all want.

8.21 pm

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): I am delighted to be able to participate in this debate, as I spent 14 years in the teaching profession—seven years in schools and seven years working with children with special educational needs.

I have concluded that the wrongly named Education Reform Act 1988 has failed. The only intention of that legislation was to centralise the control of education at the Department for Education. The route for that centralisation was grant-maintained schools.

The Bill will cause the destruction of a co-operative partnership in education that has survived numerous political parties in Government since 1870. The history of locally delivered education, with the support of elected representatives, dates back to the establishment of school boards in 1870. The Bill will remove local education authorities from our democratic processes, and for that reason alone we should oppose it.

The route towards the destruction of the LEAs is straightforward. Grant-maintained schools will become more prevalent in the education system. As that happens, the funding councils will take over the role of the LEA's. Locally democratically elected people in charge of the delivery of education will be replaced by political patronage of the Secretary of State for Education.

That anti-democratic move must be resisted. If we allow it to happen, it will be a sad day for democracy and for our education system. It is wrong to allow the Secretary of State the sole prerogative to appoint the members of the funding councils.

We oppose grant-maintained status, because it is divisive. Grant-maintained schools are fragmentary, and they will abolish a tier of democracy. As the funding councils take over the role of LEAs, the Government will insist on the introduction of selection. That process is clear in the White Paper, and it is abundantly clear in the Bill.

If the Government had been honest about their intentions for centralisation and for the abolition of LEA's and about the fact that they wanted selection, and had spelt out precisely what the Bill was about, would such a Bill have been passed by the House? I believe that it would not have been passed, because it would have caused outrage in the community at large.

The White Paper also contains an attack on surplus places. It says that it is

> "imperative that the available money is spent on pupils and not on empty buildings."

The Secretary of State must therefore explain what he intends to do when schools that are threatened with closure because of reorganisation and an attempt to rationalise places in an LEA apply to opt out. Will he grant them grant-maintained status? If he will, the so-called attack on surplus school places is nonsense.

There have generally been two reasons why schools have applied for grant-maintained status: first, they have been threatened with closure by the LEA, and secondly, they wanted increased funding because LEAs have underfunded them. The Bill attempts to move in that direction.

We are also told that it is the Secretary of State's intention that more schools should be grant-maintained. If he believes that, why did he not legislate for it in the first place and so be honest with the public? He did not do so because he knows that grant-maintained status will not address the problems in education.

Grant-maintained status does nothing to improve the chronic underfunding of our education system. It does not lower class sizes, and it does nothing to improve school building maintenance. Similarly, it does nothing to improve the morale of teachers. If the Secretary of State allowed every school to become grant-maintained, he would not be able to pass the buck to anyone else. He would have to accept responsibility for what is wrong in the education system.

We have had 13 years of Conservative rule, and the Opposition will not accept lectures from Conservative Members about standards in education when the Government have had 13 years to address the problems. I am deeply concerned about the Curriculum and Assessment Authority, which has to do with the centralisation of control of education in the hands of the Secretary of State. Staffed by political patronage on behalf of the Secretary of State, the authority will allow the Secretary of State to control the knowledge taught in schools and to interfere in the way in which that knowledge is delivered. That provision is fundamentally wrong.

I make no bones about the fact that we need a curriculum and assessment authority. However, it must be independent and able to take an objective view of the needs of education in society. The council should not have to suffer the Secretary of State's diktat.

If the Bill achieves its aims in respect of integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools, I will applaud that. It intends to make such integration a greater feature of our education system. If that is to work, it will need adequate resources to ensure that children with special educational needs have full access to facilities in ordinary schools.

Special educational needs can be met through the statementing procedure. I accept that the procedure has not so far worked as it was meant to work under the Warnock report, the concept of which was that a child's educational needs would be assessed and met. Over the past seven or eight years, the assessment has been resource-led rather than needs-led. In other words, the resources available in local authorities have determined what individuals have received. It should be the other way round.

It would be welcome if we could speed up the statementing procedure, but that will require extra resources. That will mean more educational psychologists and more resources in social services for the social work element in the assessment, and the medical profession will have to be speeded up to ensure that the appendices are submitted on time. If that happens, I will applaud it as a step in the right direction.

If the Secretary of State is intent on increasing the number of pupils with special needs in mainstream schools, the number of pupil places necessary in special schools will decrease. We are told in the Bill that special schools will now be able to apply for grant-maintained status. Will the Secretary of State allow special schools, which are threatened with closure because resources have been reallocated to ensure that pupils go to mainstream schools, to apply to opt out? He should answer that question.

Hansard of 1 December 1987 contains the following words:

> "The important question is what is required in education today and what is necessary to achieve it. I am sick to death of education in this country being knocked in the way that it is, largely for political purposes, and of teachers being constantly hammered. The great majority of our teachers are good and devoted people, as I have found in my constituency and my home area. However, they are now completely demoralised because of the treatment they have received." [*Official Report*, 1 December 1987; c. 792.]

That was in a speech by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath). I agree with every word of it.

We need to take a detached look at education. We need an in-depth inquiry into the requirements of our education system similar to the great inquiries previously held into education. We need a considered view about how education is delivered.

The demand for the Bill does not come from teachers, pupils or anyone involved in education. It has been introduced because the Tory party has so far failed to deliver under the 1988 Act.

The Bill is anti-democratic. The 1944 Act set up a partnership between local authorities and central Government and that should persist. Reinhold Niebuhr said in 1944:

> "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

That is why the Bill must be refused a Second Reading this evening.

8.31 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I shall focus this evening on religious education. I noticed with some sorrow that neither the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) nor the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) made any attempt to deal with the issue. I wonder why. Perhaps they are not interested or perhaps they do not care.

Mr. Enright: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lady Olga Maitland: I am sorry, but I cannot give way, because time is tight.

The Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen are not interested or do not care, but parents care. Parents are making their feelings known, and it is right that we should respond. I pay a special tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his interest and commitment to religious education. I appreciate his desire for a fresh impetus in RE, which he expressed yesterday. It is significant that large sections of the Bill are devoted to religious education and contain positive steps to revitalise spiritual and moral education.

The time has come to stop being apologetic about being a Christian country. We should be proud of it. We should not allow non-believers to undermine our traditions. As I described in July in my Adjournment debate on religious education, it is a tragedy that the teaching of the Christian faith has become woefully neglected in the face of multiculturalism which is promoting minority faiths at the expense of Christianity—the faith allegiance of the vast majority of the people of this nation.

As a result of that neglect, a generation of children are growing up with at best a muddled understanding and knowledge of Christianity, and at worst sheer, frightening ignorance. Children have a right to a faith without being proselytised. They have a right to understand our Christian history, which provides our moral and cultural heritage.

Sadly, more needs to be done. I welcome the attention given in the Bill to religious education. Since July, I have sent out a questionnaire to parents and children to assess the exact amount of Christian teaching at schools. I have received a considerable response. Often, the replies are pitiful and demonstrate the sheer wanton neglect of

[Lady Olga Maitland]

religious education. Some children are unable to recite the Lord's prayer. They have never studied the gospels or the Bible. Indeed, in many cases, RE is not even timetabled.

I do not have the time to go through all the examples, but one typical 12-year-old at a county school cannot recite the Lord's prayer, has not studied the gospels and knows nothing about the 23rd psalm. A 16-year-old—my goodness, she should know by now—had only the sketchiest idea of Jesus's life. She said that RE was not timetabled at the school. An 11-year-old at a Greenwich school has no timetabled RE lessons. However, I was informed that the infants celebrated the harvest festival, and that the age group took part in the Chinese new year and Diwali.

What are we to do with that depressing catalogue? I welcome the attention given to religious education in the Bill. I particularly welcome clause 126, which allows grant-maintained schools to choose their own agreed RE syllabus from another local authority. At present, grant-maintained schools that are not voluntary schools must follow the syllabus of the local education authority even after they have opted out. Under clause 126, an opted-out school in, say, Birmingham, would be free to choose the RE syllabus of another authority and so be released from the requirement to study non-theistic life stances such as communism and Marxism.

Might I suggest that a model for a mainly Christian RE syllabus, which is what a syllabus should be according to the 1988 Act, might be taken from Cornwall or West Sussex, for example? Those LEAs both have a more acceptable approach which grant-maintained schools might consider. The syllabuses have a much better balance than, say, the Rotherham module adopted by many left-wing authorities, including Sutton. The Rotherham syllabus lists Christianity as just another off-the-shelf religion alongside five others—Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism.

Sutton's primary school teachers are offered 167 themes for seven to 11-year-olds. I do not detect one word devoted to Christianity, its faith and its teaching. The buzz words are new life, aging, death, creations, light and dark, growth, wind, fire, water and eggs. A junior school in my constituency recently banned a local vicar from its religious education activities.

I particularly welcome clause 224, which provides that a local authority must review its RE sylabus and bring it into line with the 1988 Act to make it mainly Christian. As the Secretary of State said, it is disappointing that two thirds of the LEAs have yet to revise their RE syllabus. I trust that the way in which the syllabus is applied in schools will be monitored stringently.

In view of what I have described, I call for particular attention to be paid to the process to speed up and strengthen the parental complaints procedures. That must be done sensitively, and in some cases information must be accepted anonymously. Parents fear, in some cases rightly, that their children will be victimised at school. I know of parents and governors who were removed from school governing bodies when it became known that they had complained and made their feelings public.

I welcome the attention paid in the Bill to the spiritual and moral welfare of the children of this country. We cannot have academic study without moral study to go with it.

8.38 pm

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): I shall exercise self-discipline, although, having watched the antics of Government Front Benchers, led by the Secretary of State, the smart Alec of the third form, I know exactly where not to seek a good example.

We have had numerous Secretaries of State and a multiplicity of Bills, directives and changes which have disrupted schools, burdened teachers and confused and frustrated parents. All the while, we have paid scant attention to the consumers of the service—children and young people.

The Bill is yet another to be based on a White Paper which barely mentions school children and has little to say about quality education. That is where we are, because the Government are bent on disrupting and cajoling and on following blinkered and disruptive policies regardless of the damage that they will do to the education of our children. I shall deal briefly with whether the Bill tackles the problems of London and special educational needs.

The Government persist in following the failed policies of opt-out. Parents and governors have consistently rejected the policy. Now they are to be bribed and browbeaten into accepting it. In four years, only 2 per cent. of schools in London have opted out. Clearly, the policy is unpopular and unwelcome, so why do the Government insist on persisting with it? Why do they not understand that they have nothing to offer but failed ideas? They are in an ideological straitjacket and simply cannot accept that governors and parents know their schools best and know the best interests of the pupils in them, which is to stay within the local education authority.

On special educational needs, the policies to increase competition between schools and to introduce the marketplace into the classroom will marginalise children who need extra help and support and who will not feature at the top of league tables. The Bill proposes to establish guidance and criteria to determine the need for assessment of pupils' educational needs. I welcome the establishment of such objective criteria, but let us remember that only 2 per cent. of children have statements of their special educational needs, while one in five has a learning difficulty which requires extra support at some stage in their school life. There is no provision in the Bill for those children—nothing; just dogma.

It was clear from the Secretary of State's remarks yesterday that he did not even understand the difference between special educational needs and statementing. What is particularly worrying is that the overemphasis on statementing will lead parents to believe that the only way that they will get extra support for their children is through a statement, which will lead to less funds for other areas of support and will undermine the opportunity for quality education for all those in need.

I welcome the Government's stated support for integrating pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schooling. That will enshrine in legislation the existing good practice in Labour local authorities. For example, in Lewisham two and a half years ago less than 2 per cent. of the school population had statements and there was a poor record of integration, with just 13 per cent. of pupils with statements in mainstream schools—the national average is about 37 per cent. Lewisham set itself a target of 50 per cent. of pupils with statements being educated in mainstream schools within five years. At present, 60 per cent. of statemented pupils in Lewisham attend mainstream schools. I look forward to hearing the Secretary of State congratulate Labour-controlled local authorities on their achievements in that respect.

We have heard that the people who are most concerned for children with special educational needs are worried about the implications of the Bill. It is not clear who is responsible for what. Local education authorities have a duty to review their arrangements, but who oversees what is happening in grant-maintained schools? Who is responsible for ensuring that there is a range of provision locally? In grant-maintained schools, what will happen to pupils with special educational needs who do not have statements? The choice and diversity for such children and their parents are being thrown out of the window. Schools will choose pupils, rather than parents choosing schools, and we know which pupils they will choose. It will not be the youngsters with behavioural or emotional problems.

Organisations for the disabled want the Secretary of State to consult further with them on funding, over and above the standard per capita amount, to meet the needs of children without statements. Will the Secretary of State guarantee tonight that he will discuss that with people who know what they are talking about? Even when pupils have a statement, grant-maintained schools can refuse them on the ground of non-compatibility with the efficient use of resources. What a get-out clause—so much for choice.

What bothers me about this enormous Bill is its singular lack of provision for children under five. Everyone who knows anything about children with special educational needs knows that one can do more for them and can advance their abilities much faster if one begins as early as possible. Neither the White Paper nor the Bill deals with the statutory response to their needs. It focuses on the school system after the child reaches the age of five.

One would have thought that, if one were determined to add to the 17 Acts in 13 years of Conservative government, one would at least have tackled an area where there is desperate need. The Secretary of State could have come up with a Bill that would provide nursery places for all three and four-year-olds whose parents wanted them. He could have made statutory provision for children under five with special educational needs; instead, he chose to ignore the clamour for nursery education, to brush aside the needs of the most vulnerable children and to present a Bill that is filled with failed policies and failed ideas and that will inevitably fail our children.

The Bill is based on huff and puff, but it blows away a real opportunity to be a "landmark" which—to quote the Secretary of State—

> "will endure well into the next century."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 627.]

Not only are the educational needs of London children ignored, but so are their parents' views. During the rapid consultation period, there has been no change of mind, no taking on board what people involved in education have had to say and no acceptance of the views of people involved with children's welfare or concerned with quality education for every child, regardless of ability. There is nothing—just dogma. The Bill is simply the White Paper renamed. It is wholly inadequate and an inappropriate foundation for education in the next century.

London's education authorities have tried to do their best under enormous contraints. The new authorities have struggled to overcome the enormous disruption caused by the abolition of the Inner London education authority. They have worked with outer London boroughs to provide high quality education and to respond together to the continuing intervention of central Government. Yet they have improved standards by sharing good practice and expertise. The Bill seeks to undermine that partnership and the partnership that local authorities have built with parents, governors and teachers. The Bill is simply a dogmatic attack on local government by a Secretary of State who could not bring himself to mention children, students or pupils until his first Question Time was virtually over.

Added to the volume of political change in the education service during the past decade, the Bill will prove a major and tragic setback to the development of excellence in education. It passes over the real problems of children with special educational needs and leaves grant-maintained schools to do as they please, with local authorities picking up the tab. Clearly, it is an attempt to establish not merely a two-tier education system but a three-tier system, in which those who are least able to articulate their needs will fall by the wayside.

I hope that everyone on the Conservative Benches who seriously cares about quality education for children will join us to oppose a damaging, disgraceful and dangerous Bill.

8.47 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): In education, the key is quality and the essence of the Bill is increasing quality. In Committee, the House should consider the use of the Office for Standards in Education to assess quality in grant-maintained and local education authority schools. While discussing quality, I must praise teachers, who are conscientious, dedicated and professional and who often work long hours. They hold the key to the success of the individual and to our success as a nation. The Bill gives teachers the tools to do their job properly.

Special education is often discussed at the end of a debate, as an afterthought, but it has been prominent during this debate. The Secretary of State has drawn our attention to the considerable programme aimed at integrating special needs children into mainstream schools. Much as that can be welcomed, some children can do better in the protected and caring environment of a special school. Therefore, as the Bill allows, special schools should be encouraged to opt in to self-governing status so that they can secure benefits for their children as well.

I also believe that parents generally know best which school is right for their child. I therefore welcome clause 8, which will force a nominated school, grant-maintained or LEA, to take a statemented child.

As the Secretary of State, who I am pleased to see is here tonight, knows, I represent Castle Point, which itself represents a milestone in the development of education in this country, because Castle Point will be the first constituency in which 100 per cent. of secondary phase schools have self-governing status. Many of our local primary schools are also opting in to self-governing status.

[Dr. Robert Spink]

Benfleet votes next Monday. This clearly shows that the people of Castle Point are discerning people; they are an educated crew who care deeply for their children. These are the real Essex men and Essex women.

Castle Point schools do not go for GM because of money. They have told me quite unambiguously that they take grant-maintained status because it enables them to enjoy better management control of their schools for the benefit of their children and of our local community.

It is also widely acknowledged in Castle Point that this Bill will increase local accountability, not erode it. What could be more accountable and democratic than annually elected boards of governors, comprising parents, local people and teachers, all with one thing in common—an overwhelming vested interest, that of their children?

Self-governing status is not the pursuit of some novel ideology, as the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) said yesterday. It is the pursuit of the common-sense practical means of improving quality, choice and diversity, and of increasing real local democracy.

I come now to the Funding Agency for Schools. We in Castle Point are keen to learn how this will work and how the formula will be constructed. Consultation on the common funding formula should begin at the earliest possible moment, therefore, so that the formula and the mechanisms can be fixed, and we can make decisions and plan ahead with more certainty.

In Essex, the LMS formula is wrong and causes underfunding of primary schools. Essex LEA accepts this fact. It has put extra money into primary schools this year, but the problem has not yet been totally resolved, notwithstanding my continued pressure. I am hoping that the common funding formula will be better balanced than was Essex's formula as between the primary and secondary age-weighted pupil units. I also hope that the common funding formula will be based on SSAs in a rational way, because Essex spends £23 million below its SSA on education. I trust, therefore, that Essex education and Essex primary schools will benefit directly from this Bill. That is why this Bill is liked in Essex.

I must stress that, notwithstanding the underspending in Essex, its results are well above average. We achieve well above the average level of graded GCSE passes. This speaks volumes for the quality of the LEA in Essex, the quality of the teachers and the governors in Essex and the quality of the parents, all of them Essex men and women.

I want to consider carefully clause 7(4) of the Bill. Perhaps the 75 per cent. for funding agency trigger is a little high; 51 per cent. might have some advantages—I do not know. The pros and cons will need to be weighed very carefully in Committee.

I shall also be keen to watch carefully the development of the funding agency. It must not become a massive replacement bureaucracy for the old LEA. I know that the Secretary of State agrees with me on this.

That brings me to strategic planning. The LEAs have failed miserably; they do not do this effectively. I welcome the powers given the Bill to reduce vacant places from 1·5 million to about 750,000, which is the maximum we need to support choice and normal turnover. I want these powers to be used with rapier-like speed, to remove the dead space and return that money, which I estimate to be about £150 million, to the education of our children. That is simple common sense.

I can illustrate for the House how poor LEAs are at strategic planning by reference to further education in Castle Point. The 1991 staying-on rate for all Essex schools was 65 per cent. The staying-on rate for Castle Point schools—my constituency, but just the mainland part—was 67 per cent. Yet the schoolchildren of my 40,000 Canvey Island residents were able to get a rate of only 49 per cent.—shamefully low. In past years, the difference has been much worse, with Canvey totally let down by the Essex LEA.

Essex LEA does not provide one place for further education on the whole of Canvey Island, even though on that island there is a 16-to-18 cohort of well above 1,000 youths. Young people on that island are robbed of the opportunity for further education, or made to jump through hoops to get it.

At the same time, the LEA in Essex has maintained many empty places in Castle Point secondary schools—wasted assets, wasted money, wasted opportunities. I will take no lectures from any hon. Members on the need to retain strategic planning in the LEAs. That would be simply a sick joke for my constituents. We have on the mainland only one further education establishment. I therefore welcome the powers in the Bill which enable the Secretary of State to allow some of our excellent secondary schools to change their character and to provide totally independent, self-managed sixth-form further education opportunities. That is what we need; that is what we will get, sooner rather than later.

I should also like the Secretary of State to use his powers to give specialised status to a secondary school on Canvey Island to use the schools technology initiative to give Canvey Island its first further education places, and to redress the scandalous failure of the LEA in strategic planning.

I welcome the provision in clause 224 with regard to the religious education syllabus in the 1988 Act. I welcome, too, the speech just made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland).

I welcome the creation of education associations to identify failing schools. I want them to be staffed with experienced people with a balance of skills that must include chalkface experience. Clause 194 should clarify that matter. I want clause 227 and schedule 14 to clarify how we will prevent the unacceptable indefinite exclusions of difficult pupils. More details should be given about how we can deal with a disruptive child.

I want a system in which every child and every school has equality of opportunity, free from political manipulation, so that each can succeed by their own efforts. That is why I came into politics; that is why I stand in this House, and perhaps this is the point at which I should sit down.

8.58 pm

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I should like to take up what the Secretary of State said about choice and diversity.

Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman does not realise that, for some parents, choice has been available since local government reorganisation in 1974. In my constituency, there are five secondary schools, and when my eldest children were choosing their secondary schools in 1976 and 1978, under a Labour Government, we could exercise a preference for any of those schools and for two or three others immediately outside the constituency. There were no practical constraints on choice, except the number of places available and the popularity of the schools. Therefore, when the right hon. Gentleman talks about choice, it is difficult to know how choice of school could be increased for parents in my area. I suspect that he means that he will create artificial divisions and differences to make it more likely that parents will want to reject their local school.

The right hon. Gentleman has spoken about diversity and specialisation; by that we assume that some schools will be encouraged to specialise in certain subjects, perhaps technology or music, as the national curriculum allows, of course. A parent with two children might want to send one to a school specialising in technology and one to a school specialising in music, but she might find that those schools were 30 miles apart, at opposite ends of the county. Does the right hon. Gentleman think that that is a sensible method of arranging things?

I want all schools to be able to accommodate their teaching methods and their specialties to the children within them. That is what the business world calls "customer orientation" and what the education world calls "child-centred learning". Most parents want to be able to send their children to the local state school, and they want to be guaranteed a quality education that is flexible to them and their needs, can accommodate their children's difficulties and encourage their children's talents. Parents want that school to liaise effectively with them.

The right hon. Gentleman should also consider the logic of trying to create different kinds of schools. We are beginning to integrate the vast majority of children with special educational needs into ordinary mainstream schools—I understand that that is still Government policy. In other words, special schools are gradually being phased out. In that case, why are we trying to create another kind of special school for those with difference aptitudes? Are we saying that our mainstream schools can cope with children with physical, learning and behavioural disabilities, but that they cannot provide the right sort of environment for those with another kind of special need? That is an illogical and poorly thought out policy.

Even the schools in the Prime Minister's constituency are not succumbing to grant-maintained status. Hinchingbrooke school in Huntingdon has a Prime Minister as its Member of Parliament, and the Education Minister, Baroness Blatch, is a former chairman of its governors. The governors of that school, however, have decided against even asking parents to vote on opting out. Evidently they were not convinced that opting out would raise standards, and the head was quoted as saying: "I think there was a feeling that there is a lot wrong in principle with opting out."

I ask hon. Members to reject the Bill. Let us tackle the real issue in education by looking at the evidence and the facts. There is no evidence that creating diversity either through specialisation, selectivity or by changing the status of a school will do anything to raise standards. However, there is a great deal of evidence that much can be done by raising teachers' morale, increasing resources and stopping the experiments with our children's lives.

9.2 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I have listened with interest to many of the speeches, particularly, to that of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) who asked what progress had been made under this Government. Is he not aware that a record number of pupils are staying on at school? Is he not aware that a record number of pupils are going into higher education? It is a bit rum for a member of the Opposition Front-Bench team to talk about progress when, in an act of mean-minded reactionary vandalism, they wanted to destroy grammar schools, city technology colleges and grant-maintained schools.

I disagree slightly with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), because we must recognise that we live in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. It is wrong that a system of religious education should be angled at one part of our community. If we do not have a system whereby Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and the vast majority of the Jewish community can go to voluntary aided schools, religious education in the state system must take account of that fact. Those religions have a positive contribution to make and I do not think that we want a WASP-dominated religious education system today.

Lady Olga Maitland: I was trying to say that the vast majority of people in this country owe an allegiance to Christianity. I was not in any way trying to denigrate minority faiths.

Mr. Marshall: I suspect that the members of the minority faiths attend places of worship at the weekend. The majority probably stay at home, so the "don't knows" are no doubt in the ascendancy in this public opinion poll.

I am taking part in the debate for three reasons. The first is that year after year Barnet has the best education results of any local authority. We are told a great deal by Labour Members about the level of public expenditure on education. Frankly, parents do not worry so much about the level of expenditure as about whether their children will get to university at the end of their period of schooling.

Labour Members have the nerve to talk about the demise of the ILEA, that high-cost, low-result education authority which put socialism before results. Nobody should complain about the demise of that incompetent organisation. Barnet council is a thousand times more efficient, achieving far better results, than the ILEA ever was.

My second reason for taking part is that Hendon school was the first in London to opt out of local authority control. I remember the consultation meetings. As a good constituency hon. Member, I chaired the meetings to ensure that there was fair play. Events have belied the fears of the opponents of opting out, who claimed that there would be huge administrative difficulties. In fact, the system of LMS means that the school, whether or not it has opted out, is automatically responsible for the vast bulk of its budget.

It is a short step from LMS to becoming grant-maintained. It may be a short administrative step, but it is a gigantic leap for the future of the school. For example, Hendon school was able to redistribute resources away from the centralised local authority services towards improvements in education. In the first year of Hendon

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becoming a GM school, the headmaster was able to give the teachers everything they wanted by way of books, teaching aids and so on.

He was able to improve the quality of life for the teachers by employing outside invigilators for school exams, so that the teachers did not have to sit there being bored for a couple of hours or so invigilating the pupils. The headmaster was also able to improve the quality of school lunches by getting Gardner Merchant Services, instead of the local authority, to run them. Let us not forget that an army of schoolchildren marches on its stomach.

The real test for a school does not depend on what we politicians say, because we sometimes get it wrong. Teachers and parents decide whether a school is good or bad. I recall an experience when my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), now the Secretary of State for Transport, visited the school in 1990. A teacher told my right hon. Friend, "I am a member of the Labour party." I wondered what he would say next and I thought a gigantic political debate was about to start. But he added, "The best thing that happened to this school was when it became grant-maintained." When I accompanied Lady Thatcher around the school during the election campaign, that same teacher wanted only a signed photograph of that distinguished lady.

The real test must be the numbers applying to the school. In 1987-88, Hendon was a heavily under-subscribed school. Today it is heavily over-subscribed. If the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) were still in her place, I would remind her that 50 per cent. more pupils now apply to go to that school than applied to attend it when it was within the local authority system.

The third reason why I am taking part in the debate is that my two sons are educated in the maintained system. I emulate the Minister and make a small confession. I, too, have lectured to a branch of the Workers Educational Association. I found most of those present to be middle-class, middle-aged and middle-brow in their interests. Nor were they any longer supportive of the Labour party.

I pay tribute to the dedication and professionalism of the vast majority of teachers. We do the profession a disservice when we dwell on the small minority who are not truly professional, because they are not typical of the vast majority of teachers.

Will my right hon. friend the Secretary of State turn his attention to voluntary-aided schools? Since the passage of the Education Act 1944, such schools have been a great success. They have met the desire of many Catholic and Anglican parents for their children to be taught in denominational schools. There are also a number of Jewish voluntary-aided schools. All those schools have good academic and behavioural results. Schools that emphasise standards of behaviour always tend to have good academic results and those that are very academic usually have relatively well-behaved children.

A majority of Catholic children who want to be educated in a voluntary-aided denominational school can be so educated. The vast majority of Anglican children who want to be educated in a voluntary-aided Church of England school can be so educated. Many of those who go to the C of E school in my constituency would not be classified as believers in the Christian faith. Indeed, some of them have not darkened the doors of a church for many years and some come from other denominations.

My orthodox Jewish constituents welcome the fact that Catholic schools exist for Catholic children and Anglican children can be educated in Anglican schools. But they ask why, as they pay their taxes too, their children cannot be educated in voluntary-aided Jewish schools on the same basis.

The Government need to look closely at the problems for other denominations, as well as at those of the two main denominations that have benefited from voluntary-aided status. Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools look again at the problem of the Hasmonean preparatory school, about which I have peppered them and their predecessors with letters? Until they change their mind, I will continue to pepper them with correspondence. It might save public expenditure if we called it game, set and match to the parents and staff of that school, because it has been in existence for 50 years and has very good results. They have spent a lot of money on modernising it and bringing it up to date, and I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will recognise their achievements in the not-too-distant future.

9.11 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Yesterday afternoon, we heard one of the most lamentable performances that the House has ever heard from a Secretary of State for Education. It contained no substance, no serious analysis, no creative thoughts and no attempt to grapple with the real and serious issues that face Britain today as, educationally, and sadly, we fall further down the European league of achievement and standards.

Instead, we saw a Secretary of State who was more preoccupied with his appearance—the master of the blow wave and Thespian histrionics. We saw a Secretary of State delighted with himself, denouncing Labour authorities for supposedly indulging in political interference in discussing the future of their schools. What a pity that he had not first had a word with his Parliamentary Private Secretary.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) rightly pointed out, the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) had been engaged in an exercise of arm-twisting of a voluntary-aided school in Fulham—*[Interruption.]* I shall tell hon. Members some more if they will listen. That school had applied, reasonably and rightly, to expand from two to three forms of entry because it is a popular, successful school and has a huge demand for places. The hon. Member for Fulham intervened to try to persuade the school that it would have a prospect of success only if it went grant-maintained.

His approach produced the following response from the four groups of people most likely to know the interests of that school and its educational needs. I am talking about the chairman of the governors, the chair of the staff association, the chair of the parents' association and the head teacher, who in a combined letter wrote as follows —and the Secretary of State would do well to listen—

> "as the signatories of this letter show, there is deep and widespread concern at the news that our application to become"—

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are discussing the Second Reading of the Education Bill. Can you say whether this intervention is in order and has any relevance to the subject of the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows me well enough to know that I would have called the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) to order if he had been out of order. There are, after all, 200 pages in the Bill. The speech has so far been in order.

Mr. Raynsford: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The letter says:

> "as the signatories of this letter show, there is deep and widespread concern at the news that our application to become a three-form entry school will not be dealt with on its merits and in particular the strong educational case and uniquely high rate of overscription, but may be dependent on whether we are prepared to choose Grant Maintained Status at this point. Indeed, it seemed to us, that you were saying that the application might be refused precisely in order to encourage us to become a Grant Maintained school . . . If the Government really want schools to exercise a free and informed choice whether to become Grant Maintained, is it not counter-productive to resort to what has all the appearance of 'blackmail' to achieve that purpose?"

The Secretary of State was evasive when challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury to say whether that and similar applications would be treated on their merits on a level playing field, or whether other political influences would be brought to bear. The House deserves an answer tonight, but, above all, the governors, parents and teachers of that school deserve an answer, as do other schools interested in similar applications, on whether the applications will be entitled to consideration on their merits or whether political bias on the Government side will influence the decision. If we do not get a straight answer that confirms that any such application will be treated on its merits, the Government will stand condemned of the most blatant hypocrisy, criticising others for political interference while practising it themselves in the most flagrant way.

The fact that the Government have to resort to such tactics speaks volumes. So much for the much-vaunted success of the grant-maintained initiative. The truth, which was well presented by many of my hon. Friends in the debate, is that surprisingly few schools have taken up the grant-maintained option, despite all the hype, all the encouragement and all the incentives which the Government have offered.

Let us take the figures for London. They show that a total of 54 primary and secondary schools have been given approval to opt out. That is an average of 1·6 schools per borough. When we examine the breakdown, we see that five boroughs, all Tory-controlled, account for no fewer than 38 of those 54 opt-outs; that is 70 per cent. of the total. Bromley with 11 heads the list; Hillingdon with 10 is next; Ealing with seven and Sutton and Wandsworth with five each complete the list.

There is clear evidence that, by contrast with those five Tory authorities, which dominate the opt-outs in London, no Labour-controlled authority in London had more than one school opting out, and many, like Greenwich, had no opt-outs at all.

Talking as I do to the head teachers, staff and parents of children in Greenwich schools, I am well aware of the concerns and priorities. They are totally at variance with the priorities of the Bill. Greenwich parents and teachers want their schools to be properly resourced and they want also a reversal of the cuts which have seriously affected many schools in the last two years, with the withdrawal of the transitional funding around the abolition of the Inner London education authority and the unfair treatment of Greenwich under the standard spending assessment formula.

They, like me, want the many very good schools in Greenwich to be able to provide the high-quality education that they aspire to provide for their pupils. They want resources, stability and freedom from the political interference which has characterised the Government's behaviour over the past 13 years, so that they can then deliver what they are in education to deliver. They want to give high-quality education to the children of our area and country who deserve far better than they are getting from this Government.

9.19 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): This has been a lively debate. Over the past two days, it has exposed this sham of the Bill. It is an admission by the Government of 13 years of failure, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) so eloquently pointed out.

The Bill has nothing to do with improving standards in education. The only clear benefits in it are some of the provisions for improving education for children with special needs, but even they contain some shortcomings that must be overcome.

Like all the other education legislation proposed by the Government, the Bill puts the cart before the horse. Yesterday, the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) gave the game away. The Opposition had been berating the Government over the short consultation period and the lack of attention paid to that consultation, as evidenced by changes in the Bill which the Government have described in a press release as some refinements to 200 pages of legislation. The hon. Gentleman said that the Committee stage would be protracted, so the opportunity for consultation would continue. We certainly hope so, but why could we not have proper consultation first, followed by a Bill? Then the Government would not have had to announce amendments to the Bill even before Second Reading.

The Times Educational Supplement summed up the disappointment felt by almost everyone in education, apart from a tightly knit group of Conservative Members:

> "There is now little support for the advance publicity claiming that a definitive Act to see out the century was in the making."

The editorial went on to expose the failings of the Bill and the criticisms levelled at it from every quarter.

The experts are also worried about what does not appear in the Bill. My hon. Friends the Members for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope), for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon), for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) and for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) underlined the serious shortcomings in the Bill in respect of children with and without statements.

The Special Education Consortium, which represents just about every voluntary organisation—RADAR, Mencap, the Spastics Society, the British Dyslexia Association, the Royal National Institute for the Deaf and Deaf Accord—speaks of the potentially damaging implications for the education of children with special needs, especially those who are not statemented. It speaks

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of the fears about parental choice and of the evidence that education is already being damaged. It says that, because of the pressures on local authority budgets, after delegating money to schools, they are already beginning to lose some of the excellent people involved in the support services for special needs education. The list is damning. Only statemented pupils will have certain resources to support them, and it is feared that non-statemented children with special needs will not be properly recognised throughout the system. Only some local authorities, such as Lewisham, have the good sense to make the effort to prevent that.

The many criticisms made by the voluntary organisations involved with children with special needs show that the Bill will have to be much amended if it is to be made half decent for those children who deserve special help across the board.

Much has been said about the wonders that the funding agency will achieve for schools that opt out. My hon. Friends the Members for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) and for Warrington, South and the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) have all said that the funding agency, whatever name it has, will not be local, accountable or democratic. Even with a regional set-up, parents who wish to express concern will have to travel a long way in order to do so and will not be able to remove the agency if they are dissatisfied with its performance.

We must ask whether that national unaccountable bureaucracy is likely to suffer the unwarranted interference of the Secretary of State as, for example, the National Curriculum Council has in the past. There is concern from all quarters about the removal of local accountability and from all quarters there is fear that the arrangements for joint responsibility, for the provision of places to be decided between the local education authority and the funding agency, will be a recipe for chaos and a duplication of powers.

Criticism has also come from the Conservative quarter. The Conservative Education Association has said:

> "Those who spend that sort of public money should be publicly accountable."

It has also said that the funding agency is a

> "far larger, more bureaucratic and less accountable national education authority."

Even the chair of the Grant-Maintained Heads Association, Mr. Lloyd, has expressed real fears that that bureaucracy will endanger the so-called newly won freedoms—out of the LEA frying pan and into the funding agency fire. The funding agency will not be accessible in the way that the LEAs, the staff and councillors were. The sooner the Government——

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Griffiths: If the hon. Gentleman had been here throughout today's debate, I would have given him that courtesy, but he has not been here.

The funding agency will not be accountable and the sooner we can return to funding being channelled through local authorities, the better.

The Bill attempts to make opt-outs easier. The removal of the second governor's resolution will make the procedure easier. However, it is unlikely that we shall see the opting out of 11,000 or 12,000 schools as was talked about in the early days of grant-maintained status. My hon. Friends the Members for Knowsley, South, for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall), for Wallsend and for Warrington, South showed that opting out is already a failure. There is no substantial evidence that such schools provide any better education than the large bulk of maintained schools.

Far too many schools have been given grant-maintained status because they have been faced with closure. Two thirds of ballots have taken place in Tory authorities; parents have sought to escape their low-spending policies, or their attempts to reintroduce selection in, for instance, Wandsworth and Trafford.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Griffiths: I am afraid not. The hon. Gentleman has been absent from the Chamber for most of the evening.

Both the CBI and the Institute of Directors have expressed doubts about the validity of the Government's support for, and belief in, grant-maintained schools. The CBI wants to ensure that their efficacy and effectiveness is reviewed within three to four years. The Institute of Directors plainly says that it cannot be assumed that all grant-maintained schools are performing well.

The headmaster of Queen Elizabeth high school in Hexham exposed what opt-outs were all about when he said that opting out was a pretty squalid scheme, which for the most part ensured that scarce resources went to those who needed them least. The Conservative Education Association has also expressed concern, saying that, if the grant-maintained system developed, the system would restrict choice rather than increase it. The Government's emphasis on grant-maintained schools is something about which the association has grave doubts.

As for the issue of choice, we should bear in mind the horrendous impact on parents in Bromley, who, last summer, did not know where their children were going until a week or two before term started. Some of those parents were not even able to send their children to the school that they had named as their fifth choice. In that context, choice is a hollow concept. Labour will get rid of the funding council and will ensure that the performance of grant-maintained schools and the coherent provision of education for all children in LEA areas are examined. Our objective will be to recreate the educational planning role of the LEA and the self-management role of schools. Successful management models can be seen in both Labour and Tory authorities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West quoted the Conservative chairman of the West Sussex authority. I should like to quote the chairman of the East Essex authority—*[Interruption.]* I apologise: I meant East Sussex. At least I know that they are both on the south coast. I have done better than the Secretary of State did yesterday in connection with the whereabouts of Gwent and Torfaen. The chair of the East Sussex education committee said:

> "We haven't been physically leaned on, but I sense there is pressure. The whole idea of a Tory-controlled authority which doesn't have a grant-maintained school is a disappointment to ministers. But I don't understand why that should be if that authority has high standards and is giving schools the chance to make local decisions."

It is perfectly possible.

Hardly a good word has been said by any independent source about the education association. It has been pointed out by the Children's Legal Centre, and by many others who have blitzed us with griefs on the Bill, that there is already a way of dealing with the problem of schools that fail or have a high proportion of difficult children—namely, full implementation of the Elton report. Some authorities are doing that already; it is a pity that the Secretary of State does not take his educational responsibilities seriously and ensure that all authorities implement the report. If he did that, there would be no need for education associations.

The Conservative Education Association, in its comments on that idea, said that support was best given firmly and discreetly. The association regards education associations as precisely the sort of ideologically bound policy that should be avoided. It went on to say that it regarded this as an unwarranted extension of central Government power, capable of abuse in the future. It would be more helpful if the Elton recommendations were properly introduced, and a formal and effective complaints procedure, so that all schools could act effectively. The Conservative Education Association also said that the Bill and the White Paper that preceded it have left teachers punch drunk with change and that the last thing they need is more change that is driven by ideology rather than educational need.

If the Government were interested in educational need and good quality education everywhere, they would long ago have abandoned this continual tinkering with the education of pupils in England and Wales. They would have sought real consultation. They ought by now to know that parents want good quality neighbourhood schools, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge so rightly pointed out. Parents do not want to have to rush far and wide throughout the local authority's area, or outside it, looking for good schools. They want them on their doorsteps. The Secretary of State for Education should ensure that grant-maintained schools provide high quality education.

The Opposition would have been prepared to enter into real consultations in order to achieve a proper consensus on how to provide good quality education for all our children. Unfortunately, the Government, in the 17 Bills that they have introduced, have failed to provide for adequate consultation. After the Government introduced their last huge Bill on education, they had to table nearly 600 amendments in the other place to try to put right their first thoughts. They presented this Bill as an even greater Bill than the great Education Reform Bill. I would not mind betting that even more amendments will be tabled by the Government in order to put right the rush to judgment that they have made in this Bill. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth says that it is part of the consultation. Why on earth could the Government not consult in the first place and then prepare a good Bill, instead of wasting paper, acres of trees, on amendments that then would have been unnecessary?

The Bill is not about choice in education. It is about creating quangos, with Tory placepeople being appointed to positions of influence, thereby being able unduly to influence the education of our children. The Secretary of State already has the power to appoint hundreds of people to quangos in Wales. If a funding council is established for Wales and if a large number of education associations is established in Wales, the strong possibility is that there will be more jobs to fill than there are Tory voters in the whole of the Principality. The Welsh Office should give some thought to the fact that, if it is not careful, it will have to appoint Labour supporters to fill those positions. If it did that, some common sense would prevail in education.

I look forward to the Committee stage because it will offer an opportunity to correct the myriad of mistakes that the Government have perpetrated in their hasty consultation period. They have already admitted that they need to table amendments because the Bill simply is a failure. The Government can rest assured that we shall table amendments to ensure quality education for all children in England and Wales, delivered through a democratic system, which the Bill seeks to destroy.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): The two-day debate on this important and major Bill has been characterised by the concerns of Conservative Members for the themes of quality and standards, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison), parental choice, which was rightly emphasised by my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) and constant and knowledgeable references to special educational needs needs by my hon. Friends the Members for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) and for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon), to mention but a few.

Those were the themes which came through strongly from Conservative Members. Unfortunately, the themes of Opposition Members were, sadly but predictably, driven by concerns for producer interests—local authority bureaucracies and trade unions—and were embedded firmly in the past. Rarely have I seen such a contrast in attitude, content and approach between Conservative Members and the deadbeats on the other side of the House.

It is little wonder that the Bill and the White Paper have been so widely welcomed. The speeches of Opposition Members marginalised the Opposition in the debate on education and its future.

In a speech devoid of direction or content, the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) made the rather ritualistic claim, which was echoed by the hon. Members for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) and for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), that the consultation period had been abbreviated or inadequate. That is puzzling. When we were returned after the election in April, the Department was faced with the imperative to set a legal framework for the growing grant-maintained school sector. That could not be delayed or avoided, and we did not want to do so. We wanted to make real improvements to the Education Act 1981 and to special educational needs, which was widely welcomed by the special educational needs world. We wanted to take real action against local education authorities that had persistently failed to address failing schools and the pupils suffering in them.

We therefore published a comprehensive and radical White Paper in record time—by the end of July—and allowed until September for responses. I do not know whether it is unreasonable to expect people, given the whole of August and most of September, to reply to such a document. Suffice it to say that, although Opposition Members were probably safely on the beach, we received nearly 1,000 replies from local authority associations and local authorities, the Churches, the special educational

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needs lobby and all those sufficiently interested in education to consider and to reply to the White Paper. Why Opposition Members believe that it was so difficult and impossible is beyond me. They will have to answer for that, but it hardly supports their contention that the consultation period was inadequate.

We are determined, having laid this excellent and comprehensive Bill before the House, to press on with the Committee stage to ensure that the Bill's provisions are enacted as early as possible so that its benefits can be spread as far as possible.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The Minister described the Bill as excellent and comprehensive. Does that mean that there will be but a few Government amendments to it?

Mr. Forth: I cannot possibly anticipate the Committee stage or subsequent stages of the Bill's consideration. As ever, the Government will be a listening Government. My Secretary of State and I will listen carefully—more carefully than the Opposition—to representations made to us and, if we think that there is a good case for amending the Bill, I am sure that we shall be prepared to do so. That is the essence of the process. Why the hon. Gentleman should find this so amusing, I cannot possibly understand; perhaps he will explain why he finds the concept of listening and flexibility so strange.

I want to deal immediately with a question that arose frequently during the debate. It was raised first by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), in his own individual style, then by my hon. Friends the Members for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), who wondered whether education authorities were deliberately misleading parents and governors of schools concerning the possibilities that surround grant-maintained status. Disgraceful material has been produced by many local education authorities. I mention Merton and Hammersmith and Fulham among many authorities that have sought deliberately to mislead parents who are interested in the possibility of grant-maintained status for their schools.

I cannot do better than to quote a letter from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State dated 9 November:

> "I have written to all schools in the country with the very specific assurance that schools accepted for GM status will continue to receive funding that recognises the extra responsibilities they have as GM schools. I make no caveat in the case of authorities spending above their education SSA."

There it is: it is perfectly clear. My right hon. Friend has made that commitment and I hope that my hon. Friends will go to their schools and local education authorities and make it perfectly clear that the way ahead for grant-maintained status is clear and firm, and that no local education authority must be allowed to peddle the dishonesty that has been peddled in the past. That does no credit to councillors or officials in local education authorities.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Will the Minister say more about this important point, which lay at the heart of all of the responses to the consultation exercise? All those who responded asked whether there would really be an absolutely level playing field as between grant-maintained schools and those maintained by local education authorities. Will there be absolute even-handedness and absolute parity? Is the answer yes or no? This is a Second Reading debate, and that matter is a key principle. Now is the moment for the Minister to tell us.

Mr. Forth: There can never be a level playing field between grant-maintained schools and local education authority maintained schools, because grant-maintained status gives such clear benefits and advantages.

That brings me to what I would categorise as the Opposition's schizophrenia. It was picked up by my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) with his usual unerring accuracy.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Forth: I shall certainly not give way after the intervention made by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright).

On the one hand, Opposition Members seem to exhibit paranoia about what they regard as the threat posed to the establishment and vested interests of local education authorities by the growing grant-maintained sector. Yet, almost in the same breath, the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) said that, as more schools opt out, the LEAs will lose powers to the funding agency and will eventually be relieved of all their functions. In almost the next breath he said that opting out had been an embarrassing flop. Opposition Members cannot have it both ways. Either LEAs are under imminent threat of subversion by the growing grant-maintained sector, or grant-maintained status is a flop. Which is it? We have heard that contradictory message from Opposition Members throughout the debate.

The hon. Member for City of Durham said that schools opted out only in LEAs with under-funded schools. I can tell him and the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers), who tried to peddle the same nonsense, that a cursory look at the list of LEAs spending above SSA and which have a significant number of grant-maintained schools reveals authorities like Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Hertfordshire. I will not continue with the list. However, having failed to do their homework properly as usual, Opposition Members have asserted that only schools from under-funded LEAs are opting for grant-maintained status and that is wrong.

Mr. Byers *rose*——

Mr. Forth: Because he is bobbing up and down, the hon. Member for Wallsend reminds me that he said that the Government's education policy was Maoist. All I can say to him is, "It takes one to know one."

Mr. Byers: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forth: No, not at this stage.

My award for effrontery during the debate goes jointly to the hon. Members for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris) and for Cannock and Burntwood. The hon. Member for Yardley had the gall yesterday to claim that the problem with education in Birmingham was lack of resources. She referred to classes with more than 30 pupils and went on to say:

> "a work force of frustrated teachers who despair, year after year, at having to make diminishing resources go further and further."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 687.]

That is right. There are diminishing resources in Birmingham—an authority which in 1991-92 spent £64 million less and in 1992-93, £57 million less than was provided under the SSA. Of course it is a matter of diminishing resources in Birmingham. That is the kind of authority that we are trying to get schools out from under, and I am glad to say that we are doing that very rapidly.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forth: No, I will not give way because I am just warming up about Birmingham.

While we are referring to Birmingham on education performance, I can do no better than quote *The Birmingham Post* of 6 November 1992 which stated that Birmingham was in the bottom third on this year's GCSE results with only a quarter passing five or more GCSEs at grades A to C, compared with 30 per cent. of average metropolitan LEA schools and a national figure of 38 per cent. *The Birmingham Post* states revealingly:

> "Education chiefs in Birmingham are to launch an inquiry into why some secondary schools did so badly in this year's GCSEs."

That is the authority which the hon. Member for Yardley had the nerve to defend yesterday.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Is the Minister aware of the discrepancy in the capital financing of Birmingham city council compared with its actual expenditure? Will he also comment on the fact that the Conservative opposition have never proposed an increase in the education budget at the budget session? Not only that, but when council members such as myself proposed an increase in the budget, the Conservative opposition sat on their hands and did not support it.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Lady should have a word with her hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) who just the other day said something along the lines of, "If Birmingham council had spent a lot less taxpayers' and chargepayers' money on prestige products, it might have been able to spend a bit more on education."

In fairness to Opposition Members, they have repeatedly asserted or implied that there are some secretive grant-maintained schools that we have yet to unearth. They implied that there can be no positive demonstration that grant-maintained schools are superior to schools that remain under LEA control. I want to quote once more from a letter from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, as I find his letters most revealing and I want to share them with the House. My right hon. Friend said —I should like Opposition Members to listen to this:

> "HMI have observed not only that in GM schools the proportion of lessons judged satisfactory or better is greater than that in maintained schools generally, but also that since becoming grant-maintained the schools have generally deployed their resources to good effect so as to secure continuing improvements; that the demand for places in the majority of schools has increased since the change of status; that pupils' behaviour and attendance in GM schools are generally commendable; and that teachers' morale has improved."

That is what HMI says about grant-maintained schools. That is the hidden secret that Opposition Members are so keen to unearth. It is now a matter of public record.

During the debate Opposition Members have claimed that somehow there is a golden partnership between LEAs and schools that we must not seek to undermine. I wonder whether they were referring to Islington, where recently we were told that £60,000 has been paid to teachers who no longer work in Islington schools. That happened at a time when the LEA in Islington, presumably as part of its partnership with its schools, had to cut £4 million from its education budget.

Perhaps Opposition Members had Lambeth in mind. The LEA in Lambeth has paid more than £338,000 to 72 phantom teachers who no longer work for the council. Is that what Opposition Members have in mind when they talk about partnerships? Are they surprised that more parents begin to ask searching questions about what LEAs do, especially those that I have mentioned, and why the option of grant-maintained status is not more attractive to them?

I shall mention briefly a point made by the hon. Member for Caerphilly. I shall trespass slightly on to Welsh territory, but as so many hon. Members who spoke come from Wales, I should nod in their direction. I shall read a brief excerpt from the *Western Mail*—that Welsh bible—which recently said:

> "The message from Whitehall is that parents should be able to send their children to the school of their choice, shopping round for the one which best meets the requirement of the child. The message from Wales's eight education authorities is, by and large, the negation of that. You send your child to the nearest school, and that's that . . . Hitherto, opting out has not taken off in Wales. But the current anti-choice culture in Welsh education means that parents and head-teachers will increasingly regard it as a way of liberating their schools from the inflexible grip of county hall. If the counties don't change their ways it could become a stampede."

That sums up better than I could the ethos of what is happening in Wales.

In conclusion, I refer to the quotes from *The Times* which has been mentioned several times in the debate. A number of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Caerphilly and the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope), quoted from *The Times* in July when our White Paper was produced. When the hon. Member for Caerphilly was pushed and invited to examine *The Times'* more recent considered opinion, a certain coyness came over him. Having given time and thought to our White Paper and Bill, *The Times* recently said:

> "The government deserves congratulation for its attempt yesterday to dislodge the vested interests that control the state schools system"—

and Opposition Members.

> "Instead it will be accused of excessive centralisation and worse."

On my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, *The Times* said

> "Mr. Patten seems sincerely committed to the idea of improving education for the majority of children. Further, he seems to interpret this to mean what most parents understand by it: restoring the importance of knowledge and visible achievement."

Even my right hon. Friend could not have put it better.

The Government want quality education for all children. We want choice for parents and decisions made as closely as possible to schools and communities. The Bill provides for that with additional important provisions for children with special educational needs—a matter widely recognised.

Opposition Members apparently cannot support those aims. They are in thrall to producer interests, the local authorities, trade unions and any group which feels threatened by changed parental powers and the greater demands of higher standards. We are proud of the Bill, we

[Mr. Forth]

can see the way ahead and we trust parents and governors. I ask the House to reject the educational Luddites on the Opposition Benches and to support the Bill.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 268.

Division No. 84] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon, Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann

Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John

Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*

Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.

Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

EDUCATION BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Education Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State—

(a) for making grants to the following bodies established under the Act, that is, the Funding Agency for Schools, the Schools Funding Council for Wales and the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority,

(b) for paying remuneration, allowances and other expenses in respect of the Special Educational Needs Tribunal, or any education association, established under the Act,

(c) for making payments in respect of expenses incurred in connection with the acquisition by any school of grant-maintained status,

(d) for making grants to the governing body of any grant-maintained school, including a governing body in liquidation; and

(e) in respect of any administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under the Act;

(2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money so provided; and

(3) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

10.15 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I feel it necessary to raise a few matters relating to the money resolution because, by its tone and content, it is a propaganda section of the Bill. The explanatory and financial memorandum contains a section claiming to give the financial effects of the Bill, paragraph 2 of which, under the heading, "Financial effects of the Bill," states:

> "The proposed new funding authorities for schools will take over from the Department for Education and the Welsh Office responsibility for the calculation and payment of recurrent and capital grant to grant-maintained schools under regulations and guidelines made by the Secretary of State."

It goes on to say later:

> "It is expected that the costs of the funding authorities will be offset over time by savings in the running costs of the Department for Education and the Welsh Office".

What is the time scale? When the transfer of funding takes place, there will be a gap between the new funding authorities—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. It would be appreciated if hon. Members having meetings would continue them outside the Chamber.

Mr. Cryer: The money resolution provides for any sums of money required by the Secretary of State. In other words, when the House has passed the resolution, it will not have given authority for money to be spent through the new funding authorities, that money being offset by money that was spent by previous authorities. It will have given authority to the Department to provide for any sums of money that the Secretary of State may require.

Paragraph 3 states:

> "Local education authorities are currently paying for the upkeep of up to 1·5 million more school places than are required . . . . Clause 14 places a duty on local education authorities and funding authorities to provide the Secretary of State with information".

Clause 14 places a number of not qualified but absolute duties on local authorities. Those duties will cost money. As the House knows, LEAs, and local authorities in general, are extremely short of money. Will the money being authorised be made available to LEAs to cover the duties that clause 14 places on them?

It is interesting to note that the money resolution provides for

> "any increase attibutable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act".

If the Minister does not intend to pay money directly to the Department, what will happen if local authorities can show that the total expenditure that they are undertaking by virtue of the additional duties will result in a reduction in some other area of local authority expenditure? Does the money resolution require the Department to provide an increase in the amount to be paid? That places yet another obligation on the backs of local authorities without, so far, clear provision having been made by central Government to employ people to do the work in providing information about the alleged 1·5 million places that are needed.

By the way, the money resolution is couched in general terms, as are the "Financial effects of the Bill". I hope that the Minister is aware that local authorities such as Bradford, part of which I represent, do not have an excessive number of school places. Bradford has a shortage of school places because it has an expanding roll of pupils. More money is needed, not for the administrative requirements with which the Bill is riddled but for new schools and extensions to existing schools.

The Minister is probably aware that some 600 temporary classrooms are in use in Bradford to sustain the education system. I hope that he will bear it in mind that the powers contained under "Financial effects of the Bill" and the authority that he will gain from the money resolution cannot be used only for the grant-dispersing bodies—funding authorities—referred to in the Bill. As the money resolution provides for

> "any sums required by the Secretary of State",

he could conceivably use the authority in the Bill and the resolution to provide additional educational facilities for local authorities like Bradford, which are very short of money and urgently need extra money for proper educational purposes, such as more classrooms and permanent school extensions.

I draw the Minister's attention to the provision for payment of local public inquiries when schools are to be closed. What calculation has been made for the cost of those local inquiries? The money resolution provides for the Secretary of State to pay for them. The Government have a lot of experience in financing local public inquiries, particularly in controversial areas such as changing existing roads and introducing new roads. As it happens, the closure of schools is highly controversial and emotive, and local public inquiries could be heated, lengthy, and costly. Based on the Department for Education's experience in undertaking school closures, has the Minister made a rough calculation of how much will be allocated to financing local inquiries?

Paragraph 5 of the "Financial effects of the Bill" covers the balloting of parents and makes it clear that, under clause 28, the Secretary of State is given

> "a new power to pay grant to local education authority maintained schools in support of the costs associated with their ballots of parents".

What powers does the Secretary of State have in mind to pay those sums of money? The payment terms are determined by the Secretary of State but nothing is laid down in the Bill. The House is authorising the Secretary of State to spend money, having been given no idea of the extent of that expenditure. For example, it is one thing to provide postage for a single document explaining the parents' case, but it is another thing if the Secretary of State has in mind money to finance a propaganda campaign to support the move towards grant-maintained status. That would be entirely different and a great deal more expensive.

Before we give authority to the Secretary of State to spend money on terms determined entirely by himself, the House should know something about the sums that the Secretary of State has in mind to spend. It would be very unfair if he intended to hand out to parents who want to undertake balloting large sums of cash, simply on a propaganda exercise, without both sides of the argument being presented to those who wish to vote. It seems fair and reasonable to ask the Secretary of State what is to be provided. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but there is far too much noise in the House. I understand that Madam Speaker has made that point once already.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friends on the Bench beside me have been making that very point. It is disturbing, particularly when hon. Members are making serious points about money. The House lets money resolutions go through far too easily.

I have yet to hear the Minister's reply. It may be that some hon. Members who are beyond the Bar of the House are getting near the door so that they can go home. The more noise that emanates from that area, the more I shall feel bound to call a Division if the Minister's reply is less than satisfactory. On the other hand, if there is rapt, silent attention to my remarks in recognition of the seriousness of the occasion, the Minister may take more time to explain the position and I may be satisfied and may not have to call a Division. I do not want to cause disruption needlessly. As the House knows, that is not my style all the time.

I am seeking information because we are very concerned. My hon. Friends have been discussing seriously with me the aims of the Secretary of State. Truth to tell, the section on the financial effects of the Bill is very bland. We are told that, when expenditure is moved from one area to another, one will offset the other and there will be no cost. That is not good enough.

The Department should have made guesstimates at the very worst and informed calculations at best. Those should have been placed before the House. We are not asking the Department for information on sums of money by which they will be bound but, as the money resolution is couched in extensive terms, it gives the Secretary of State virtual carte blanche to spend what he likes. That is not good enough. People would not accept that the Government should use taxpayers' money under the balloting provisions for Tory propaganda in support of the Government's cause. That is what it seems like to me. I hope that the Minister will prove me wrong.

Another point causes me extraordinary concern. On the Tory Benches, we have a collection of merchant bankers, Lloyd's members, estate agents and all the rest [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Some of them may not like to be associated with Lloyd's now, but they did at one time. They are always concerned about public expenditure and say that it should be cut. Yet when it comes to this, they want carte blanche in the amount that they can spend. Given their attitude towards public expenditure, I should have thought that they would not want a general power under the money resolution but would want detailed calculations from the Department. The figures could have been brought before the Minister, who could then have presented them, in general terms, to the House, to show what good housekeepers the Government really are—to show that they are not prepared to hand out taxpayers' money for secret propaganda.

Some of these Tory Members voted last Wednesday because they were worried about the shift of sovereignty from this House to the Common Market. Twenty-six of them went into the Lobbies with us. They should not be prepared to ignore a bland money resolution of this nature, which gives widespread powers to Ministers. It is inconsistent of them to worry about the sovereignty of the House but not to worry about handing over unqualified, unquantified powers to the Secretary of State, to spend as he likes.

That is why I have raised these issues, against a background of noise emanating from indifferent Conservative Members standing beyond the Bar of the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are your hon. Friends?"] I do not need large numbers of Labour Members behind me. They know that I am capable of raising all these issues on my own, with the support of those of my hon. Friends who are sitting beside me.

I hope that some of the Conservatives here tonight are not here only because they have been told to stay by the Whips in case there is a Division. I hope that they are interested in this subject and that they have not been bribed, arm-twisted or intimidated, as they were last week to give the Government a majority of three. The subject merits attention in its own right.

10.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Nigel Forman): As one who has been in the House for quite a long time—perhaps not as long as the hon. Gentleman, or perhaps even longer—I can tell my younger colleagues that we have just heard a characteristic speech by the hon. Member for Keighley.

Hon. Members: He lost it.

Mr. Cryer: Bradford, South.

Mr. Forman: Perhaps there is some connection there. In any event, these are the sorts of speeches that the hon. Gentleman is used to making, almost in his sleep. Indeed, some of us remember finding opportunities to sleep when he was making them. Nevertheless, I have taken his remarks seriously, and I shall try to answer some of his questions.

The hon. Gentleman began by referring to the cost implications of the proposed funding agency for schools. The Government intend it to be a very lean and light-touch body, with minimal costs involved. The precise costs will depend on a number of factors—most importantly, the growth in and the number of grant-maintained schools. The body's main functions will relate to the payments of grant to those schools, and the running costs will be offset by savings in the LEAs' and the Department's administrative budgets.

In the last year for which figures are available, local education authorities' administrative costs totalled about £900 million. The costs associated with the assumption by the funding agency of planning responsibilities will be minimal, as will any start-up costs. The FAS will be, as I

[Mr. Forman]

say, a light-touch body, not a bloated bureaucracy. It will attract people from commerce and industry, who will bring to its management financial skills that will ensure that it operates cost-effectively.

The costs incurred under clause 14 should be equally modest, if not minimal. The various statements of information required are an extension of the general requirements on LEAs to provide information to the Secretary of State under the 1944 Act. There is nothing new or dramatic about that. The costs should be more than offset by the savings resulting from the removal of surplus places, thanks, inter alia, to the provision of that information.

Mr. Cryer: What about a local authority such as Bradford which does not have surplus places? If it can justify extra costs incurred as a result of the new obligations in the legislation, will it receive grant aid to meet those costs?

Mr. Forman: I should have thought that such a local authority might well be interested in new school buildings as well. However, I should prefer to give the hon. Gentleman a considered answer to his precise point by writing to him later.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the administrative expenses of the public inquiries foreshadowed in the Bill. The main additional administrative expense will be cost of the inquiries. The public inquiry procedure is a last resort. The Secretary of State's new powers should concentrate LEA and funding agency minds to bring forward sensible proposals and only when they do not will the Secretary of State need to bring forward his own proposals.

Therefore, public inquiries will be cost-effective. The end product should be a sensible scheme for the removal of surplus places where the LEA or the funding agency has not offered one. Where major reorganisations are concerned, that can result in significant capital and revenue savings over a number of years. The hon. Gentleman should be assured that any additional tasks flowing from the operation of the public inquiry system can be absorbed within the Department for Education manpower planned provision.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the role of ballots and their possible cost. Let me try to reassure him. He follows these matters closely and he will know that hostile local education authorities have sought to exploit the substantial resources at their disposal almost to intimidate governing bodies which may be considering grant-maintained status and to undermine their attempts to inform parents properly.

In contrast, governing bodies have only limited funds at their disposal to present their views about what is best for the future of the school. Therefore, by limiting local authority expenditure and putting modest sums at the disposal of governing bodies for the promotion of grant-maintained status, we intend to redress the balance in order to ensure that there is a balanced debate on the issues. In that way, parents will be given every opportunity to make informed decisions about what is best for the future of their school.

The grant to the governing body will be sufficient to pay for the cost of producing one leaflet about grant-maintained status. It is as modest as that. When the House considers that individual schools are as David to Goliath when faced with large local education authorities determined to argue the case against, it will see that that is only redressing the balance in a fair and reasonable way.

The Bill will help us to get better value from our substantial investment in education. It will do that, first, by providing a framework for the expansion of grant-maintained schools. The independent status of grant-maintained schools and the sense of ownership that they enjoy have significantly enhanced their work. Experience has shown that grant-maintained schools can use to very good effect their share of their former LEA's central costs, which is exactly what is passed over to them.

The Bill will secure better value for money by tackling the scandal of surplus school places. In too many cases, LEAs have failed woefully to take the resolute action required. In consequence, there are now up to 1·5 million surplus school places, the sheer maintenance of which pre-empts an estimated £300 million a year. We need to release as much of that as possible to spend on children's education. Allied to that is the problem of uneconomically small schools which must also be addressed.

The Bill will tackle the problem of surplus places by giving the Secretary of State the powers to direct local education authorities, and the funding authorities if necessary, to bring foward proposals to remove surplus places. The Bill also gives the Secretary of State powers to bring forward his own proposals for schools reorganisation where he is not satisfied that the LEA's proposals adequately address the problem.

In all those ways, and as the White Paper explains, our proposals provide a framework for the efficient and effective development of policies that the Government have pursued since 1979. We believe that they will lead to significant increases in value for money and improvements in quality over the years ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Northern Ireland

That the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 (Amendment) Order 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 10th August, be approved.

Arms and Ammunition

That the draft Firearms Acts (Amendment) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 15th July, be approved.

European Communities

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Poland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 19th October, be approved.

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Hungary) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 19th October, be approved.

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 8) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2623), a copy of which was laid before this House on 23rd October, be approved.

DANGEROUS DRUGS

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Modification) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 22nd October, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

CULTURAL GOODS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4327/92 and the proposals described in the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of National Heritage on 17th July 1992, relating to the export of cultural goods and the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from a Member State; would support acceptable measures of additional protection for national treasures after the removal of internal frontiers without imposing intolerable administrative and financial burdens; notes that they need to be in proportion to the problem they are designed to solve, that they should not impair the balance of interests of the European Community which is the essence of the United Kingdom policy, and should not involve substantial additional costs whilst introducing damaging uncertainty into the art and antiques trade; and supports the strong recommendation of the First Report of the National Heritage Committee that the Government should seek deferment of a decision unless and until redrafting to take account of the inconsistencies and unacceptable administrative impact of the proposals has been achieved.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Protection and Support of Victims of Child Abuse

10.41 pm

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I rise to present a petition signed by some 4,420 members of the public from Wallasey and elsewhere. It states:

We wish to see instigated a programme of support and counselling for the families of the victims of child abuse, That we wish to see convicted abusers of children moved from residences in the vicinity of their victims.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House do take steps to achieve these goals.

And your Petitioners, as is duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Business Rents

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.42 pm

Mr. Angela Browning (Tiverton): The issue that I raise tonight is crucially important to small businesses, not just in my constituency but throughout the United Kingdom. As all hon. Members know, Britain's small businesses provide the very bone marrow of our economy, and the retail sector alone—from the corner shops, which are the kernel of a local community, to the large retail chains—directly employs well over 2 million people. It is without doubt one of the most important engines for economic growth.

Britain's small businesses have suffered a number of powerful body blows in the past few years, not just because of the global recession but because of the uniform business rate—particularly in the south-west—and the sky-high real interest rates needed to bring down inflation. Not one of those factors, however, has had such a devastating impact on our small businesses as the antiquated and deeply unjust system of commercial leasehold that exists in this country, uniquely in the European Community.

The origin of the current crisis—I use the term advisedly—lies in the huge escalation that took place in rents for shops and offices in the late 1980s. As a result of a number of factors, the period between 1985 and 1990 brought huge and, as it subsequently turned out, unsustainable pressure on the demand for what was then a limited resource—prime shopping sites in our high streets. The market mechanism responded accordingly, and as demand increased, rents soared—way above the relatively modest growth in sales that took place even in the boom conditions that existed at the time.

It is a little known fact, but an extraordinarily potent one, that, between 1984 and 1988, retail sales grew by just 25 per cent., while rents rocketed by no less than 60 per cent. Even more dramatic is the escalation of retail rents between 1985 and 1990—up by 145 per cent., when the increase in RPI was just 33 per cent.

That was bad enough even before the recession struck, but when it did, demand for sites vanished and customer spending plummeted, unlikely ever to return to the unsustainable levels that it reached in the late 1980s.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Does my hon. Friend agree that the uniform business rate, about which she complained earlier, was directly related to the soaring level of rents? UBR and rate valuation are linked to rents.

Mrs. Browning: My hon. Friend makes a good point. That has exacerbated the position for small businesses.

While the market mechanism has responded in boom conditions, it has completely failed to respond to recession. In a free and fair market, rents for leasehold premises should have taken account of all the relevant economic factors and fallen accordingly. Instead, they have defied the laws of economic gravity, remaining on top of the outrageously high plateau they had reached in 1990, while the spending power of their customers has been gutted. The market, it appears, is neither free nor fair.

It is a chilling fact that, if sales grow at an annual level of between 0 per cent. and 4 per cent., in line with the Government's target for inflation, it will take up to 15 years for that growth in sales to catch up with the increased rents that most small businesses now pay—provided that there are no further rent increases. Many businesses will not survive for that long.

There are three roots to what is, essentially, economic dyspepsia. I want to draw each of them briefly to the Minister's attention, since urgent reform is, I believe, essential if any sort of future for hundreds of small businesses in my constituency—and, indeed, countrywide—is to be secured.

The first is the iniquitous upwards-only clause—a remnant, long overdue for abolition, from the days of double-digit inflation. At a time when one of the main challenges facing the Government is how to adapt to a new age of falling prices and disinflation, it seems utterly ludicrous that rents, unlike any other commodity, and, as we all know, unlike house prices, can move upwards only and are prevented from falling to reconcile demand with supply—the very core of the market mechanism.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): This issue affects small shopkeepers in every high street throughout the country. Does my hon. Friend agree that lawyers should not advise landlords that they have to insist upon using that clause? There is nothing to stop lawyers saying, "Abandon that clause." Instead, lawyers are giving landlords unsound, unhelpful advice.

Mrs. Browning: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I hope that he will forgive me if I press on with some speed, because I have other factors to mention.

Allied to the blatant negation of the market is the second problem—the dominance of the 20-to-25-year institutional lease, which is virtually unknown outside this country. These long leases mean that tenants are unable to escape unjustified rents. In addition, they also prevent small shops from moving from existing premises to new shopping centres or, in the case of offices, to business parks, when local market conditions dictate. As experience in high streets throughout the country, from large cities to small market towns, demonstrates, consumers are departing from traditional shopping areas, leaving those that they used to shop with trapped by hopelessly unprofitable long-term tenancies.

The third root of the present problems is the system that is in place to resolve disputes between landlords and their tenants. When a tenant disputes the rent at a review, he or she must appeal to a third party arbitrator against whose decision there is no appeal. To resolve that dispute, the arbitrator summons evidence of the rental levels agreed for "comparable" properties.

Comparable evidence includes both rent reviews and new lettings, but such a system effectively means that evidence or reviews must be based on the peak of the market. The recession means that there are few new lettings on which to draw. What few new lettings exist are obscured by a miasma of confidentiality clauses concealing the real market rent. There is therefore effectively no way for the true state of the market to influence an arbitrator's valuation.

Empty shops and offices—an excellent indication of what rental levels ought to be—are not admissible as evidence; nor are other factors, such as the level of unemployment, the rate of inflation, or the balance of supply and demand. Yet again, the market cannot work because a free flow of readily available information—the heartbeat of the market mechanism—is totally absent from the system. The cumulative effect of each of these problems is, sadly, all too often bankruptcy.

The story does not end there, however, for yet another part of our medieval system of retail rents is the horrendous concept of original tenant liability. This system, which the Scots have been clever enough to avoid and which is unique to England and Wales, means that, when a bankruptcy occurs because of a dramatically uplifted rent at review, tenants far back in the lease assignment chain, even if they occupied a property for only a few months decades earlier, can find themselves presented with a liability of nightmarish proportions.

One bankruptcy swiftly follows another, and produces a great deal of personal anguish. I have known of three such cases since I became Member for Tiverton in April, one of which led to the couple concerned facing the prospect of having to sell the matrimonial home to discharge the debts of people whom they had never met. The effect that it had on their health was dramatic. They were under permanent medication from their doctor, and it damaged their lives tremendously.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): I have experienced similar disgraceful examples in my constituency, as have many other hon. Members, and we must do something to change the law.

Mrs. Browning: Many hon. Members have experience of constituents being placed in that distressing situation.

These four burdens—the outdated arbitration system, a complete lack of transparency, upwards-only clauses and original tenant liability—are bravely borne alone by Britain's small businesses. Our punitive system of commercial leasehold exists nowhere else in the European Community, and it is high time that we came into line with the modern market-oriented systems of our competitors.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): My hon. Friend has put her finger on the point that is causing grave concern in my constituency and throughout the country. I know that members of the Small Business Bureau are experiencing difficulty with upwards-only clauses in rent reviews and with the awful business whereby, if a company goes bankrupt, there lands on the assignee of the lease a liability from years before to find a high level of rent that it cannot possibly meet.

Mrs. Browning: I have raised a lot of problems today, and in the short time available in an Adjournment debate I have little opportunity to outline in detail the possible solutions.

A number of organisations, most notably the Property Market Reform Group, with which I have had a number of interesting discussions, and a group of businesses organised by Sir Desmond Pitcher, are working hard on behalf of Britain's small businesses to establish a consensus for reform and to hammer out practical solutions.

Among those which seem to be the most interesting are the establishment of a lands tribunal to take over the arbitration of disputes and the setting up of an open register of rents to provide information for those arbitrations. I therefore urge my hon. Friend the Minister urgently to consider a complete review of the legislation covering leasehold law. This will be a positive measure by Government to assist small businesses without being a burden on the taxpayer and will be widely welcomed.

To date, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the various other landlord interests have shown no interest in reforming the system. The previous price of such grievous and indeed callous inaction—mounting unemployment and high streets littered with "To Let" signs falling into decay—is too high. The Government must step in and act in the name of natural justice and to free up the market and safeguard the future of thousands of small businesses from Tiverton to Tyneside.

10.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I, and I am sure the whole House, are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) for raising the important subject of leasehold premises—shops and offices. She put her case with lucidity and care.

The Government fully appreciate the concerns of business tenants facing problems with rents and other aspects of their tenancy agreements. The recent report, "Retail Rents: Fair and Free Market?" by Professor Burton, which the Property Market Reform Group commissioned, criticises the so-called institutional leasing system and proposes radical reforms to the operation of the letting market.

No one can deny that present property market conditions are severe. They are, however, not unprecedented in what, for a long time, has been a cyclical market. Understandably, there are a number of problems facing tenants at the moment, and they arise from a variety of causes.

Business leases are founded on the package of rights and obligations for tenants and landlords set out in part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, which includes security of tenure and the right to renew a lease, and freedom for the parties to negotiate tenancy agreements on the open market.

The 1954 Act has worked well, providing a well-understood and balanced framework for the commercial property market through all the ups and downs of the past 40 years. We have rightly kept the Act under close consideration. When a review of part II was conducted in the mid-1980s—with particular reference to small businesses—it was concluded that the Act generally strikes a fair balance between landlords and tenants.

We are currently considering the Law Commission's report, which recommends changes to the working of the Act while leaving its fundamentals unchanged. We continue to look carefully at all the implications, and I have been interested to hear the views expressed by my hon. Friends this evening. The fundamentals of the legislation have endured for 40 years. Clearly, any major reform would require a substantial justification.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baldry: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I do not intend to give way just yet, because a number of points have been raised and it would be unfair of me not to try to cover them in this short debate.

Over the years, the United Kingdom economy has benefited from substantial inward investment in business

[Mr. Baldry]

property, which, to a degree, has been attracted by the sophisticated property market in this country. Business is the lifeblood of our economy, and we need to have tenants whose businesses are thriving. We also need a healthy commercial property sector nurtured by landlords who invest for the future.

Successive Governments' policy of non-intervention in business tenancies gives tenants and landlords freedom to negotiate the terms of the lease including the length of lease, rent levels, rent reviews and dispute terms, in the light of current market circumstances, thus avoiding the distortions that invariably result from statutory controls. In exercising his or her business judgment, the tenant will obviously take fluctuations in the marketplace into account. Clearly, an important part of that business judgment is taking appropriate professional advice about the terms of the agreement and market rental levels on commencement.

Many of the present problems relate to the terms of a private contract. It is entirely a matter for negotiation what terms are included. Upward-only rent reviews, for example, have understandably been mentioned this evening, but they are not covered by a specific statutory provision, being neither prescribed not proscribed by law. It is for contractual negotiation between an individual landlord and tenant at the outset whether such terms are included in a lease.

Under an upward-only rent review, rents increase to the market levels pertaining at the time of review. If market rent levels are less than the current rent, there is no increase, but no entitlement to a reduction under the lease. My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) made an important point here: as these are contractual terms entered freely by the parties, which can be freely varied by the parties, it may well be in the best interests of the landlord to agree to other rental levels in the light of current difficult market conditions in order to avert the risk of a vacancy arising if business pressures on the tenant become unsustainable. That is an important point, of which all involved should be well aware.

Similarly, it is entirely a matter for the parties negotiating the lease to decide what, if any, arbitration clauses are included in the terms of the agreement. On the basis of those terms, rent reviews take place, although in some instances a landlord and tenant may agree to go to arbitration even when that is not specified in the lease. The Government take the straightforward view that landlords and tenants should be free to negotiate agreements in the open market on whatever terms they decide. It is in both their interests that they should have flexibility to agree terms in the light of particular circumstances and not be constrained by statutory provisions.

The 25-year term, common in institutional leases, has been said by some to handcuff tenants to landlords, but it is a contract term which the parties have freely and voluntarily agreed. There is no statutory obligation to agree this length of lease. Also, it has to be recognised that statutory measures to proscribe such leases could have adverse implications for future investment and ultimately lead to a shortage of premises to let.

I turn briefly to the report's proposal for the compulsory registration of all the terms of United Kingdom commercial property leases with the Land Registry. What happens now is that leases over 21 years are registrable, but, contrary to what is implied in the report, the 1954 Act specifically states that copy leases and copy mortgages are not available as of right under the Act. Professor Burton's proposal would involve changing the law, would be resource-intensive, and would not be favoured by those concerned with commercial confidentiality. Moreover, it is not clear whether such a change involving charging would be warranted, and indeed, whether it would achieve the desired transparency.

As regards rent dispute procedures, the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton, together with the associated recommendation for an enlarged Land Tribunal, have been noted with interest. However, such suggestions have been made before, of course, and raise far wider considerations. That is not a reason why they should not continue to be considered, but one must recognise that there are considerable implications and ramifications if one considers how the state might start to interfere in what has hitherto been freedom of contract between willing and voluntary partners.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Is my hon. Friend aware that upward-only clauses in leases are unlawful in certain European countries?

Mr. Baldry: Of course, it is perfectly possible for Parliament to decide to do anything that a sovereign Parliament decides to do. The structure of the 1954 Act has endured very well and its framework has lasted for more than 40 years. The framework has been based on parties voluntarily and freely entering into contracts on the basis of informed opinion, judgment, knowledge and professional advice. If Parliament starts to interfere statutorily in those freedoms, sooner or later distortions will arise. That is exactly what happened in the domestic market when Parliament began to interfere with the Rent Acts. We will be living with the consequences of that for some time to come.

The Government are very conscious of the dangers in regulating and interfering with well established market practices for determining commercial rent levels, whether by index-linking or by any other mechanism. Moreover, if rents are held down by some statutory device, eventually, over time, markets will become distorted, and the supply of commercial premises available for new lettings will decrease as investors turn away from the property market. The last time a rent freeze was tried in the 1970s, it had exactly just such indirect, unintended and undesirable effects.

The question of unfair lease assignment clauses and privity of contract, graphically highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and reinforced by my hon. Friends the Members for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) and for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), is the responsibility of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor. I can assure the House of the Government's awareness of the understandable concern over this matter. In fact, it was considered by the Law Commission in its report "Privity of Contract and Estates" which examined the present rule, under which a leaseholder remains liable to comply with his obligations under the lease until it ends.

The Law Commission has recommended a major modification whereby both parties should cease to have any liability when they part with those interests, except in cases where it is objectively reasonable that their liability continue. My right hon. and noble Friend is considering the report with care, and hopes to be able to make a statement about it in the near future.

Retail and office businesses sectors were markedly affected by the revaluation in 1990, because of the large change in the relative values between different sectors of the economy and parts of the country since the 1973 revalution. However, it is important to recognise that, overall, the rates paid by businesses as a whole after 1990 were kept broadly the same in real terms as in the last year of the old rating system.

For businesses which face increases following the reforms, we introduced generous transitional arrangements to phase in the changes gradually. We believe that, when it comes to the 1995 revaluation, those businesses with the highest values will find that market rents for the type of property that they occupy may well have fallen relative to rents for other types of property. If so, this will be reflected in lower values than would otherwise have been the case. So some businesses which fared badly as result of the 1990 revaluation might well see reductions next time.

Mr. Nigel Evans: The debate tonight is extremely important. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) stressed how many small businesses there are in Britain, from small corner shops to retail chains which employ 2 million people. I know the industry well, as I am a small business man and own a corner shop. I know how important small businesses are to Britain. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is amazing that not one Labour or Liberal Democrat Member is here this evening to listen to the debate?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes his point tellingly. Of course, small and medium-sized businesses make a major contribution to the economy and life blood of Britain.

We remain of the view that we should retain the uniform business rate without major changes. Small businesses have benefited from the new system. A revaluation was long overdue and was therefore bound to result in large changes of rates burden for some people. However, as I said, those businesses which fared badly as a result of the 1990 revaluation might well see reductions next time.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton for expressing her anxieties fully and with care. They are clearly echoed by Conservative Members, if not by Members from other parties. It is precisely because we are aware of the difficulties that we recognise the importance of safeguarding the balance of rights and obligations of tenants and landlords contained in part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.

Mr. Steen: I practised at the bar for almost 20 years before I came to the House. I dealt with the 1954 Act, so I am familiar with it, and I am glad to know that the Lord Chancellor is considering certain alterations to the asylum clause. But 300 corner shops have been emptied between Bristol and Penzance because the recession has had such a unique effect on the fortunes of small businesses. That has required and demanded that my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton bring the matter to the House. The unique circumstances of the recession, which may continue for another two or three years, have resulted in the anxieties of so many Conservative Members——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Interventions must always be brief, but particularly so in a short Adjournment debate.

Mr. Baldry: We are well aware of, and by no means insensitive to, the concerns raised in the debate, and we fully appreciate the difficulties that many businesses face. We must consider carefully any suggestions that could upset the balance of rights and obligations for tenants and landlords set out in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, and whether we shall help or hinder by upsetting that balance and interfering with the freedom to negotiate the terms of business leases in the market place.

My hon. Friends can rest assured that Government Ministers with responsibility for such matters, including my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor and others—will take careful note of what my hon. Friends have said. The Law Commission has made several recommendations in a number of areas and will consider those with care. We must recognise that the 1954 Act has endured well for more than 40 years and has provided a framework of rights and obligations which has served the business community extremely well for many years.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 11 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

1. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans to announce any new measures to reduce the number of homeless people sleeping rough this coming winter in towns and cities outside London.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): The Government are providing more than £6 million in grants this year to voluntary organisations throughout England which give direct practical help to homeless people. The primary responsibility for help to people sleeping rough in severe weather rests with local authorities, and the local authority associations have accepted that responsibility in the context of the "Winter Watch" guidelines published recently by Crisis and Shelter.

Mr. Bayley: Will the Secretary of State consider increasing his grants to voluntary bodies? I have just received a copy of the annual report of the Peasholme centre, a York charity which provides a hostel for single homeless people. In the past 12 months, its number of clients in York has increased by 60 per cent. to 445. Of those, three out of five—some 267 clients—were found to have slept rough at some time in the previous year. The number of young clients aged 24 or under has more than doubled in 12 months, increasing from 60 to 130, of whom 33 are aged 16 and 17.

The figures are increasing sharply, and I urge the Secretary of State to do considerably more than he is doing at present to deal with the plight of single homeless people.

Mr. Howard: According to the census taken on the night of 21 to 22 April 1991, only six people were sleeping rough in York on that night. I believe that the assistance that we are providing is effective, and is helping to provide a solution to the problems, but I shall look with interest at the figures cited by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. David Nicholson: My right hon. and learned Friend will know that families face housing difficulties not only in the larger towns outside London, but in smaller towns and rural areas such as my constituency. Will he and his colleagues continue to press the Treasury—I am sure that they have been doing so—for assistance with the construction of low-cost housing, especially through greater flexibility in the release of capital receipts from council house sales? Such an initiative will not only meet certain social needs but will revive the construction industry, which is greatly in need of revival.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend has put his points with great force. He knows that what he says is always taken extremely seriously.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: Is the Secretary of State aware that 5,000 homeless people are now being dealt with by the Cyrenians in Coventry—a 32 per cent. increase over the past two years? Does he realise that the Cyrenians' entire evening service depends on a temporary grant from his Department which is due to run out in March? Will he take the necessary measures to ensure that the service continues beyond that date?

Mr. Howard: First, I pay tribute to voluntary bodies such as the one that the hon. Gentleman mentioned which are doing such admirable work in partnership with my Department. We take our responsibilities very seriously, and I believe that the resources that we provide are being used effectively, but I have noted what the hon. Gentleman said about next year.

Local Government

2. **Mr. Deva:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for giving local people more say in the structure of local government in their areas.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): I have asked the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which is reviewing the structure in shire England, to pay special attention to the views of local people and where they feel that they belong. The commission will be using a variety of techniques from radio phone-ins through use of the local press and opinion surveys. It will invite a wide range of representation of local opinion.

Mr. Deva: When my hon. Friend announces the commission's decision on Heathrow airport, will he take into account the strongly held views of local people?

Mr. Redwood: I can reassure my hon. Friend. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will take into account all the evidence—including local opinion—relating to that crucial boundary issue in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware that at the time of the abolition of the Greater London council two thirds of Londoners expressed a wish for the retention of a strategic authority in the capital city? A recent opinion poll in the *Evening Standard* shows that two thirds of Londoners still want a strategic authority. If people's views are to be taken into account, why cannot Londoners' views be taken into account in terms of local government structure?

Mr. Redwood: Londoners do not want extra costs and extra bureaucracy. They remember how bad the GLC was.

I am amazed that the hon. Gentleman should have the effrontery to suggest that London needs that kind of burden again after the absurdly high expenditure on unnecessary causes which was the hallmark on the GLC. Strategic issues for London are dealt with by the boroughs coming together and by the Cabinet Committee on London which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State chairs. Of course there is a strategic vision for London: it is co-ordinated by the Government.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Can my hon. Friend confirm that following the passage of the Local Government Bill earlier this year my constituents, and those of other hon. Members, will have the opportunity to apply for unitary authority status? Will he encourage my constituents in Southport to take advantage of that excellent piece of legislation and press the Local Government Commission to allow my constituency of Southport to recapture the unitary status that it lost in 1974 so that it may get out of Merseyside and return to Lancashire, where it rightly belongs?

Mr. Redwood: I am aware of my hon. Friend's keen concern about this matter. We have set out the parameters for the review. My hon. Friend knows that the areas specified have been made clear by the Secretary of State and that they will be reviewed in the series set out for the Local Government Boundary Commission. If the commission thinks that there is a big boundary issue or a big council management issue which overruns the boundary and spills into an area not under review, it can put that point to the Secretary of State who, on reflection, could modify his request if he thinks appropriate. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has heard my hon. Friend's comments and will give due consideration to them, should recommendations come forward from the Local Government Boundary Commission.

Mr. John Evans: Will the Minister acknowledge that people are as much concerned about the financial structure of local government as about its physical structure? Is he aware that the citizens of St. Helens are appalled at the unjust and corrupt standard spending assessments which effectively rob St. Helens of millions of pounds in rate support grant, which is translated into reduced services and increased council tax demands? Will the Minister agree to meet representatives of St. Helens and the Webber Craig authorities to discuss their standard spending assessments?

Mr. Redwood: The grant allocations and standard spending assessments are based on objective criteria. They take into account how many people and what kind of needs there are in the area. There is a clear method that we set out each year for hon. Members to review. The SSAs are not corrupt. That is a dreadful calumny to cast upon the officials who compiled them and upon Ministers who bring them to the House for debate. In the normal course of business we shall, of course, consider representations when the time arises.

Mr. Dunn: Will my hon. Friend please give an absolute guarantee that the integrity of the present boundaries of the county of Kent will be maintained at all costs and against all odds and that there is no question at all of part of my constituency being hived off into the former Greater London council area?

Mr. Redwood: I can give no absolute guarantees, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is also a Member of Parliament for a Kent constituency and I am sure that he is a keen defender of Kent as a county. However, the issues will be reviewed in the usual way. The Local Government Commission only has power to recommend changes in boundaries between the areas that it is reviewing. My hon. Friend may take considerable comfort from that.

Darwin Initiative

3. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his official visit to the royal botanic gardens in Edinburgh to discuss the Darwin initiative.

Mr. Howard: I visited the royal botanic gardens in Edinburgh on 18 September at the invitation of Professor Ingram, the Regis Keeper, to look at the excellent and very important research work being carried out particularly in plant systematics, biodiversity and conservation. I visited the living collections, the herbarium collections and the library collections and saw evidence of the extensive scientific and educational programmes undertaken there. I was extremely impressed by the valuable work being carried out there.

Mr. Dalyell: But how much new money will there be for Darwin?

Mr. Howard: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman looks forward with the same pleasurable anticipation as I do to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement tomorrow.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1991 is already making a contribution to areas covered by the Darwin initiative?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right. We make a distinguished contribution to the cause of biodiversity, but the Darwin initiative will mark a new stage in our contribution to that cause. I look forward to being able to make announcements before too long which will take the initiative forward.

Rio Agreement

4. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he intends to do consequent upon the Rio agreement and as President of the EC Council of Environment Ministers to improve the implementation of EC law on environmental matters in all member states.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): The need for more effective enforcement of environmental laws is one of the central themes of our presidency. I am pleased to say that the Commission has now agreed to my right hon. and learned Friend's request to prepare regular reports on implementation for discussion by the Environment Council, starting in December.

Dr. Twinn: Britain has one of the best records of compliance with European environmental laws, but is it not ridiculous for us to be firm and good supporters of the European Community but to allow our partners to put us at a disadvantage due to the increased costs of compliance which result from their not keeping the European laws? Will my hon. Friend make it a matter of priority for the Government to use their presidency to ensure compliance by other member states?

Mr. Maclean: I assure my hon. Friend that we have an excellent record on compliance, and we are determined to see enforcement evened up throughout the Community.

I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that only last week in Chester, at the invitation of the British, we had the first meeting of all the environmental inspectorates from around the Community. Excellent progress was made in the network of inspectors. The inspectors have agreed unanimously to maintain and continue the network with a rotating presidency. Even now they are working on measures to ensure even-handed compliance and a high level playing field throughout the whole Community.

Mr. Denham: The Government will have no credibility in their discussions with their European partners if they continue to promote the destruction of the environment through measures such as the M3 motorway through Twyford Down. Are there no limits on how far the Government will sink in the promotion of environmental destruction, including the hiring of a private detective agency, Bray's detective agency of Southampton, to photograph peaceful protesters at Twyford Down? Does the Minister have any limits as to how far the Government will go in destroying the environment and suspending the basic civil liberties of Her Majesty's subjects?

Mr. Maclean: I regret that the hon. Gentleman takes a tone which drags Britain down unfairly. He should concentrate on this country's record of compliance with environmental legislation in the past few years. Since the United Kingdom joined the Community, the European Court of Justice has not delivered one adverse judgment against it on environmental matters. If the hon. Gentleman compares the records of all countries in the Community he will find that 11 judgments have been made against Italy, 10 against Belgium, seven against Germany, five against France, three against the Netherlands, one each against Denmark, Greece, Spain and Luxembourg, and none against Britain. Why does the hon. Gentleman not speak for Britain for a change?

Sir Anthony Durant: Will my right hon. Friend congratulate the National Rivers Authority on its wonderful job of cleaning up the River Thames? The River Thames is now a beautiful river—*[Interruption.]* particularly in the Reading area. Will he continue to support the actions of the National Rivers Authority?

Mr. Maclean: I am delighted to support the excellent work that the NRA has carried out in recent years with a continually increasing budget. Last night I was delighted to attend a joint venture with the Countryside Commission which was sponsored by the *Financial Times.* With considerable funding from my Department, and with the help of the NRA, the Countryside Commission is taking forward a national trail along the side of the Thames. We shall have a national trail of about 200 miles alongside this excellent river. I look forward to walking part of that trail, probably near Reading.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the Minister agree that some environmental policies within the United Kingdom have an impact on the rest of the European Community while others have no impact? In connection with the latter, does he agree that the European Community should keep its nose out?

Mr. Maclean: Of course, some policies need to be implemented at a European or international level. That is essential for many environmental policies. However, national Governments can perfectly adequately implement other policies. The House ought to be aware that the European Council of Ministers has decided that work needs to be carried forward in conjunction with the Commission on the principle of subsidiarity. We are working on the general plans and criteria for applying the principle. It would be wrong to assume that the environment has been singled out for special treatment. It has not. However, there is no reason why certain environmental matters should not be covered by the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I welcome the Chester conference, which was an important initiative. Is not one of the keys to implementation on a European scale the establishment of the European Environment Agency? Is it not hypocritical of the French to lecture us on being uncommunautaire while they are using every power at their disposal to block a Community decision on the location of that important establishment, which should of course be in Britain?

Mr. Maclean: Of course, it is terribly important that we get the European Environment Agency up and running. At the last meeting of the Council of Ministers, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made strenuous efforts to make progress on the matter. It is unfortunate that some member states could not agree to come to a conclusion on the matter. They considered that other agencies should be included in the package and that agreement could not be reached solely on an environment agency. We shall consider the matter again at our next Council meeting in December, but the British Government are determined that the agency should be up and running as soon as possible in Europe. It is essential if we are to achieve the proper environmental protection and enforcement that we want throughout the Community.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Has the Government's apparent problem with ratifying treaties spread to the Department of the Environment? At the Rio summit in June, our Government were keen that everyone should sign the climate change treaty. Indeed, the Government persuaded reluctant countries such as the United States to do so. The United States has now ratified the treaty. Denmark is about to ratify it. The Department of the Environment says that the treaty will be ratified by the end of the year, but the Treasury says that we shall have to wait for all 150 countries to do so ahead of us. What is the truth? Shall we be last yet again?

Mr. Maclean: That is nonsense. The hon. Gentleman has been Liberal Democrat environment spokesman for some time and he should know better. We made it crystal clear that we considered the ratification of the climate change and biodiversity conventions to be important. We have always made it clear that we hope and intend to complete our ratification by the end of next year. [HON. MEMBERS: "This year."] Important work needs to be carried out in the European Community to achieve agreement on a host of measures to make ratification mean something. It is easy to ratify a treaty, but if we do not have all the clauses in place to ensure that we cut our carbon dioxide emissions, there is no point in ratification. We shall ratify the convention on time and take the necessary steps to ensure that we comply with it.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important to make haste slowly on implementation of some of the conditions because scientific evidence is constantly emerging which introduces a new aspect on some of this stuff, and especially on carbon dioxide emissions? Many scientists now say that carbon dioxide is a beneficial gas and that the amount in the atmosphere is not a danger and does not cause global warming.

Mr. Maclean: Far be it from me to disagree with my hon. Friend on too many occasions, but I do not accept that we should go very slowly on this. We should proceed sensibly. There is a clear body of scientific evidence that increased carbon dioxide emissions are damaging the atmosphere and the planet on which we live. That is unacceptable. We believe in the precautionary principle. I intend to make progress as quickly as is practicable in the circumstances, and we shall continue to do so.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Minister of State appears to take too lightly Britain's responsibilities to fulfil the commitments that we made both to the European Community and at Rio. Chief among the Rio commitments was the drawing up of a national sustainability plan. Will the Minister tell us whether he stands by that commitment? Will the plan be a forward-looking document, setting out objectives and targets? If so, when will it appear, and how will he go about drawing it up?

Mr. Maclean: First, I am delighted formally to welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new position—although I have already welcomed him in another debate a couple of weeks ago. I tell him—and I may chastise him slightly, as I did last time—that he ought to pay more attention to what we have been doing. We intend to produce our own report to the Sustainable Development Commission. Even now, we are working on its design and we shall consult a range of organisations on what they believe should go into the plan. We shall publish the consultation document shortly, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be one of those who respond to it. We want as many ideas as possible—even, no doubt, impractical ones—about what should go into the report. We are working to ensure that in the United Nations the Sustainable Development Commission is as high powered and efficient as possible.

Renovation Grants

5. **Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the funding arrangements and operating regulations of the mandatory renovation grants system.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): We continue to keep the grant system under review.

Mr. Harvey: Does the Minister accept that the new £50,000 limit which will apply next year will affect only a small number of grants, leaving local authorities such as North Devon having to cough up so much that they will not be able to meet their other housing responsibilities? Will the Minister clamp down on professional grant-getters who have more than one house, and will he make the awards discretionary after local authorities have met their targets and budgets?

Mr. Baldry: North Devon council was awarded £835,000 this year towards renovation grant spending. We also have a reserve of supplementary credit approvals to help authorities such as North Devon cope with the pressures. I hope to announce the extra allocations shortly.

Sir Michael Neubert: If, as I hope, the Chancellor of the Exchequer decides tomorrow to relax the 25 per cent. limit on local councils' use of receipts from council house sales, may I even at this 11th hour urge that consideration be given to predicating that money for the renovation and refurbishment of property already in council ownership, such as houses, schools and other buildings? That would both provide a boost to the local construction industry and maintain the value of public assets.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes his point well, and it has been noted.

Mr. George Howarth: Does the Minister accept that the means testing applied to renovation grants acts as a disincentive, especially for people on low incomes, to carry out much-needed improvements? Does he also accept that relaxing the regulations and allowing people living in appalling conditions to have a full grant to carry out improvements would be a quick way of boosting the construction industry?

Mr. Baldry: The means testing is straightforward. It is designed to ensure that the money goes to those in the greatest need, thus ensuring that the money available is put to the best possible use. I find it difficult to believe that the hon. Gentleman does not understand that.

Mr. Spring: My hon. Friend will agree that the provision of good local services does not necessarily involve high public expenditure. Will he join me and my constituents in congratulating St. Edmundsbury borough council on working so hard to achieve debt-free status?

Mr. Baldry: I am sure that every local authority must seek to spend its resources properly and effectively. The way in which authorities use their money to help with private sector renewal is as important as their other responsibilities.

Mr. Pike: The Minister gave a cautious first answer to the question. Do the Government intend to carry on with the mandatory grant system for dealing with unfit housing? If so, will the Minister guarantee that local authorities will have the full measure of Government support and the financial commitment, including the 25 per cent. currently required from their own resources, which is necessary to enable them to meet the need without having to abandon the rest of their capital programme?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman knows that we keep the system continually under review. We had a review earlier this year, as a consequence of which we have now managed to target resources even better at those who have the greatest need. We are also giving extra help to those just above income support levels. We maintain a close review of the system. We see the need to maintain a good renewal of private sector stock and we shall continue to carry forward that policy.

Opencast Mining

6. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on opencast mining.

Mr. Howard: The Under-Secretary of State—my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry)—announced on 15 July the Government's intention to review the current planning guidelines on opencast coal which are contained in minerals planning guidance note 3. That review is under way and revised guidance will be published for consultation in due course.

Mr. Jones: Why should the Government propose 80 million tonnes per annum of opencast coal mining while proposing the closure of 31 deep mines, with the loss of 100,000 jobs? Why should my constituency, especially the township of Buckley, have fairly extensive opencast mining while it is proposed that the Point of Ayr colliery, 10 miles away, will be closed? I warn the right hon. and learned Gentleman that his Government should not plan to destroy more trees, more hedges and more meadows when he could keep open many of our mines and prevent the march towards mass unemployment in the colliery areas.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that most aspects of his question are matters for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. The land use planning aspects of opencast mining are taken into account before permission is given. As I said in my original answer, we are reviewing the planning guidelines.

Mrs. Currie: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that opencast mining in my constituency is of tremendous benefit, not only because we can thereby obtain coal at one quarter of the cost of deep-mined coal—which makes it the cheapest mineral available to us in the world—but because we can thereby clear hundreds of acres of derelict land and return it to a use and a purpose that will generate more jobs in future than the pits underneath the ground have ever done?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is entirely right in drawing attention to the environmental advantages that can frequently follow opencast mining. She makes an important point.

Mr. Skinner: Can we be assured from what the Secretary of State said about redrawing minerals planning guidance note 3 that fewer opencast applications will be accepted? Is the Secretary of State aware that the amount of opencast coal has gone up to about 18·5 million tonnes, which is equivalent to the production of 17 to 18 pits? That equates to about 17,000 to 18,000 miners. If the review of the pits is to mean anything, surely opencast production must be severely reduced.

Mr. Howard: I understand the hon. Gentleman's points. My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy has already made it clear that opencast mining is on a downward trend. I cannot anticipate the results of our revision of planning policy guidance. We shall take all the land use aspects of opencast mining carefully into account in the review that is under way.

Dr. Spink: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that Canvey island in my constituency is threatened with coal dust from the transshipment of coal from the proposed jetty? In such a sensitive environment as Canvey island, where we already have problems with oil, with gas storage and with being below sea level, that additional environmental hazard is unacceptable.

Mr. Howard: I am sure that my hon. Friend and many of his constituents have drawn that point to the attention of the local authority which has powers to deal with such matters. I am sure that he will want to pursue it with the local authority.

Ms. Short: Does the Secretary of State agree with the Council for the Protection of Rural England that opencast mining is one of the most environmentally destructive processes carried out in the United Kingdom? Is he aware that, contrary to the impression that he has just given to the House, there has been a doubling of opencast mining in Britain since 1979 and that there are currently many applications from British Coal and from private companies? Will he give an undertaking that the review of planning law will produce more stringent conditions so that opencast mining is not allowed unless it is beneficial to the local community and is not environmentally destructive and unless the site will be restored to a decent condition? If that is not achieved, we will see the loss of our coal industry, the despoliation of our economy and the destruction of our countryside.

Mr. Howard: I congratulate the hon. Lady on her new responsibilities. I hope that they prove rather more long lasting than her previous responsibilities on the Opposition Front Bench.

As for the hon. Lady's three questions, the future course of opencast mining is on a downward trend, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy has made clear. The hon. Lady is right to assert that in many cases opencast mining has environmental disadvantages. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) pointed out a moment ago, in many cases it can have environmental advantages. The land use aspects are carefully taken into account in the planning process and the hon. Lady will understand that I cannot anticipate this afternoon the outcome of our review of the planning policy guidance note.

Council Housing (Competitive Tendering)

7. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes to extend compulsory competitive tendering to the management of council housing.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): The Government's proposals for extending compulsory competitive tendering to housing management were set out in the consultation paper "Competing for Quality in Housing".

Mr. Evennett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reply. Does he agree that many tenants in London cannot wait to be free of local authority control, particularly in areas where there are Labour local authorities whose management of council housing has been so poor? Will my hon. Friend confirm that he will act to prevent local authorities avoiding putting housing management out to tender? Many Conservative Members are very concerned about that issue.

Sir George Young: Our view is that local authority tenants are entitled to the best possible service within the available resources. We do not believe that that is happening at the moment. We believe that our proposals for CCT for housing management will enhance and improve the standard of service that many tenants receive and that they have the most to gain from our proposals.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister confirm that, in preparation for the consultation paper to which he referred, the consultants hired by his Department talked to approximately 30 local authorities and 30 private contractors but did not talk to a single tenant or tenants' organisation? Having failed entirely to consult tenants before producing his proposals, will he confirm that the tenants have reacted by rejecting them decisively? Will he guarantee the House that, before taking any further action, he will listen to and heed the views of council tenants?

Sir George Young: The House should know that more than 100 tenants' organisations responded to the consultation document. It is not the case that their views have been overlooked. Many of them look forward to higher standards of management on their estates. For the first time, tenants will have a statutory right to take over the management of their estates. Many of them cannot wait to take over management of their estates from their local authorities.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will my hon. Friend reassure the very large number of council tenants in my constituency of Norwich, North, many of whom face serious housing difficulties, that the proposals really are to their advantage? If that is the case, will he condemn those members of the Labour party in Norwich who are issuing leaflets and trying to scare people—as is their usual practice?

Sir George Young: I am disturbed to hear that my hon. Friend's local authority is raising needless anxiety among tenants. We have already invited seven local authorities to pilot the arrangements for us in advance of the legislation. One of the local authorities is Labour controlled. There is considerable enthusiasm among many local authorities to use the new facilities to drive up the standards that they are receiving at present from their work forces. We have tried that in other local authority areas and have secured welcome improvements in quality and welcome reductions in costs. We see no reason why local authority tenants should not benefit from this extension of a principle which is already well established.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the boon that has been suggested for council tenants be extended to tenants of housing associations or quangos, such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive?

Sir George Young: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will have heard or will quite soon hear that question. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an answer very soon.

Home Ownership (Flats)

8. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for improving opportunities for home ownership for those living in flats.

Sir George Young: The Housing and Urban Development Bill will give most long leaseholders in flats either the right to purchase collectively the freehold of their blocks or the right to an extended lease. It will also enable secure tenants to buy their homes on rent-to-mortgage terms.

Mr. Congdon: I welcome the measures on leasehold enfranchisement and the rent-to-mortgage scheme, but will my hon. Friend consider further measures to encourage local authorities that have been very reluctant to do so to sell more flats?

Sir George Young: The Government are anxious to continue to diversify tenure on local authority estates, particularly local authority flats. The rent-to-mortgage scheme, which comes under the Bill to which I referred, will offer a new low-risk route into home ownership with a minimum increase in outgoings. That will be attractive to many people who live in flats. As interest rates come down, the right-to-buy option becomes equally attractive. I hope that we shall be able to make further progress in diversifying tenure on local authority estates.

Council Tax

9. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the total cost will be of transitional relief for the operation of the first year of the council tax in 1993-94.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): It is too early to say. We shall be announcing our proposals for next year's revenue support grant settlement shortly, including details of the proposals for transitional relief.

Mr. Leighton: Bearing in mind the fact that the Secretary of State for the Environment was the Minister who introduced the poll tax, will the introduction of the council tax be as big as fiasco as that or a bigger one?

Mr. Squire: The House might determine that that was not a question which gained its full impact on delivery. The council tax will be a fair tax. Apart from the banding, which has been well stressed, many people will receive deserved discounts. Above all else, there will be rebates of up to 100 per cent. for those who are in most need. The Government are certain that the council tax will be welcomed by most people as an improvement.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my hon. Friend agree with me, as someone who was perhaps one of the biggest poll tax losers in this country, with the Ribble Valley by-election—which certainly cost me the seat at the time—that the vast majority of people in my constituency would welcome the fact that the poll tax is being abolished and that the council tax will take its place? We shall get greater discounts for people on low incomes, students will have 100 per cent. rebates and people living alone will benefit because, for the first time ever with a household tax, they will gain with a 25 per cent. discount.

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend makes his points admirably and I fully endorse them.

Mr. Vaz: Is it not the case that, whatever transitional relief the Secretary of State has been able to get out of the Treasury, it will not cover up the basic and profound unfairness of the council tax? Will the Minister confirm that millions on below-average incomes will not be eligible for any council tax benefit? They will be forced to pay a proportionately much greater amount of their income than the best-off, whose tax has been capped at twice the average. Does the Minister agree that, rather than the council tax becoming a fiasco, it will be a shambles? What is he prepared to do about that?

Mr. Squire: May I begin by welcoming the hon. Gentleman to the Front Bench and, as is the usual custom, wishing him a long sojourn there. On his central question, I completely reject his charges. The ability of all those on income support to receive 100 per cent. rebate is an important part of the new system. It is buttressed, as I said in answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), by a rebate system that will reach and assist many people, including those who are less well off.

Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

10. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reduce the number of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Sir George Young: There has been a reduction of 17 per cent. over the latest 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Mullin: Will the Minister confirm that it costs twice as much to keep a family in bed-and-breakfast accommodation as it does to pay, on average, the cost of a loan for building a new house? Is that not madness? Will the Minister introduce a scheme to encourage building societies to lease homes to local authorities for the accommodation of homeless people? If that is not practicable, why not build more public housing?

Sir George Young: The numbers in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are coming down because there is greater use of private sector leasing along the lines that the hon. Gentleman suggested. Everyone agrees that bed and breakfast is a wholly inappropriate form of accommodation for families. We have been working out much better alternatives which are also cheaper.

Mr. Paice: Is not one way of dealing with the problem to allow housing associations to build many more homes? In that context, is my hon. Friend aware that East Cambridgeshire district council in my constituency, having achieved debt-free status beforehand, transferred its housing stock to a housing association and is now in the position of being able to make annual massive contributions to that association to build new homes?

Sir George Young: I pay tribute to the enlightened view of my hon. Friend's local authority. There are many gains from the policy that he described, not least for those who live in the new homes that are funded out of capital receipts. Housing associations have a role to play in tackling the problem. Completions have gone up from 27,000 two years ago to 53,000 next year, on current plans.

Mr. Clelland: We all await with bated breath the Chancellor's autumn statement on Thursday. Notwithstanding that, can the Minister tell us what representations he or the Secretary of State have made to the Chancellor with a view to allowing local authorities to use capital receipts from council house sales to build, renew or lease properties, to put an end to the appalling housing record of the Government over the past 13 years?

Sir George Young: Certainly not.

Mr. Hendry: Will my hon. Friend, when looking at the problems of homelessness, consider what can be done to bring into use the tens of millions of square feet of empty office space whose owners and developers would be happy to see it used on a short-term basis to house homeless people or students? That could make a significant contribution towards tackling the problem.

Sir George Young: I very much welcome using the lateral thinking in which my hon. Friend engaged to see whether one could convert empty office space, particularly in London, into accommodation which is clearly needed. Studies are going on in which my Department is very interested. Where it is feasible, practicable and possible, I shall do what I can to support such a transition.

Mr. Battle: Of course, it is welcome that the numbers of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are starting to come down, but is not the reason the fact that there is now the highest ever number of families in temporary accommodation? Do not some 63,000 families want to know how temporary is temporary? Rather than further cut local authority housing, change pledges to housing associations and cut their budgets, is it not time for the Government to let local authorities make use of the £5 billion of capital receipts to provide desperately needed housing to rent and at the same time provide work for the severely depressed construction industry?

Sir George Young: The figures for acceptances on the homeless side have started to fall, so it is not the case that there is an inexorable increase in the families being accepted by local authorities. Total acceptances in London in the current year were 40,700—that is a reduction. On the capital receipts point which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, that is a debate which I have had many times. He well knows that if one wants to make the best use of capital receipts, one has to examine the incidence of where they arise and where the need is greatest. One cannot spend the same capital receipts twice.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the Labour boroughs of London were to bring back into use the empty properties that they own and properties that are currently squatted, tomorrow there would be no one in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right. For the last date for which we have figures, there were 74,200 voids in local authority ownership. That is more than the number in bed and breakfast, so my hon. Friend is right.

Council Tax

11. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's most recent estimate of the average level of council tax per household; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: We have made no predictions of the level of council taxes and have no intention of doing so. The council tax is a local tax and bills will be set locally.

Mr. Salmond: Does that change of approach follow the remarkable success of the forecasting team at the Secretary of State's Department when estimating the poll tax? Can the Secretary of State explain why all the speculation about the introduction of the council tax has centred on how much money he might get out of the Treasury to cushion the blow of the incidence of the tax in the south of England? Does no one else need cushioning? Has the Secretary of State noticed that every potential candidate for Tory leadership is colliding with a political disaster? Is the Secretary of State about to collide with his?

Mr. Howard: I am thoroughly at a loss to know where to begin to deal with the remarkable foolishness contained in the hon. Gentleman's questions. I am confident that the council tax will be seen to be a fair replacement for the community charge, and I hope that the Opposition Front Bench will heed the urgings of the labour leaders of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, who told the leader of the Opposition to soft-pedal his opposition to the council tax so that we could introduce it, to put the arguments of the past behind us and to ensure that we work together. I invite Opposition Members to co-operate with us to ensure the smooth introduction of the council tax next spring.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that he will seek to keep down the level of the council tax, by making widespread use of his capping powers to restrict the high-spending proclivities of Labour-controlled local authorities?

Mr. Howard: I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that capping powers will be available, will be used and will play an important part in the restraint of public spending, which is so crucial to the success of national economic policies.

Mr. Straw: Just now, the Secretary of State said that he was not making predictions about the level of the council tax. He will recall that yesterday, at the annual conference of the Association of County Councils, he went further and said:

> "The Government has never made any predictions of the level of the council tax."

How can those two statements be true, when I have here 28 pages of tables of predictions for the council tax, issued by his right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) when he was Secretary of State for the Environment in April 1991? The calculations show, district by district and band by band, what the Tory party pretended to be the level of the tax in a run-up to the election, and give an average figure of £400. Is it not the truth that those figures were entirely bogus and an effort to defraud the electorate in the run-up to the election? The reason that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is trying to pretend that no predictions were made is that he will be profoundly embarrassed when the figures come out this week or next.

Mr. Howard: No predictions were made. I am astonished at the hon. Gentleman's incomprehension. He knows full well that the caveats attached to those figures were clearly spelt out at the time and that they never were forecasts. If the hon. Gentleman cannot do better than that cheap misrepresentation when dealing with the problem, he ought to start again.

Housing Associations

12. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about progress in transferring local authority housing stock into housing associations.

Sir George Young: Since 1988, 18 local authorities have transferred the ownership of their housing stock to housing associations with the agreement of their tenants. Those completed transfers have taken more than 94,000 tenanted houses and flats out of local authority ownership; they have generated capital receipts of more than £820 million and have brought more than £1·2 billion of private funds into social housing.

Mr. Moate: Is my hon. Friend aware that Swale borough council in my constituency was one of the pioneers in transferring its total housing stock of more than 7,000 houses to housing associations? Is he aware also that that policy has been a tremendous success, has all-party support, that the council is debt free and that there is an excellent record of tenant relations? What is my hon. Friend doing to trumpet the success of that policy, so that councils throughout the land break up, as rapidly as possible, the bureaucratic empires that so many have sought to defend?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right. It so happens that only this morning I was reading Swale housing association's business plan. I was interested to see that it was ahead of its targets, that it had honoured its commitments to its tenants and that its performance had improved. The Government remain committed to a continuing programme of large-scale voluntary transfers. I hope that the advertisement that my hon. Friend just made on behalf of that programme will be picked up by many councillors and tenants throughout the country so that they, too, can avail themselves of the advantages that he mentioned.

Mr. Jim Marshall: The Minister will be aware that, on a number of occasions, the tenants of the Boot houses on the Saffron Lane estate in my constituency have always expressed opposition to development by housing associations. What progress is being made in providing additional funds to ensure that those properties can be redeveloped?

Sir George Young: Speaking from memory, I think that the tenants were offered an option for taking forward development of that estate and they rejected it because they were not entirely happy with some aspects. I hope that the discussions continue between the tenants and the local authority. If they can come up with an agreed solution, I shall see whether my Department has a role to play in bringing forward a satisfactory long-term solution for that estate, the background of which I am familiar with.

Sir Anthony Durant: Is my hon. Friend aware that Newbury district council, which is part of my constituency, has gone into that matter on a big scale and has been highly successful? Regrettably, Reading borough council scared tenants in the area against voting for it by putting out an iniquitous leaflet at the last general election, saying that if tenants voted Conservative, their houses would be stolen.

Sir George Young: In a recent visit to my hon. Friend's constituency, that leaflet was drawn to my attention. The Labour councillors with whom I was speaking had the grace to admit that they had gone slightly over the top in their predictions of what might happen in the event of a Conservative victory. There was a Conservative victory and none of the awful things that they said would happen has happened. I hope that my hon. Friend will pursue in his local newspaper the points that he just made and explain that tenants should not always believe what they are told by Labour councillors in Reading.

Hazardous Waste

13. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had with local authorities concerning future policy on the disposal of hazardous waste.

Mr. Maclean: I have had no recent discussions with local authorities on hazardous waste policy issues, but my officials have regular meetings with representatives of the local authority associations on waste issues.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister confirm that the EC directive prohibiting the importation of hazardous waste will not come into operation until May 1994 at the earliest? What is to happen in the meantime? Will he ensure that local authorities are not overruled when they refuse to grant permission for those waste disposal plants? Does he appreciate that, in Newport at present, an appeal is outstanding from the American concern, Browning Ferris? It is generally recognised locally that Newport needs Browning Ferris like it needs a hole in the head.

Mr. Maclean: I must congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his remarkable success at the last Council of Ministers meeting. For many months, we had not reached agreement and, at the first meeting that he chaired, he managed to get the waste shipments regulation agreed. We shall have the benefit of that regulation when it comes into force in 1994. We were keen to get it because we had no effective means of cutting off the importation of overseas hazardous waste without that international agreement.

Planning matters must be decided according to planning rules and it would be wrong to try to manipulate the planning system to deal with importation and exportation of waste. We now have the new directive and we want to ensure that we can bring forward our national self-sufficiency plans so that we can implement them when the directive takes effect. In that way, we shall begin to turn off the taps on the importation of waste from developed countries that should deal with it themselves.

National Rivers Authority (Funding)

14. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much funding the National Rivers Authority received in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Maclean: The National Rivers Authority's grant in aid from my Department was £103·9 million in 1990-91 and £83·85 million in 1991-92 towards total expenditure on grant-aided functions of £168 million in the first year and £197 million in the second.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Those figures mean that the administrative costs of the National Rivers Authority will progressively have to be borne by agricultural and industrial users. That will impact severely on fish farmers, who are large upstream and downstream volume users of water. I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister had a meeting with the British Trout Association yesterday. Will he give a resume of the discussions and state whether any concessions were made?

Mr. Maclean: I must point out that the NRA is receiving substantial grant in aid from my Department, but I am concerned about the proposed NRA charges as they impact on trout farmers and met the British Trout Association yesterday. I think that we would all agree that although all those who take water from rivers must pay for it, there should be an equitable regime. I see no environmental benefit in unfairly putting 400 small trout farmers out of business. I have undertaken to look again at the NRA's proposed charges to see whether we can devise an equitable regime for all involved, including trout farmers.

Political Talks (Northern Ireland)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the political talks concerning Northern Ireland. The talks were built on those which were held last year. Like them, they took as ground rules my predecessor's statement to the House on 26 March 1991.

The first strand of the new talks began in Belfast under my predecessor's chairmanship on 9 March this year, and they resumed on 29 April under my chairmanship, to consider political arrangements within Northern Ireland itself. By the beginning of July I thought that it was appropriate to propose that the other two strands be launched. Accordingly, on 6 July, the second strand, involving both the Irish and British Governments and concerning relationships in the whole island of Ireland, was begun. We met initially in London, and subsequently in Belfast and Dublin. That strand has taken place under the distinguished chairmanship of Sir Ninian Stephen. To him, and to the Australian Government who permitted him to be available, we all owe an enormous amount of gratitude, particularly since in the latter stages he readily accepted an invitation to help us in our proceedings across all three strands.

On 28 July in Dublin the two Governments held the opening meeting of the third strand concerning future relationships between them.

Throughout the talks I have received wise and indefatigable support from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). In particular, he chaired a most fruitful series of strand 1 committee sessions, and has often deputised for me in the other strands.

The present talks, like those last year, were stipulated to be held during a specified gap between meetings of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference, provided for under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Before the talks resumed after our own general election, the two Governments announced that the next meeting of the intergovernmental conference would not be before the end of July. Since then the gap has been twice extended. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach announced on 25 September, in a final extension, that the next meeting of the conference would be held on 16 November. More than six months have accordingly been available for these talks.

We have not yet succeeded in the ambitious task of securing an overall settlement, that is to say,

> "a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland, within the island of Ireland, and between the peoples of these islands."

Since the talks were held on the basis that

> "nothing will be finally agreed in any strand until everything is agreed in the talks as a whole and that confidentiality will be maintained",

the question of a partial settlement did not arise. All the same, the talks have seen substantive and detailed engagement on issues of the first importance.

In strand 1 the Northern Ireland parties, together with the British Government, identified common themes and principles which should underlie any new political institutions in Northern Ireland, and examined possible structures which might reflect these.

In strand 2, in which of course the Irish Government have also been a participant, delegations discussed fundamental aspects of relationships within the island of Ireland, and of the realities underlying them, including constitutional issues and questions of identity and allegiance. We examined the scope for enhanced co-operation within the island of Ireland, in the social, economic, and security fields, among others. We considered the nature of the structures which might best serve such co-operation.

In strand 3 the two Governments, as co-signatories of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, addressed, in liaison with the other participants, possible principles for a new and more broadly based agreement, and possible intergovernmental arrangements.

Much has been done to identify and enlarge the common ground, and to increase understanding and respect for the participants' respective positions. The process has involved hard work and commitment from all the participants. The talks participants have collectively reaffirmed their total abhorrence of, and unqualified opposition to, all forms of terrorism, from whatever source they may come. Nothing has taken place to alter my firm view that it was right to bring together the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland and the two Governments to address, in a single process, a comprehensive agenda. It remains my judgment that, with good will and application, a comprehensive settlement can yet be secured. Those qualities are not lacking.

Yesterday the talks participants agreed and issued a statement, copies of which have been placed in the Library. In it they recognised that

> "while at this time there is no basis to agree a settlement, they have identified and discussed most, if not all, of the elements which would comprise an eventual settlement; they have developed a clear understanding of each other's positions; and established constructive dialogue on ways in which an accommodation might be reached on some of the key issues which divide them".

All recognised the great value of that dialogue. The two Governments expressed their view yesterday that further dialogue was both necessary and desirable. The four Northern Ireland parties agreed with that, and accordingly undertook to

> "enter into informal consultations with a view to seeking a way forward."

The House, although doubtless disappointed that we have not been able to achieve fuller agreement, will welcome that commitment. The objectives of the talks process remain valid and achievable. That is the expressed opinion of the independent chairman, Sir Ninian Stephen, and it is my opinion. The objectives are realistic. We have a duty therefore to build on what has been begun, however slow that process has been, and not to give up. We have a duty not to lose patience with what is a deeply historic problem; not to give way to exasperation; and not to recriminate.

Her Majesty's Government for their part, therefore, will steadily persevere. We shall maintain our line of approach to these objectives and continue also our commitment to resolute, fair and just government in Northern Ireland. Not only the people of Northern Ireland but the people of the rest of these islands—let us not forget them—deserve that of us.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I thank the Secretary of State for his fairly full and comprehensive statement and take this opportunity to join him and associate the Opposition in thanking Sir Ninian Stephen for his work. We share what must be his regret that it has not been possible to reach heads of agreement.

The Labour party welcomes the progress that has been made, and the understanding reached as a result of the talks process. For the first time, an agenda was reached that recognised the three primary relationships upon which any future settlement must be based in Ireland. The fact that this agenda was acceded to by all the parties has to be seen as a major breakthrough which should be built upon. The Labour party welcomes the undertakings given by the parties to maintain bilateral talks and discussions to maintain the dialogue.

In November 1990, the Secretary of State's predecessor declared:

"The British Government has no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland."

May we assume that this is still the attitude of Her Majesty's Government?

While it would have been useful, after nearly two years of talks, for the Government to have published a paper outlining the current position, as the four main constitutional parties have undertaken to continue negotiating, and some have already published their latest positions, it is probably better for the Government to hold back so as not to prejudice any future possible agreement. However, there will come a time when such a document will be necessary. In any event, if the Irish parties can reach an agreement amongst themselves, no British Government will seek to undermine it.

Some voices will call on the Secretary of State to impose a solution. I hope that he will resist such blandishments. Will he give an undertaking that there will be no alteration in the status quo in Northern Ireland or in the House while the dialogue is taking place, without the agreement of all the parties? The basic problem throughout the process of the talks has been that, although the parties have used the same language in their attitude to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, they have meant entirely different things. This is a contradiction which must still be addressed.

While the talks are in abeyance, the Anglo-Irish Agreement remains in force, and indeed it should be widened and deepened. If it becomes apparent that there is little chance of the parties securing agreement, then we must move further towards a greater sharing of the responsibility between the two Governments in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his endorsement of what I said about Sir Ninian Stephen. I am grateful also for his welcome to the agreement by all the participants that these talks should continue the process of consultation. He asked whether the British Government stood by the assertion, made by my predecessor, that we have

"no selfish economic or strategic interest"

in the present constitutional position of Northern Ireland. That is certainly the case. There is no qualification to that, nor to the undertaking that my predecessor gave on 26 March 1991 that so long as it remains the wish of most of those living in Northern Ireland that Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom, so it shall. There will be no change of status, save if there is a change in the wish of the majority.

I also welcome what the hon. Gentleman said about possible publication at this stage of an account of these negotiations. It was wise of him to recognise that, in the light of the parties' willingness and wish to continue to consult, it might be damaging if an account of who said what and when were published, particularly in the light of the understanding that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.

There is no question of an imposed solution. The British Government are doing all in their power to seek a settlement of this deeply rooted historic problem that is arrived at by agreement with all those who are concerned with it.

The hon. Gentleman asked for an undertaking that there would be no alteration of the status quo in Northern Ireland while the dialogue is continuing. I give him that undertaking without any qualification.

It remains the case, as is evidenced by the fact that the intergovernmental conference is to take place next Monday 16 November, that the Anglo-Irish Agreement remains in force.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I deeply regret that the process has not resulted in positive conclusions, but will my right hon. and learned Friend contemplate that the chances of future agreements might be increased if the Irish Government showed more flexibility with regard to articles 2 and 3? I also draw my right hon. and learned Friend's attention to the public statements of the leader of the Alliance party, who expressed the belief that greater flexibility on the part of the Social Democratic and Labour party would greatly help future talks.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I share my hon. Friend's regret that we have not achieved a greater degree of convergence—of agreement. It would be unwise of me to be drawn into——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Convergence—it is a joke.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is not one that the hon. Gentleman understands.

A discussion of individual ingredients in the conversations that have taken place throughout the process during the past six months. It is fairly well known among the parties where the sticking points have been and where there has been what has amounted to quite a wide area of agreement. I do not wish to be drawn today into commenting on what one party may have said about another or anything of that kind. Recrimination will not be helpful to us, but a welcome to the parties' agreement to continue consultation will usefully come out of the House.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I join in paying tribute to Sir Ninian Stephen, as we did at Stormont yesterday, and, on behalf of my party, I express our appreciation and thanks to the Secretary of State, his predecessor and the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), who, as the Secretary of State said, chaired one of the most vital strands, strand 1, at which there was considerable agreement and progress.

As the Secretary of State has said, the climate definitely has improved. I am sure that he did not wish to place undue emphasis on that little phrase that he used, perhaps accidentally implying that progress had not been made on a beginning for new relationships within Northern Ireland, because we have moved forward to some extent.

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

In view of that, will the Secretary of State facilitate the Northern Ireland parties in further developing the degree of co-operation that they have shown so often in the past on, for example, the economy and social matters, and a whole host of issues of vital importance to the people of Northern Ireland, and do that around the table in a way which, apparently, the other party leaders in the House representing constituencies in Great Britain seem to find abhorrent?

Has the Secretary of State taken note of the advice given by the Opposition spokesman that the Secretary of State should not seek to impose a solution; but on behalf of the Labour party the hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he would impose a solution without regard to the wishes of anybody?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for what the right hon. Gentleman has said about Sir Ninian Stephen, which I am sure will be much appreciated, and I am also grateful for what he said about the Government team and about my predecessor.

I entirely agree that the climate has definitely improved. Sitting round the table for six months has led to a marked increase in the understanding of the parties for the positions taken by others and a respect for them, and all of us who have taken part in that recognise it. It has been very marked.

Progress has been made towards a new beginning in relationships both north-south, within Northern Ireland, and east-west. Progress has been made; it is not enough. It has taken six months, but six months in the history of Ireland is but an evening gone. We shall come back to it.

The right hon. Gentleman asked if I would facilitate progress on specific subjects in round-table conversations between the Northern Ireland parties. The British Government are anxious to facilitate any convergence—any area of agreement—in Northern Ireland, but we do not wish to lose sight of our objective of progress towards a new beginning in the totality of relationships. That objective has occupied us over the past six months.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Let me associate myself with what has already been said about Sir Ninian Stephen and his colleague George Thompson, who has assisted him lately. I also echo what has been said about the present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, his predecessor and his deputy, who made such a valuable contribution to the talks in the conference and at stage 1.

Will the Secretary of State bear in mind what was said by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara)—that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was imposed on the people of Northern Ireland? It comes ill from the hon. Gentleman to say that nothing should be imposed, and then to say that the Dublin Government should have more say in the affairs of Northern Ireland. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman also confirm that, if the southern Government had not asked for the conference, the talks could have continued in spite of the election? We needed to revert to stage 1, for there was still business to be done, but the southern Government had no place in that.

Will the Secretary of State also bear in mind that, although the other Government said that articles 2 and 3 were on the table, the Taoiseach kept repeating outside the conference that there would be no change? Last weekend, the SDLP spokesman exhorted his supporters to stand firm. The House should face up to the fact that no progress can be made until the Irish Republic gives up its illegal, immoral and criminal claim to the territory of Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is true that the Irish Government asked for a meeting of the intergovernmental conference, as it was quite entitled to do. The last conference met on 27 April; this one will bring the total to four this year. Normally, there are eight on average. Under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Irish Government were perfectly entitled to ask for such a conference, and I make no complaint about that. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agreed with the Taoiseach that it should take place. I think that it had a beneficial effect, in that it brought us under the whip for the past couple of weeks. Good progress was made.

Articles 2 and 3 have featured in our discussions, as it was apparent that they would. I welcome the fact that they have been recognised by the Irish Government as being on the table for discussion, along with other constitutional matters. I shall not go into the business of what weight is to be put on which ingredient in the talks, because I do not think that that will help the process of carrying forward the consultations—which, I trust, will begin very soon. I shall merely say that all the participants have, in their various ways, put their backs into this business, and much progress has been made as a result. Many historical watersheds have been encountered, and have been left behind us as we have moved onwards.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): I join other hon. Members in expressing deep appreciation of Sir Ninian Stephen and Mr. George Thompson, who have put incredible effort, energy and dedication into the talks. On behalf of my party, let me also express appreciation of the effort put in by the Secretary of State and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State—and by the Dublin Ministers, who came here on a regular basis during strand 2. Six months is a short time in the history of a problem like Ireland. As I said to Sir Ninian Stephen yesterday, the Irish problem existed before his country came into existence. Six months, therefore, is a short time. During that time, I believe that the discussions had very many areas of constructive dialogue and very many areas of agreement, as well as areas of disagreement, but that, in terms of the depth of the divisions in our society, is progress.

I look forward to building on that progress by maintaining contact with the other parties, by dialogue, because dialogue is the only road to the future, and also by working with the other parties on matters of common concern, such as the economy, in order to build up trust and to break down the distrust and prejudice that goes to the heart of our problem.

I ask the Secretary of State to agree that, in summing up the approach of my party to this dialogue, we said that the task which faced us was the accommodation of two sets of legitimate rights: the rights of the Unionist people to the full expression of their identity and way of life and the rights of the nationalist people to precisely the same —the accommodation of both, not the defeat of one by the other?

While that principle is self-evident, and while the Secretary of State can agree that everyone can accept the principle and the reality, when one translates the reality into institutional expression both identities transcend the confines of Northern Ireland. While the three Unionist parties seem to have no difficulty in transcending the confines in the direction of London for the expression of what they describe as their Britishness, they seem to find difficulty in moving in the other direction to allow the nationalist community to have an equal expression of their identity.

The Secretary of State knows that we regard that as the major area of disagreement, but we look forward to continuing to discuss that area of disagreement, with a view to coming to an ultimate agreement, because dialogue —no matter what anyone says, and there is no point in recriminations—is the only route to a lasting settlement of our deep-seated problem.

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State to respond, may I remind the House that we are dealing with a statement? Therefore, hon. Members should be questioning that statement, not making their own comments. That is essential if we are to make progress within the parliamentary framework.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I neglected to express my thanks to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) for what he said as to both Sir Ninian Stephen and myself.

I am grateful for what the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) said at the beginning of his remarks, and I welcome the thrust of what he said. It is right that the parties have come to acknowledge that one of the principal issues is the question of accommodating differing identities and differing allegiances in Northern Ireland. It is one of the achievements of the process that there has been a widening understanding of a point that he has always regarded as of crucial importance.

Equally, the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that there has been a widening understanding of the position, anxieties and fundamental beliefs of the Unionist side in the process. All that is to the good. The question is not so much whether one acknowledges these differences but how one applies the principle of accommodating them in real, practical reality. That is the question for continuing consultation, based upon what we have built in the last few months. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's commitment to that further process.

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): May I join in the expression of praise and thanks to Sir Ninian Stephen for his patience, tact and skill? He was a distinguished chairman of the talks.

Does not the Secretary of State's opinion, that the objective of the talks remains both valid and achievable, fully justify the Government's commitment to continue with the process of informal discussions? Perhaps he might widen the discussions to include all Northern Ireland's parliamentary parties. Does he realise that the overwhelming majority of the Ulster people, regardless of their religion or politics, and in particular the younger generation, are anxious that Ulster should shake off the shackles of fear, prejudice and hatred and make way for political progress?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he has said. I endorse his final remark, but the people of Northern Ireland across the spectrum wish that the past no longer dominates the present and dictates the future. The hon. Gentleman has much more experience of democratic politics in Northern Ireland than I have. Walking about in the streets and going about my business in the Province has brought home to me time and time again that there is a demand from the people of Northern Ireland that we should leave the past behind us. People say, "There are legitimate grievances on each side, but we are fed up with having them recited. We are looking to the future." Of course, that is particularly true of the young. So I stand by what the hon. Gentleman said.

I look forward to the continuation of the discussions. they will need to continue with the same participants with which they were begun. I know that all the participants will benefit from informal advice from the hon. Gentleman, as I have unfailingly done.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): In recognising the common ground as well as the difficulties in Northern Ireland, the talks have been welcomed, and will be welcomed, by all parties and all hon. Members. All hon. Members wish the Secretary of State and others well in the future.

Does the Secretary of State accept that the democratic deficit in Northern Ireland will need to be addressed by people not only in Northern Ireland but throughout the islands? A way of extending the discussion would be, not a *Hansard* such as that suggested earlier, but the publication of a Green Paper setting out the various options that now lie before us. The publication of a Green Paper would enable people to have a proper discussion about the alternatives and the concessions which would have to be made by each of the participants.

Does the Secretary of State agree that he must move from the role of umpire to that of a protagonist and, perhaps, reach further to the ordinary people both north and south of the border in Ireland and put a series of propositions in a referendum in due course to all the people, above the heads of politicians?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his comments. I agree with his comments about a democratic deficit.

Part of my purpose is to bring back to Northern Ireland democratically answerable government which is exercised by the people, elected from the population of Northern Ireland and answerable for final decisions to them. For far too long Northern Ireland has suffered the indignity of being ruled from this House on matters which would normally be within the jurisdiction of a borough or district council. But we must secure the abolition of the democratic deficit on a fair and workable basis. The abolition of that deficit must attract the suport of the community. That, in part, is what the discussions are about.

I would rather publish a Green Paper which sets out the ways in which the agreement, once reached, can be implemented; but for the reasons that I have given, there is not much to be gained by publishing a Green Paper before we reach agreement.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the announcement that he has made to the House today is disappointing to those of us who have a keen interest in and affection for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland? However, we realise

[Mr. Tom King]

that a great deal has been achieved and that the parties involved deserve credit for the discussions that have already taken place. I refuse to believe that the discussions have been a waste of time.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, although the election in the Republic imposes a certain interim period until a new Government are elected, the parties in this House can take advantage of the interim period to continue the informal discussions in the hope that an opportunity will present itself to carry forward an important development?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I agree with what my right hon. Friend said, and I thank him for his comments. There may be some advantage in the pause or intermission—whatever one may like to call it—that has now occurred in meetings of the intergovernmental conference. The interim period will give an opportunity for ordinary men and women in the street to make their opinions known and inform the political leaders in the Province and the north and south what people think and what they hope will be achieved. I believe that that will happen, and that it will be beneficial. I am grateful for what my right hon. Friend said about how much has been achieved, and I believe that he is right.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): In a normal, ideal situation one would agree with the Secretary of State that this is not the time for recriminations. None the less, does he not agree that one party at the table was beyond the normal courtesies in terms of making a substantial contribution—lacking good will, flexibility and, one might say, common sense? That party made not one solitary compromise during the whole period of the discussions.

In so far as that party is joined with Her Majesty's Government, through the Anglo-Irish Agreement, does that not prove the folly of conferring on a Government who lack responsibility the right to interfere in our affairs in Northern Ireland? Instead of listening to the contradictory gobbledegook which we have heard from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), will the Secretary of State consult elected Northern Ireland Members? In terms of their advice and their participation in remedying the democratic deficit, will he give those Members precedence over the Irish Republic, which has proved so reluctant to enter into the spirit which the rest of us tried to inject into the talks?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The elected representatives in Northern Ireland probably have precedence over everybody; they all know—at least, I hope that they do —that they can come to see me about any subject whenever they want, and many of them have done so.

I do not think that I shall follow the hon. Gentleman on his principal point, save to say that if any party has lacked flexibility and movement, no doubt it will be thought that there is all the more scope for movement in the further consultations in which we are about to take part.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): May I associate myself with the tributes paid to Sir Ninian Stephen and his assistant, Mr. George Thompson? I add my thanks to the Secretary of State and his predecessor, and to the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), for their valuable contribution during the talks, for their commitment and dedication, and for the enthusiasm that they put into the process.

Over the coming weeks and months, as the Secretary of State assesses and analyses the process which has just ended, will he consider not only where the sticking points have been but the basic structure of the talks process and the aspects of it which may have caused this degree of failure? If he concludes, as I have, that some parties at the talks were so content with the status quo—the Anglo-Irish Agreement—that they were not encouraged to move from it, will he consider introducing a level playing field by ending the marginalisation of the Unionist community in Northern Ireland which has been caused by that agreement? That would give any consultations which might take place a better chance.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks. I understand his position and that of his party on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and I understand what he has said about it. The hon. Gentleman believes that there may be less incentive for his political opponents to seek changes such as those we are discussing, because they have an advantage under that agreement. I understand that point. That is not, with great respect, what we are really concerned with today.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is in force and I reiterate that the British Government will be loyal to it. That said, it was part of the statement of 26 March 1991 by my predecessor that the British Government would seek with the Irish Government, by direct discussion, to discover whether it was possible to agree a new and more broadly based agreement either to supplement or to replace the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That is still very much part of our concerns in the process. It is the subject of strand 3 of the talks. I believe, therefore, that it would be a very desirable outcome and one that we shall work towards.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Tributes have been paid to the Secretary of State, to the Under-Secretary of State, to the chairman and to his assistant. I add to that my tribute to the other parties taking part in the discussions—even those that wish to involve themselves in recrimination today. I sat through every session of the talks except one, so I realise that an enormous amount of effort went into the talks from every party. Some people found it necessary at times to express their positions differently by not actively taking part, and I respect that.

I do not want to answer the recriminations or to involve myself in them except to ask the Secretary of State one question when he considers and ponders the results. Did we not all know when we responded jointly to the invitation from the British Government and from the Irish Government that there would be difficult questions and that there would be issues that we should not be able to resolve easily? Did we not know that one of those would be that Unionists would not become nationalists and nationalists would not become Unionists overnight? May we now take the opportunity in the informal discussions, which I hope will lead to a resumption of formal discussions, to face those problems and difficulties, because they will not be wished away, ignored away or talked away? Sooner or later we must face them.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: There is an unearthly unanimity in the way in which right hon. and hon. Members begin their contributions. I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman has said.

If we are sensible, we all recognise that the enormously deep-rooted problem will not be solved overnight. It must be solved by the people of Northern Ireland and it must be solved by all those with legitimate interests in the problems of Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman is right about that; I do not think that there is any disagreement about it. I am not depressed, although I am disappointed, that we have not got further and that in a mere six months we have not reached heads of agreement. We have plenty of time and no lack of determination.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): The longer I am in the House, the more glad I am that I come from the north of England where we tend to use words that mean what they say. If the purpose of the talks was to get an agreement between the parties of Northern Ireland, then I must say that they have failed. It is about time that someone used that word. There is nothing wrong with saying that. I do not believe in political alchemy and I know of no geometrician who has yet squared the circle, as was being attempted. I am glad to know that people will carry on talking. However, they always did, so there is nothing new in that.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is a formal body in existence, which can be and has shown itself to be an appropriate debating chamber—the Anglo-Irish parliamentary body? I repeat my plea to the Unionists in the Chamber to take their seats on that body. Surely that must be a way forward.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Anglo-Irish parliamentary body is extremely valuable and I do not doubt it benefits from the plain speaking of my hon. Friend. I always find that Yorkshiremen and those who come from other less favoured counties—

Mr. Porter: I am from Lancashire.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Well, Yorkshiremen in particular and people from other counties which regard themselves as being in the north, never fail to remind us how bluntly they speak. That is also very much appreciated. The AIPB is a very good thing and I wish that the Unionists would take their seats in it. I value the body's reports and hope that it will continue its work.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): The failure of the talks comes as no surprise to most people in Northern Ireland. The failure was inevitable because of the Dublin Government's refusal to change articles 2 and 3 and because of the clear refusal of the SDLP to agree to any form of devolved government based on elections in Northern Ireland.

In view of the imposition of the Anglo-Irish Agreement five years ago—and I am glad to hear, five years too late, that the Labour party spokesman is now against imposed solutions in Northern Ireland—and the stalemate which it has created in Northern Ireland for five years and the fool's errand that devolution now is, will the Secretary of State consider the alternative of giving the people of Northern Ireland the same rights and responsibilities as those enjoyed by their fellow citizens in Scotland, England and Wales?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I understand that there is a desire for much more answerable democratic government of Northern Ireland in Northern Ireland. I have already said that I share that objective. However, I very much share the objective that underlay the whole process, that whatever structures are set up, they shall have the widest possible degree of acceptance across the community. That is very important.

I will not be drawn into a discussion of the merits of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It is there, it remains in force, and the British Government are loyal to it. Many advances have been made in the past few years in the way in which Northern Ireland is governed. I want to see those advances retained and built upon, but on a basis of restored democratic government locally in the Province.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I want to reinforce the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) and invite the Unionists to take their place on the Anglo-Irish parliamentary body. They would make a most valuable contribution to our discussions.

Can my right hon. and learned Friend give us any idea when he might reconvene the talks between all parties? Will he assure the House that it will be a reconvening and that process will not start again from square one?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: What was agreed by the parties yesterday was that, bilaterally, discussions will resume on the basis that they have been going on over the past three or four weeks. We have got away from the strands which were convened. In the first instance, those informal discussions will take place on bilateral initiatives. After that, we must consider how we bring the matter to a conclusion. While I welcome what my hon. Friend says about getting on with it now as quickly as possible, it will not be for me to convene a formal process. It will happen more informally, and I hope as quickly as possible.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The way in which the talks have ended clearly demonstrates that the diktat imposed on us by the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) has been only a stumbling block which will cured by no supplement and merits only oblivion.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) said, there was considerable progress in the talks within strand 1. However, is it not the case that, once we got into the other strands, the talks rapidly deadlocked on a number of issues with the result that strand 3 never really got off the ground? As there is no likelihood of those deadlocks being resolved, is not the only rational course to go back to the issues addressed in strand 1 and bring them to fruition, thus ending the democratic deficit?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Certainly there was a lot of progress in strand 1, as has been said. However, there was a lot of convergence also in strand 2. Strand 2 comprises those institutions which will be put in place to affect relationships north-south. A lot of progress was made there, but that has to be a matter primarily for those who are going to work them—political parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government. I do not agree that there was no progress there. In strand 3, we certainly held meetings, but it is difficult to make progress on strand 3 until the first two have got a good deal further.

I would not want the hon. Gentleman to think that I agree that there has been no merit in the Anglo-Irish

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

Agreement. There has been much recognition in recent years that there is a legitimate interest from outside Northern Ireland in some of the affairs that affect nationalists in Northern Ireland. That recognition has grown and it derives from the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Whether it does or does not, that recognition is a very good thing. It is something that has been reflected by all parties in the talks. I do not think that we should allow ourselves to be deflected from the really important business by a discussion of matters that took place a few years ago, let alone discussions of matters that took place perhaps 20, 30 or more years ago.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. and learned Friend will know that many Conservative Members will be disappointed but not surprised at the failure of the talks. Few of us believed that they would succeed, but we wished them well. Whatever decisions are arrived at in the talks in the future—I welcome the fact that the parties are continuing to talk—at the end of the day, as long as the majority of people in Northern Ireland continue to say that they wish to remain part of the United Kingdom, this House and this Parliament will determine what happens. We should never ever walk away from that. It is our responsibility—our duty—somehow to find the answer to the democratic deficit in Northern Ireland. In fact, the rest of the United Kingdom will suffer as long as that deficit remains.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I agree with my hon. Friend. Of course it is the responsibility of the House to govern the affairs of Northern Ireland as long as Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom. That is expressly recognised in the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Most hon. Members will feel warmed when they hear from the Secretary of State that progress has been made, but people outside the House want to know what progress has been made. On their behalf, I ask the Secretary of State whether the intransigence of the Irish Government and the insurmountability of the Ango-Irish Agreement have prevented real progress in the talks to date.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have tried to make it clear, and I hope that, when the hon. Gentleman reads the record, he will see the areas in which I consider that there has been agreement. Perhaps rather more important is the opinion of the independent chairman that quite substantial agreement has been made—not enough, but quite a lot. I do not think that I will help the hon. Gentleman by going over it. I am not going to follow him into recriminations of one party or another in the talks; that will not help us. I believe that we should be getting on, and I hope that he believes that we should be getting on. I do not think that we shall get on if we start pointing the finger at one participant or another.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Does the Secretary of State accept that there are great opportunities at this time for all those who live on the island of Ireland with the Single European Act coming into force on 1 January, the prospects of enhanced trade and the prospects of enhanced employment?

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognise the consensus in the House that the British-Irish inter-parliamentary body represents a forum of dialogue, co-operation and consultation that helps to unite people north and south, east and west, of these islands? May I make an appeal to Unionist Members? There are seats available for them. They would take their seats with a great welcome from the House because it would be fully in line with the traditions of democracy and freedom in Northern Ireland and the consultation and co-operation that they are seeking with the Parliament of the Republic and the Parliament of Westminster.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I very much agree with the relevance of what the hon. Gentleman said about the Single European Act. That Act opens up prospects for much greater trade, north-south; it is surprising how little there has been until very recently. Trade and a strong economy lead to the kind of stability which is the best insurance against toleration for terrorism. That is the relevance of what has been said, just as the business that we have been engaged in over the last six months is relevant to the defeat of terrorism, which is the Government's overriding objective. I endorse what the hon. Gentleman says about the Anglo-Irish parliamentary body.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): The only agreement that appears to have been reached throughout the talks is the unanimity of view that the talks were chaired well by officials or politicians.

Moving to the substance of the Secretary of State's report to the House, first, will he confirm that any overall agreement can be attained only with the consent of the Government in Dublin? Secondly, he said that he would not like to see published a blow-by-blow account of the talks. I agree, because it would make public the divisions which clearly exist. But the Secretary of State says in his statement that the participants

> "have identified and discussed most, if not all, of the elements which would comprise an eventual settlement".

If that is so, does not he agree that those elements should be made public so that there could be a wider public discussion of them? That would not itself prejudice any future talks between the internal parties in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman says that hon. Members seem to recognise only one area of agreement—that the process was chaired well. I am happy to accept that. We have to begin somewhere. He asked whether we should publish the areas where we say that there has been discussion of the basic elements. The point is that everybody agreed at the beginning that nothing should be agreed until all was agreed. It may be that people at the preliminary stage said, "We could agree with this or that, provided the other." I do not think that that process would be brought to crystallisation and agreement if there were to be publication now of what has taken place. I know that it is disappointing for those who take great interest in these matters, but that I believe to be the view of all who participated in the talks.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Does the Secretary of State agree that it was the existence and the workings of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which were the conduit which brought the otherwise distant parties together around the table? Does he further agree that the talks would be continuing to this very day if certain parties, for very good reasons of their own, had not withdrawn from the process? We could have been talking next week if that had not happened.

I share the Secretary of State's optimism and confidence for the future. I should like to think that, notwithstanding what I hope will be a short recess, the mechanisms of getting together would be facilitated by him and by the parties in order to bring all three strands, which are so intertwined, to a successful conclusion.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am very anxious, as I know the hon. Gentleman is aware, to do anything I can to get this thing going and moving in the right direction. Nobody is less inclined to stand upon formality than me, so he has that assurance.

I will not take up what the hon. Gentleman said earlier. I was described by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) as an umpire. I do not think I am an umpire, but certainly an umpire does not get drawn into supporting one side or the other in a conflict, and I do not propose to do so.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not a fact that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was approved in the House by an overwhelming majority of hon. Members on both sides? The Unionist parties, of course, recognise the sovereignty of Parliament as regards Northern Ireland. As to the parliamentary body, there has been a remarkable breakthrough in that British and Irish parliamentarians have sat down together in the full body and in sub-committees over the past two years.

In view of the interest of a number of European countries, and now the United States, in the talks or in what may take place in Northern Ireland in future, is the Secretary of State willing, on behalf of the Government, for those Governments which are so interested, including the new Administration in the United States, to come to Northern Ireland so that they may see for themselves that we have absolutely nothing to hide?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I agree warmly with the hon. Gentleman. I encourage visits from all over the world, and when visitors come there is an almost uniform result. They say, "We had no idea that the media image was so wide of the mark." The Southern Legislative Conference of American States—senators and congressmen from the southern states—is the most recent example. They spent the thick end of a week in Northern Ireland, and at the end of their stay they said, "We are going back to America to do our best to correct the image, which we regard as unrecognisable." That is so. As far as I am concerned, anyone who wants to go to Northern Ireland, from whatever quarter and with whatever prejudice, is welcome. I shall see to it that they have a fair view of Northern Ireland, and that they are free to go wherever they like and to talk to whoever they like, and they will come away wiser and, I trust, happier people.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Were the talks exclusively concerned with constitutional, political and security matters or were economic and social affairs discussed, as the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) seemed to suggest? One way to tackle the situation in Northern Ireland and to undermine sectarianism is to make progress in dealing with the unemployment, deprivation and poverty which exist there and throughout the island of Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I assure the hon. Gentleman that they were included. During those six months there were times when I thought that nothing under the sun was excluded. The extremely important matters that he mentioned were certainly included, for the reason that he identified. Economic strength and the elimination of deprivation and disadvantage, wherever they may be found, are important in their own right, and to inculcate stability. That is why the British Government are so anxious to target areas of social need—as we do—and to target areas such as Belfast and Londonderry, where financial help can get businesses and employment going. That is why the MacBride principles, which are espoused in certain areas of the United States, are so deeply damaging because they are destructive of jobs, and that is why they are opposed by every constitutional party in Northern Ireland and supported only by Sinn Fein.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I am sure that the majority of people in Northern Ireland would agree with what the Secretary of State said about looking to the future and not to the past and not recriminating about what has gone on. Does he agree that in the foreseeable future Northern Ireland will stay part of the United Kingdom and that during that time the people there should be treated in the same way as the rest of the citizens in the kingdom? Why does he not agree to set up a Select Committee on Northern Ireland immediately?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Lady is right to say that Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom in the foreseeable future—as long as the majority of people living there wish to do so. If they change their minds, it will cease to be a part of the United Kingdom. That has been made perfectly clear for many years.

The hon. Lady asks about a Select Committee. I remind her that, in their response to the report of the Procedure Committee, the Government said that they had no objection to such a Select Committee—provided that setting it up met with the approval of the House—but that it would have to have the support of the broad community in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is it not rather strange that along comes the ex-Attorney General, Mr. Smoothie, who could have said all he needed to say in a few sentences? The Government's policies have failed. They have gone down the pan, but he is trying to kid us along that somehow everything remains the same. The truth is that we need a new political initiative in Ireland, and that is to get the troops out. I intervened when the Secretary of State talked about convergence because he could not get convergence between two nation states. What chance has he got in Maastricht with 12 nation states?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman has lost his form since I used to see him off over Attorney-General's questions; he is out of practice. The British Government do not adopt what he calls the "troops out" policy because we have more concern for the real interests of ordinary people in Northern Ireland than he could ever begin to understand.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): It may be of little moment, but some hon. Members believe that the Anglo-Irish Agreement should have been entitled the British-Irish Agreement.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

Although it is reassuring to hear the Secretary of State say that the Government hold to the view that there can be no agreement other than a comprehensive agreement by all the parties and that therefore the Government will never seek to impose a change on Northern Ireland, will he assure me that that message will be conveyed to Washington? Will he further assure me that President-elect Clinton will be most carefully apprised of the current circumstances surrounding those talks? Surely the days of the American interventionist role in Europe are coming to an end.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have been rather grateful, as have most people in this country, for the concern which the Americans have shown in the past 45 years for our affairs here in Europe. However, we must distinguish between what is said in the heat of a hotly contested election campaign and what is likely to be the considered policy of a great ally of this country and a great nation. As I have said, the more people come to see what Northern Ireland is really like, the better. But it is important that they should realise that we need not so much a peace envoy as agreement in the process of constitutional talks now engaging us, which the whole House supports.

Points of Order

4.37 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I assume that you will shortly be holding a ballot for notices of motions for 27 November. I know that you are busy and must give a tremendous amount of thought to all the processes in the House. May I remind you, however, that last Wednesday you announced the names of those who were successful in the ballot for Friday 20 November. Last Wednesday we debated further the European Communities Bill. I expect that most hon. Members will remember that day. My name appeared in column 280 of the *Official Report* of 4 November as the first to be selected in the ballot for 20 November. In recent months, some Opposition Members have accused me of ballot rigging. I should not like anyone to suggest or imply that I have been responsible for rigging this ballot in any way.

In the blue pages of the Order Paper for 4 November, page 1179 reads:

> "Mr. Ray Powell . . . To call attention to a subject and to move a resolution".

On 5 November, I received a letter from the Table Office informing me that I had been drawn first in the ballot of 4 November for Private Members' Notices of Motions and that, to have priority under Standing Order No. 13, I was requested to give notice of the subject before the rising of the House on Wednesday 11 November—today. Yesterday afternoon, I took the opportunity to give notice of the subject that I intend to move on 20 November. The subject was "the fear, plight and poverty of pensioners".

When I put that to the Table Office, there was no suggestion that there had been any change or mistake about who had come first in the ballot for 20 November. Then, at near to midnight when I was in my room, the Clerk from the Table Office called to inform me that I did not have the number one spot for notice of motions for Friday 20 November, but that the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Ralph Howell) did.

My point of order to you, Madam Speaker, is that six clear days elapsed between when I was informed of the change and when you announced from the Chair, and all Opposition Members believed, that I was first in the ballot for 20 November. I had been assured that the maximum publicity would centre on the important subject that I had chosen, especially this year. The local and national——

Madam Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Powell: But it is for you, Madam Speaker, to rule on the matter. There is no one else whom I can approach, My office has sent out publicity to pensioners' organisations throughout the country highlighting the problems and difficulties for pensioners, particularly now just before the onset of winter. Many pensioners are worried and fear that they will not be able to pay their bills, and are concerned about what will happen if they become homeless. As a result of the strong-arm tactics of the Whips Office last week that we read about——

Madam Speaker: Order. I want to hear no more about the Whips Office from a man who was himself a Whip. I can rule on the matter as the hon. Gentleman is now addressing the subject rather than speaking about technical matters.

Mr. Powell: I was informed of the change last night, and protested that six days had elapsed. Madam Speaker, you know that we have only one or two days in which to notify the *Official Report* when we want anything altered. Its staff tell us that they will not alter any part of the report after two or three days. Why does the Table Office have a licence to alter the decision recorded in *Hansard* when preparations have already been made for my debate on 20 November? Why does the Table Office have the right to make alterations when hon. Members do not have a similar right? I want you, Madam Speaker, to rule that the announcement that you made a week ago today still stands and I can go ahead with my debate on 20 November.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I doubt that I need any further points of order after such a long explanation from the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell).

I remember the day very well. The House was excited about a forthcoming debate. There is no question but that the successful candidate in the ballot was Mr. Ralph Howell, not Mr. Ray Powell. The mistake has been made, which is to be greatly regretted. I understand the anxiety of the hon. Member for Ogmore, who has done much to inform his constituents about the subject that he wished to raise only to find that it is not to be debated, which is also to be regretted. There is no doubt that Mr. Ralph Howell, not Mr. Ray Powell, was successful in the ballot. If the hon. Member for Ogmore looks at the Ballot Book, he will see that the number drawn out was clearly that of Mr. Ralph Howell. A mistake was subsequently made, for which there has been an apology. I do not know how lucky the hon. Gentleman is in ballots—I have never been successful—but if he waits a while he can see whether he is successful today.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be nothing further to be said on that point of order. I have dealt with the matter.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether your in-tray has, like mine, been burdened with a glossy piece of paper known as a baby Maastricht. The Foreign Office has called the document "Britain in Europe—the European Community and Your Future". If you have yet to receive a copy, you will be pleased to know that you can get one free through Freepost. However, if you were to scan its pages, I believe that you would be less than pleased as it is not objective, but blatant propaganda. I shall not weary the House with several examples of propaganda; I will give just one. It states:

> "Aren't we on a slippery slope to federalism?"

The Government say, "No", but we know that Martin Bangemann says, "Yes"——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): And he was speaking the truth.

Mr. Marlow: As the hon. Gentleman says——

Madam Speaker: Order. The point of order must be directed to me. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has raised points of order hundreds of times and knows the procedure.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry, Madam Speaker. Although I have been a Member for a long time, I am distracted from time to time, for which I apologise.

The leaflet is propaganda. I have obtained from the Library the background on the Governments information service which sets out the rules under which they must operate. It states that some conventions have been established and

> "Government publicity should be objective and explanatory, not tendentious or polemical"—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is abusing the time of the House. I am patient when listening to points of order, but the hon. Gentleman has not yet come to his. The hon. Gentleman is arguing a case with me, but he is not in a position to do that. If he has a point of order for me, he must come directly to it or I shall ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. Marlow: Madam Speaker, have you been asked by the Foreign Secretary whether he can give a statement on why the guidelines have been abused and why taxpayers' money is being provided to produce propaganda for circulation to taxpayers? If the Foreign Secretary has not requested a statement, what action is available to the House to stop the abuse?

Madam Speaker: The latter question must be put to the Foreign Secretary, not the Chair. The answer to the earlier question is no—the Foreign Secretary has not informed me of a statement. No Minister asks me about a statement; I am informed when a statement is to be made. I have not been so informed.

We shall now move on to the ballot for notices of motions to see whether the hon. Member for Ogmore can be lucky this time.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 27 NOVEMBER 1992

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Tam Dalyell
Mr. Roger Knapman
Mr. Cyril D. Townsend

General Election Expenses Reform

4.46 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to control general election expenses within limits set nationally and in each constituency; and for connected purposes.

Many hon. Members have travelled worldwide to observe the electoral processes of many of the newly democratised countries. We have rarely found anything to complain about in their newly minted democratic systems. But I wonder what the verdict of observers from Romania, Estonia and Hungary might be on our electoral system, had they been here in April. I believe that they would have said that the system was basically sound, but long overdue for care and maintenance, especially in its weakest sector—its failure to control national spending.

We have just witnessed in the United States the power that money deployed in prodigious quantities can have to persuade one voter in five to vote for a previously little known candidate. In Britain we are in an extremely foolish position. For more than 100 years we have rigidly controlled local spending by individual candidates. That reform was introduced to end the practice then known as bribing and treating, which dishonoured the electoral process in the last century. Since 1974 an aberration in the law has allowed parties to spend unlimited sums of money on so-called national spending, which means that spending is allowed on publicity which mentions the party's name, but not the candidate's name.

Not surprisingly, since that time national spending has increased and local spending has decreased. At the last two elections, for every £1 spent locally £8 was spent nationally. The law frets and worries about the minnows while the great fat salmon sail by unhindered. The most authoritative calculation that I can find on the comparative spending of the three main parties in the last two general elections is that for every £1 spent by the Liberal Democrats, Labour spent £4 and the Conservative party spent £9—more that all other parties combined.

At an election the incumbent party already has enormous advantages. Earlier, there was a point of order about the possible use of Government money for propaganda. A great avalanche of Government so-called advertising precedes a general election. The Government have an obedient press and control of their own advertising in a friendly poster industry. The advantage of the richest party is magnified to an even greater extent because the so-called national advertising is concentrated in the 100-plus key marginal constituencies which determine the election result.

I have searched for some scientific analysis of how persuasive were the "double whammy" and "tax bombshell" posters in April. There is none, but subjective evidence shows that that message was repeated on many billboards and, although it was dishonest, it had an enormous effect in influencing people's voting choice. However, there is an even greater threat to the integrity of our system—the way in which the poster sites were distributed. Three huge blocks of valuable poster sites were booked in the name of commercial companies before the date of the general election was announced, and many of them were booked without the knowledge or consent of those companies.

The most significant feature was that 2,000 poster sites were booked in the name of the Imperial Tobacco Company which immediately handed over those sites to be used by the Conservative party. In a frank statement, Mr. Peter Middleton, the marketing manager of that company said that as Labour and the Liberal democrats had said that they would support a ban on tobacco advertising, the company would like to see the Conservatives re-elected because it believed that they would continue to oppose the advertising ban.

The refusal to support a ban on advertising is one of the promises that the Government have honoured, and they continue—quite disgracefully and against all the evidence and public opinion—to oppose such a ban. The greatest threat is that there is nothing to prevent an individual, a company or even a country with enormous amounts of money, however malign their intentions or anti-social their views, to enter the British electoral system and spend millions—there is no limit whatever—to persuade voters. Our system, if it is not yet corrupted, is wide open and inviting corruption to come in. Vote buying is returning to British elections.

The remedy that the Bill provides is the establishment of a national registration system for political parties. So out of touch is the law that at present it does not even recognise the existence of political parties. The Bill seeks an electoral commission to oversee all national expenditure limits. Each party would appoint a national agent to be legally responsible for ensuring that limits are not exceeded. Those controls would be based on the number of candidates fielded by each party. The Bill's general sentiments have been publicly supported over and over again by all main British parties except one—the party which gains most from the present system.

Last week in my constituency, we commemorated the 153rd anniversary of the martyrdom of 20 Chartists who died when they demonstrated outside the Westgate hotel. That commemoration of those brave men and women who gave their lives for what they said was a noble cause is held every year. They died in the cause of protecting and strengthening the dishonoured democracy of their day. Democracy is a fragile organism and it needs the constant care and renewal that the Bill will provide.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Who will prepare and bring in the Bill?

Mr. Flynn: Mr. Nick Ainger, Mr. Jon Owen Jones, Mrs. Jane Kennedy, Mr. Nick Harvey, Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, shades of the Newport Chartists, John Frost, Henry Vincent, George Shell and Zephaniah Williams——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must start again, giving the names of hon. Members who will bring in the Bill.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Paul Flynn, Mr. Nick Ainger, Mr. Jon Owen Jones, Mrs. Jane Kennedy, Mr. Nick Harvey, Mr. Elfyn Llwyd and Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

GENERAL ELECTION EXPENSES REFORM

Mr. Paul Flynn accordingly presented a Bill to control general election expenses within limits set nationally and in each constituency; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 81].

Orders of the Day

Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

4.56 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is a modest and technical measure and, if I may presume to say so, it is narrow. It will amend the court procedures for the reciprocal enforcement of maintenance orders by magistrates courts. It will enable orders for maintenance to be enforced where one party is resident in the United Kingdom and the other party is resident in a country with which the United Kingdom has a reciprocal agreement. Until this amendment is made, a number of people will be unable to obtain the maintenance for themselves and their children to which they are entitled.

The Bill consists of four clauses and three schedules. Clause 1 will bring into effect the substantive amendments contained in schedule 1. Clause 2 will bring into effect the consequential amendments to other legislation set out in schedule 2. Clauses 3 and 4 provide for commencement and the short title of the Bill respectively. Schedule 1 contains the substantive changes to be brought into effect by the Bill. Part I amends the Maintenance Orders (Facilities for Enforcement) Act 1920 and part II amends the Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) Act 1972. Schedule 3 is a schedule of consequential repeals. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): Will the Minister explain how that rather sorry state of affairs came about?

Mr. Taylor: Certainly. That state of affairs, to use the hon. Gentleman's words, was debated in the other place. As the House wants a candid answer, I must say that it was an oversight made in good faith.

4.59 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): We are grateful to the Minister for his candour. What occurred was a legislative cock-up of the most monumental proportions. *[Interruption.]* I see one of the silent ones telling me to calm down. I am not getting over-excited, at least not yet, but it is a bit rich for the Government to present only now, almost a year after the Children Act 1989 came into force on 14 October 1990, a Bill that addresses an issue that should have been addressed when the Children Act was considered both here and in the other House. Had it been so addressed, we should not have needed this Bill.

As the Minister said, we are here because of an oversight in the drafting of legislation that ought not to have happened. We do not blame the Minister personally, but my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) was right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that there is someone to blame. Since 14 October last, it has not been possible to make a claim for maintenance under the reciprocal enforcement legislation because any such claim could not be processed as a result of someone's oversight in drafting.

[Mr. Paul Boateng]

It has not been possible to initiate proceedings under the Maintenance Orders (Facilities for Enforcement) Act 1920 and the Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) Act 1972 because they refer expressly to a complaints procedure that, as a result of the passing of the Children Act, no longer exists. Under that Act, all procedures have to be initiated by application. Therefore, in the past year or so, about 1,000 applicants have been adversely affected. There ought to be some parliamentary draftsman or Minister, past or present, whose ears are burning because of that oversight.

The Minister said that the oversight might have occurred as a result of the speed with which the Children Act was dealt with, and the necessity to get it through. The Lord Chancellor said of the Children Act:

> "It was a very important stage and one which I would certainly not have liked to have forgone for the sake of ensuring that it was absolutely complete."—*[Official Report, House of Lords, 22 June 1992; Vol. 1538, c. 349.]*

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I seek some information from the hon. Gentleman. Will the 1,000 people who have been disadvantaged get back the money that they have lost?

Mr. Boateng: No, they will not. The hon. Lady puts her finger on the point. For the past year, such people have been without remedy, and that is a cause for concern that I know she will share. Rather than being a party matter, that is one of those oversights that both Houses have a duty, when we are considering legislation, to ensure simply does not happen.

It is no excuse for us to be told that the other place was in a hurry and had to get the Bill through. The whole point about starting Bills in the other place is that their Lordships are supposed not to be in a hurry. They are supposed to be at that wonderful stage in life when they can relax, take it easy and use their considerable endeavours in the unheated and uncontroversial atmosphere that is cultivated in the other place to give measures such as the Children Act the mature and reflective consideration that is required. In this instance, that clearly did not happen.

Not surprisingly, the Opposition welcome the Bill, as the whole House will no doubt welcome it. As the Minister said, it is a modest measure, but it is worth while looking briefly at the context in which it is being introduced. Sadly, matrimonial breakdowns are all too common, resulting in more and more lone parents, whose plight is very real. It is the duty of the House to ensure that the arrangements for initiation of maintenance proceedings and the enforcement of resulting orders are effective.

It is important not only that orders are effective in ensuring that those against whom they are made obey them and respect the order of the court but that the proceedings are brought to a conclusion as quickly as possible, with the minimum delay, fuss and inconvenience. In so doing, one ensures not only that the parents or parties making the applications receive a rapid remedy to address the financial constraints in which they often find themselves, but that the cost to the public purse through the court system is minimised.

At the moment, only 30 per cent. of lone mothers and 3 per cent. of lone fathers receive regular payments of maintenance. Some research carried out in 1990 showed that less than 10 per cent. of lone parents' income arises from maintenance, compared with 45 per cent. from income support and 23 per cent. from net earnings. The problem of family poverty as it is associated with the receipt and payment of maintenance to lone parents is a real one. To the extent to which this modest measure addresses that problem, it is welcome.

5.7 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) has put his finger on the problem—errant fathers in particular manage to leave the matrimonial home, abandon their children and expect the state to pick up the tab. I should like to address the House—shortly, as always—not on the subject of the Bill's extremely narrow purpose but on the way in which it will work——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Before the hon. Member goes down that path, let me point out that this is a Second Reading debate on a specific and narrow Bill. I hope that we shall not have a long and wide-ranging debate on matrimonial matters. I urge the hon. Member to stick to the Bill.

Mr. Steen: Your rulings are always extremely helpful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and have great foresight in their application. I took the liberty and, you may feel, the prudent step of checking with the Public Bill Office first about whether the speech that I hope that I shall be allowed to make would be permissible. I was advised that, as this is a Second Reading debate, the modest matters that I wish to raise would be in order. I have no doubt that if you feel, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am in any way abusing the time of the House, you will mention it in your normal courteous way.

At the outset, I said that this is a narrow Bill, dealing with a specific point which, as has been said, should have been dealt with before. None the less, it relies on magistrates courts for the execution of justice for those men and women who have been abandoned by their partner and whose children need maintenance and help from that partner. My concern is whether magistrates courts, the subject matter of this and the earlier Bill, can and should deal with such cases.

I do not know whether other hon. Members have a similar problem, but three out of every 12 cases at my advice centres every fortnight involve women who have been abandoned by men who take no responsibility for their children, expecting the wife to look after them and the state to provide the maintenance for them.

Two particular cases in the past couple of weeks clearly illustrate that point. Both concern the failure of magistrates courts to deal with serious matters of child maintenance. Magistrates seem to be inexperienced and to be advised by clerks who may not have the knowledge to deal with these matters. The result is that women who have been abandoned by men have been abandoned by the courts. The courts have not come to the aid of the abandoned women or their children but have supported the husbands, even though they have produced virtually no, or little, evidence to show that they cannot afford to look after their own children.

A constituent of mine in Dartmouth was abandoned with three children, aged nine, seven and two and a half, by her husband who has paid nothing at all and who, at the hearing, expected the magistrates court to take up the problem and turn to the state to help the lady with her children.

Even worse is a case, which was drawn to my attention by Cornish and Company, a well-established firm of solicitors in Totnes, of a lady with one son whose husband has never paid any money for his son since he left the matrimonial home. He now owes hundreds of pounds, but the court wiped off the maintenance simply because it believed the husband's story, although there was virtually no evidence to support his claim that he could not afford to pay even £5 a week for his son. As a result, the mother has to work nights at the local hospital so that her son can have the little extras and obtain the extra help that he needs for his education.

I am trying to point out that women are being abandoned by men and that the state is allowing that to happen and colluding with it by paying for the abandoned children. Husbands leave the matrimonial home and remarry and the magistrates court, because of its lack of experience, tends to say that the state should pay for the children of the first marriage, allowing the husband to get off scot free. That is a national problem.

Rather than introducing this narrow Bill to provide for reciprocal arrangements around Europe and elsewhere, the Minister should show a particular interest—I know his concern in the matter because we have corresponded on it —in ensuring that magistrates courts are equipped to deal with such cases and do not allow their eyes to be closed when husbands come to court and avoid their responsibilities. That is what is happening in my area and probably in many other parts of the country.

Three or four years ago, the former Prime Minister—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has put before the House a distressing case, but it is outside the bounds of the Bill, so I shall have to urge the Minister to continue the correspondence rather than to deal with the points from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Steen: I have the impression, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you feel that I have made my point well enough and that the House wishes to move on to other things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House does not want to move on to other things; it wants to stick to the Bill.

Mr. Steen: I understand the point you make so tellingly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I rest my case by saying that I do not believe that a magistrates court can deal with those matters. The Bill will not help it to deal with them. I am worried stiff about the increasing number of women who are being abandoned by husbands who expect the state to pick up the tab for their children.

I urge the Minister to see what can be done to ensure that husbands who desert their wives and children take responsibility and pay for those children rather than expecting the state and the taxpayer to take on that responsibility.

5.15 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It is true that the Bill does not deal with some matters that are of great importance in respect of maintenance on which one would be interested to hear the Government's view —for example, what they propose to do to tackle the problem of the high incidence of default which particularly affects those on low incomes and those with low awards.

I rise not to seek to widen the debate but out of curiosity to know what lessons the Government have learnt from this rather unusual legislative episode. It is extraordinary to have an afternoon devoted to considering, in prime time, the defects of a Bill so recently before us that appears not to have thrown up any awareness of the need that the Bill addresses. It suggests that there is something wrong with the way in which the Children Act 1989 was considered.

It is a matter of satisfaction that the Lord Chancellor's junior Minister, who is now a Member of this House, has introduced the debate and has some departmental responsibility for the Bill. That marks a considerable step forward, perhaps even to the avoidance of the kind of difficulty in which the House now finds itself. However, it raises other questions.

We are clearly not debating simply a slip of drafting. A whole circumstance has been overlooked. It suggests that the Children Act was drafted in too much of a hurry and was not subjected to the usual kind of—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) will have an opportunity to intervene if he wishes and the Minister may feel it appropriate to answer the point.

Consideration has been given to whether Bills, particularly technical Bills, should, as a matter of course, be considered by Select Committees before they are brought to the House for Second Reading, or after Second Reading, in order for evidence to be taken. Such a procedure might be suitable in a case of this kind to avoid the difficulty that has been experienced here. However, it occurs so rarely that the Minister may have some more mundane explanation.

I am genuinely puzzled: it strikes me as extraordinary that such an obvious requirement was not spotted earlier, given the history of our procedures. We should try to learn from the omission and to devise scrutiny procedures that will prevent the time of the House from being taken up in this way. After all, we do not have a superfluity of time for primary legislation; many matters that others may consider more important are waiting in the queue, and no doubt some of those matters pertain to the Lord Chancellor's Department.

The Department may wish to consider the appropriateness of referring Bills of this kind—Bills that involve consequential changes to existing legislation—to the scrutiny of the Law Commission. It has the capacity—although not, perhaps, the resources—to give further consideration to whether the form of the legislation is appropriate. It is not entirely reasonable to expect us to pick up certain technical matters in Standing Committee; such matters require the technical advice of a body such as the Law Commission.

That prompts me to ask whether the Lord Chancellor's Department is considering a better method of scrutinising what might be described as law reform measures. As was suggested in the other place by Lord Hailsham, this kind of piecemeal approach makes the statute book extremely difficult for the practitioner to manage. We now have two Acts where one would have done, and the second introduces most of its substantial modifications very obscurely by means of schedules. That is a far from ideal way of legislating, but it exemplifies a practice that—alas —is becoming too common.

5.22 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): Hon. Members on both sides of the House have described the Bill as a modest measure. To acquaint myself with it, I consulted the report of the Second Reading debate in the other place. I observed that it took up five columns of *Hansard*. The report was followed by a report of their lordships' debate on court practice—the wearing of wigs and gowns—which took up not five but 25 columns.

Although that may support the claim that it is a modest measure, the Bill raises issues which are far from modest and whose importance is likely to increase, both in this country and throughout Europe. I feel that the reciprocal arrangements may not be adequate, and may need to be complimented in the near future by legislation above national level—possibly Europewide legislation. The demography of our times will make measures such as this far more important. It is not just a British concern; I understand that the courts are also concerned with foreign nationals who may come to Britain—often from other EC countries—and against whom their spouses or ex-spouses in those countries may make orders.

Between 1960 and 1985—no more up-to-date figures are available—the divorce rate quadrupled throughout the EC countries. In the EC countries as a whole, one in 10 families with children is now a one-parent family. Of course, the rate is far higher in this country. One of the reasons why I welcome the Bill—despite the circumstances in which we are debating it—is its importance to family life in Britain and in Europe as a whole. It also deals with what, sadly, will become an increasingly important aspect of family law.

By a sad coincidence, the increase in family breakdowns is occurring at a time of greater labour mobility across Europe. One of the features of the internal market, and of current European policy, is the way in which British people are encouraged to work in other European countries—and, indeed, other Europeans are encouraged to work in Britain. Because of that, there will be more opportunities for men, in particular, to leave their families behind and to escape maintenance obligations.

A more complicated scenario may also arise. Let us suppose that a British family follows the father's work to Brussels or Milan, and the marriage breaks up in that foreign city. The father may go on to another European country, leaving a family who may wish to return to Britain. The issues raised in the Bill are more important than we assume. As the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) pointed out, it is difficult enough to enforce the relevant obligations in this country; how much more difficult will it be when families are scattered across Europe, and questions of jurisdiction arise relating to access, custody and maintenance? Those are substantial issues, and it does not surprise me to learn that the European Commission is beginning to commission studies of them.

A social revolution involving family change is happening in Europe at approximately the same time as the revolution in labour and family mobility. That will make legislation such as this increasingly important. When the Child Support Act comes into force next April, fathers —the absent parent is usually the father—may find that, far from escaping their maintenance obligations as they often do now, they are asked by the new agency to pay £20, £30 or £40 a week, and rightly so. The chance of a job in another part of Europe—or in Australia, New Zealand, or the United States—may then become very attractive financially. The current changes make the Bill more important than the House may assume, and it may need to be complemented by more far-reaching legislation in the future.

The Bill is important for another reason. Throughout the world we are becoming increasingly concerned about children's welfare, and about the child poverty which has already been described. That is not a uniquely British phenomenon, but 70 per cent. of British children in one-parent families depend on income support, and—as has already been said—most do not receive maintenance. The legislation on child support and maintenance that has been introduced in some American states, in New Zealand, in Australia and in other parts of Europe demonstrates increasing awareness about children's welfare. We need to recognise the obligations of the state in regard to social security and employment training; we also need to recognise the duties and responsibilities of parents.

Mr. Steen: On the wages paid to the average person in this country, a man who abandons his children and then remarries often cannot pay for the maintenance of both families. Another problem is that the magistrates courts are not necessarily the right people to pursue husbands who can afford to pay maintenance. The hon. Gentleman has raised some even more complicated issues, and he was right to do so. Answers need to be given.

Mr. Wicks: I agreed with the hon. Gentleman's first point. On any wages which are other than fabulous, it is particularly difficult to support two families at a time of economic recession. The Child Support Act contains a necessarily complicated formula to try to deal with the dual obligations of such parents, which we shall no doubt discuss when the Act is implemented. My judgment, however, and the judgment of the legislation, is that that should not enable him—or, sometimes, her—to escape duties towards the first children.

Some people might adopt a harsher tone and say that if legislation such as this makes it difficult for a father to father a second group of children, it may be right and proper that he should think twice before doing so. We are dealing, however, with very complex matters and my argument is that they will grow more complex and become more of a challenge for the House.

Britain is not alone in facing these issues. Throughout the world, Governments are trying to get to grips with them. At the heart of it, there has to be a new definition of what a parent's rights and responsibilities are. I for one —faced with the appalling evidence of child poverty, which could grow worse, given the family changes that I have mentioned—think that we have to be tough-minded about enforcing parental obligations. Therefore, I welcome this admittedly modest measure.

5.30 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): This measure has been introduced as a small technical measure although, as the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) said, it touches on a wide range of issues which go beyond the merely technical. I listened to his speech with considerable interest and considerable agreement.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department told us that this issue should have been addressed in the Children Act 1989 and that the oversight stems from its omission. I cannot forbear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from remarking that Northern Ireland is at least fortunate in having no equivalent to the Children Act, even though we have been pressing in Northern Ireland for some time for equivalent legislation, but that is a passing complaint.

I noted with particular interest the comments made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) regarding the style of the legislation and the manner of its enactment. I endorse entirely what he said about the drafting style. The modern legislative drafting style is getting worse and worse. In places, the Bill is almost unintelligible. I see no reason why its substantive provisions cannot be placed in the clauses. I do not know why so many of them are buried in schedules, in a way that is particularly difficult to follow.

I noted also the hon. Gentleman's comment that technical measures such as this ought to be considered by a Select Committee, or referred to other bodies. It reminds me of a comment that was made, I believe, by the Foreign Secretary at a fringe meeting of his party's conference the year before last, when he suggested that there was a case for referring a number of measures to Special Standing Committees of this House instead of having the Standing Committee procedure which mirrors the normal Second Reading style of debate. It would be well worth looking into that suggestion.

I rise to speak on the Bill for, I regret to say, entirely parochial reasons. This measure also extends to Northern Ireland. Admittedly, it does so only with regard to the provisions for variation and revocation of maintenance orders, the substance of which I welcome. The fact that this primary legislation will go through its normal stages of Second Reading, Committee stage, Report, and so on and contain within it provisions which apply to Northern Ireland is very welcome. For many years, those of us who sit on this Bench have complained about the iniquitous system of legislating for Northern Ireland by means of Orders in Council which are only perfunctorily debated and cannot be amended.

When we complain, one of the reasons given for needing Orders in Council for Northern Ireland is that that procedure maintains the integrity of the statute book in Northern Ireland—in other words, that the Northern Ireland statutes contain Orders in Council and that there will be no interference with Northern Ireland legislation by United Kingdom legislation. The Bill, however, extends to Northern Ireland and amends Orders in Council. Consequently, it interferes with the so-called integrity of the Northern Ireland statute book.

I do not complain about that—I commend it. It demonstrates what we on this Bench have said time and time again—that there is absolutely no reason why legislation for Northern Ireland cannot be made in the normal way. We welcome in particular that aspect of this measure and hope that it will increasingly be a model for other measures.

5.34 pm

Mr. Boateng: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This has been a short, although important, debate. As it developed, it demonstrated to the wider world one of the advantages that we have in this place—we are able to draw on the experience that hon. Members gain in their constituency surgeries. We are also able to draw on their clearly displayed—I refer to the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks)—knowledge, which is deep and detailed, of a subject that has led to legislation such as this. It has been a good debate.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) called into question, rightly so with respect to the history of this legislation, our having any complacency about the efficacy of our procedures for checking and overseeing the stages of the legislative process, in order to ensure that drafting and content oversights such as this—it goes as deep as that—are not repeated.

One of the odd features about the passage of the Bill is that, even when this matter was brought before the other House to deal with the oversight in the Children Act, it was necessary for their Lordships to consider on Report no fewer than 15 amendments to the Bill as it was after Second Reading in the other place. It is incredible that it was found necessary to amend it 15 times after its Second Reading.

Hon. Members will have read the proceedings on Second Reading and Report in the other place and seen that their Lordships proceeded at a fast pace—at considerably more than a gallop on the part of the Lord Chancellor. Such a speed would have done credit to a participant in the Derby. The way in which their Lordships went through those amendments was incredible.

I make no complaint about that, provided that we can be absolutely sure that their Lordships got it right and that we shall not find next year, or the year after, that again we have to go through that which we seek to achieve on this occasion. I anticipate—for it requires no great foresight—that we shall not spend all that much time on the Committee and Report stages of the Bill.

When the Minister responds to the points made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, I hope that he will state clearly that he and his Department are satisfied that the matter has now been dealt with, that the Bill is in its final state and that we shall not have to come back here, years hence, to deal with it again.

I wholeheartedly endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West. He was absolutely right to set the debate about reciprocal arrangements in a European context. In July this year, a report was published by the Family and Policy Studies Centre entitled "Lone Parents in the European Community", of which my hon. Friend is aware. The evidence is that report makes it clear that lone parenting is likely to become an even more important issue in Europe in the next few decades as a result of rising divorce rates and an increased number of births outside marriage.

The evidence suggests that the southern European countries are following the north. An examination of the figures for lone parents in Europe shows that there is a marked distinction between Greece, Spain and Italy, and the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom heads the list, with 17 per cent. of families with children under 18 headed by a lone parent. The figures for Greece, Spain, Italy and southern Europe fall as low as 5 and 6 per cent. It is clear that the position is changing. The issue will not go away.

It is important that we examine the reciprocal arrangements carefully and that we have the means to do so. I hope that the Minister will give an assurance that the Lord Chancellor's Department will take on board the points made this afternoon in the debate and that this

[Mr. Boateng]

important issue will be addressed effectively in the interests, above all, of the children and the deserted spouses.

5.41 pm

Mr. John M. Taylor: With the leave of the House, I wish to reply to the debate. Perhaps I should deal with the last point first. The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) asked whether the Lord Chancellor's Department would take seriously the comments made in the debate this afternoon. I tell him and the other hon. Members who have taken the trouble to attend the debate that the answer is an emphatic yes. I am here to take careful note of some valuable points that have been made in the debate.

I hope that the House will not consider it discourteous if I say that many of the matters raised in the debate—for perfectly understandable reasons—may fall just outside a strict interpretation of the Bill's narrow purposes, but I shall try to reply as best I can.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) addressed the issue constructively. He commenced his remarks by addressing the matter of default. I say to him with the seriousness that his comments merit that he knows as well as I do—it is a humbling thing to come to terms with—that, sadly, no amount of legislation and rejigging even of the jurisdiction and practices of magistrates can stop marriages breaking down or people behaving thoroughly unpleasantly towards each other and defaulting and welshing on their obligations to members of their families. That is part of the original sin of the subject, and we all know it.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his personal remarks about the job that I have been asked to do and the fact that the Lord Chancellor's Department is for the first time directly represented in the House of Commons. I always thought that it was important for the Lord Chancellor's Department to be represented in this House, but I did not know that I would be given the job.

I accept what the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members have said about scrutiny. The hon. Gentleman's remarks were about the complexity of the statute book and were similar to those made by the Lord Hailsham in another place. As the hon. Gentleman is a distinguished law practitioner, he might follow me if I said that most practitioners in this subject, who are probably specialists, would be more inclined to use "Stone's Justices' Manual" than the statute book.

I join other hon. Members in congratulating the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) on his excellent and thoughtful speech. Clearly, he knows the subject well. As he developed his remarks into wider jurisdictions, he may be interested to know that the present score is that the United Kingdom has reciprocity with 100 jurisdictions. But that position will develop. We will need to examine the position closely and take the new opportunities where they arise.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West may also be reassured, as will the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, that in the other place the Lord Chancellor undertook to examine the possibility of consolidating this law. Meanwhile, I thank the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West for his thoughtful contribution.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) correctly distinguished the position in Northern Ireland. As he rightly pointed out, apart from the provisions on variation and revocation of orders which also apply in Northern Ireland, the amendments in the Bill affect only proceedings in magistrates courts in England and Wales. I noted the pleasure with which the hon. Gentleman welcomed the references to Northern Ireland in the primary legislation. That point was not lost on us.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) is, to his eternal credit, persistently concerned about matrimonial welfare—I do not think that he will mind if I say persistently. I cannot comment on his individual cases. But if he would like to write to me, as he regularly does, I shall gladly examine them. He wondered whether magistrates courts were the right forum. Since 1920 magistrates courts have been dealing with the narrow range of cases that we are discussing today.

The Bill aims not to change policy but to deal with procedural changes—that is a rather negative remark. I shall tell my hon. Friend something more encouraging. The child support agency, which will deal with domestic maintenance claims in the future and seek to improve the enforcement of them, will be set up with effect from 5 April 1993. I am sure that my hon. Friend would prefer the agency to be set up at the end of next week. The agency will have a valuable role. None of us are relaxed in the slightest about the degree of default and the difficulties of enforcement.

The Government's White Paper entitled "A New Framework for Local Justice" says much about improving best practice in magistrates courts and bringing all of them up to somewhere near the best, with an inspectorate to follow through.

Unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) is not in her place. However, I shall answer her intervention about maintenance and the position of those who may have been put in difficulty by the legislative need of repair. Maintenance is payable for the period for which it is claimed. It is therefore payable in respect of the periods both before and after the commencement of the Bill.

I interpret that rather cryptic advice to mean that people will not lose in the circumstances described. I hope that that is true, but I shall certainly research the matter.

I end my speech as I began it, by responding to the hon. Member for Brent, South. At the risk of saying this twice, I tell him that Parliament overlooked the deficiency to which I referred in my opening speech and which I dealt with candidly. I do not seek to step aside in any way from that reality. There was an oversight, but it was committed in good faith, and we have brought the remedy before the House as fast as we could. With the good will of the House, we shall secure that remedy today.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made—[Mr. John M. Taylor]—and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

5.52 pm

Mr. Steen: I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for being so candid with the House and for the generous things that he said he would do as a result of the many contributions that have been made from both sides of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed without amendment.

Registered Homes (Northern Ireland)

5.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): I beg to move,

That the draft Registered Homes (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 19th October, be approved.

My noble Friend Lord Arran, who now has responsibility for health and personal social services in Northern Ireland, will introduce this order in another place, but it is my pleasure to introduce it to the House this evening. It covers a narrow and specific field—that of the regulation of standards of care in registered homes.

It strengthens, updates and replaces the existing Northern Ireland legislation on the registration and inspection of residential care homes and nursing homes in the private and voluntary sectors. Those homes provide accommodation and care for a wide range of people who are unable to continue living independently in their own homes because of old age and infirmity, illness or disabilities.

It may be helpful to the House if I take a few minutes to outline the background to the order and say a few words about those new provisions that will strengthen the powers of registering authorities in Northern Ireland—the four health and social services boards—to register and inspect private and voluntary homes.

In late 1988 and early 1989, the Department of Health and Social Services conducted a review of existing Northern Ireland legislation relating to the registration and inspection of private and voluntary sector homes. The review was prompted at the time by two main factors. The first of these was the very substantial increase in recent years in the number of such homes in Northern Ireland, which led to growing pressure on the boards to ensure that satisfactory standards of care were being maintained. The second main factor was the more up-to-date legislative provisions made in England and Wales through the Registered Homes Act 1984 and its associated subordinate legislation compared with the legislation in Northern Ireland dating from the early 1970s.

As part of that review, the Department issued a comprehensive consultative paper which invited comment from a wide range of interested statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations and individuals. About 100 responses were received. Although the responses revealed differences of opinion and emphasis on individual matters of detail, it was clear that there was widespread support for the view that the existing legislation needed to be strengthened and brought broadly into line with the 1984 Act.

The order includes a number of new provisions that strengthen the boards' ability to ensure that private and voluntary sector homes deliver satisfactory standards of care to their residents or patients. It provides for the registration of both the person or organisation in control of a home and, where different, the manager. It also enables the Department by regulation to require notice to be given during prolonged absence of the registered person or persons.

The order also provides for dual registration of a home as both a residential care home and a nursing home, so that, for example, elderly clients who become ill or more frail and therefore in need of nursing care do not have to

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

move out of what could be called their home. It introduces a procedure for the urgent cancellation of a registration in cases where a justice of the peace is satisfied that the residents are at serious risk. It also gives inspectors authorised by the Department a right of entry at all times to private and voluntary sector residential care and nursing homes.

The order enables the Department of Health and Social Services, for the first time, to prescribe by regulation registration fees and annual fees for residential care homes and annual fees for nursing homes. Current legislation provides only for the charging of registration fees for nursing homes. The introduction of fees will help, as far as is practicable, to make the boards' work of regulating the homes self-financing. The order also establishes a registered homes tribunal to hear appeals from proprietors of private and voluntary homes against decisions of the boards.

The order will, for the most part, bring Northern Ireland into line with the legislation on the regulation of similar homes in England and Wales—the Registered Homes Act 1984, to which I have already referred. It also takes account of the provisions of the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will the Minister explain to the House the basic difference between the regulation before the House and those in the rest of the United Kingdom? Will he inform the House what all the talk concerning appointing a key worker for each individual in the homes is about? How much will it cost, and will the homes have to pay for it?

Mr. Hanley: I shall take advice on the matter and reply to the hon. Gentleman during the evening.

The equivalent provisions in the order are intended to provide the minimum controls necessary to prevent unsuitable people from operating small residential care homes for fewer than four people. Under existing legislation in Northern Ireland, such small homes have always had to be registered.

The provisions are designed to safeguard vulnerable people from any unscrupulous owners of small homes, without subjecting families who are participating in such worthwhile schemes as the stay-a-while scheme for elderly people and adult placement schemes for mentally handicapped people to the full rigours of registration applied to the owners of larger homes.

The order re-enacts the existing powers of the Department to make regulations in relation to the conduct of homes. Although the primary legislation provides, therefore, the legislative framework for the monitoring of standards of care and accommodation in private and voluntary sector residential care homes and nursing homes, it will nevertheless, like the 1984 Act, need to be underpinned by detailed regulations to be made by the Department on matters such as the records to be kept in homes, the registers, consultation with fire authorities, the provision of services and facilities, religious observance, the notification of death, serious accident or illness of residents or patients, complaints procedures and the frequency of inspections.

The order also provides a convenient vehicle for an amendment to the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 which is required to ensure that the Department and health and social services boards have unequivocal powers to contract for the provision of health and personal social services with private and voluntary sector providers.

This amendment is contained in paragraph 2(1) and (2) of schedule 1 to the order. Although this amendment can only be related loosely to the other provisions of the order, it is required as a matter of urgency following legal advice that the existing contractual powers in the 1972 order are open to challenge.

The proposal for a draft order was published for comment on 30 January 1992. There were only 13 replies. All welcomed the general content of the draft order, but there were some comments and suggestions about individual provisions.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): My point is not directly relevant to the order, but this debate is an opportunity to make a point about a nursing home in my constituency which does a tremendous job in serving many people. It is 300 yards from the main road, and for years the Department of the Environment has refused to salt the road from the main road to the entrance to the nursing home. Throughout the year, doctors have to call, ambulances have to call and nurses have to travel to the home at all times of the day and night, yet the Department has made this stupid decision. Will the Minister take that point on board in relation to all nursing homes and not only in relation to the one I have talked about?

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): What is salt for the goose is salt for the gander.

Mr. Mallon: What is salt for the goose is salt for all ganders. The point is worth considering and this is an opportunity to enlist the Minister's help in dealing with it.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question. I assure him that, if he writes to me, I shall ensure that the matter is dealt with by my Lord Arran in its health and social services aspects and by the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), in its Department of the Environment aspects. If the hon. Gentleman writes to me, I shall ensure that answers are given to his questions.

I was saying that when the draft order was published for comment earlier this year, only 13 replies were received, which were generally supportive. I am most grateful to those who examined the proposals scrupulously in the interests of some of our most vulnerable citizens. I am grateful for those representations, because a few minor amendments were required as a result of the consultations. That has helped to improve the order.

It may seem surprising that the proposed legislation——

Mr. Taylor: It is interesting that the Minister agreed to make some amendments to the order as a result of representations from 13 parties. Is he prepared to make any changes to the order as a result of representations from elected Members this evening?

Mr. Hanley: Of the 13 representations we received on the order, not one came from a Member of this House.

Mr. Taylor: I must push the Minister to answer the people of Northern Ireland honestly because he has avoided answering the question. Will the Minister agree to any amendments to the order expressed by any elected Member this evening, whether on the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Democratic Unionist or Ulster Unionist Benches?

Mr. Hanley: I have given the right hon. Gentleman my answer. Representations have been made. The time scale for representations has now ended and the order is before the House tonight. The right hon. Gentleman knows the procedure of legislation, so he knows exactly what will happen tonight. If he wishes to press for a Division on an order that has been amended thanks to representations, I need say no more.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I do not want the Minister to be led into putting incorrect information on the record. I know that he has a problem because he is speaking today on behalf of a Minister in another place. I for one have made representations to the Department on many issues in the order.

Mr. Hanley: With respect, that is a different matter. The hon. Gentleman has a long record of being most constructive in his advice. His brother, the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), also has a long record of giving advice to the Department on these matters —I readily admit that. However, of the 13 representations that related solely to the order, not one came from an elected Member. If my information is wrong, I shall willingly apologise to the hon. Gentleman in writing.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I am not attempting to catch the Minister on the hop because I know that the matter is not his direct responsibility, although he answers in this House for it. My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), as I understand it, and I wrote to the Department on the issue and asked for the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association to be permitted to have a meeting with the Minister in another place. All three of us wrote asking for such a meeting, but to this day Lord Arran has refused to give us a meeting.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comment. As he readily admitted, I am not aware of that set of circumstances. I can only inquire. Naturally, I apologise to the House. I do not have responsibility for health and personal social services in Northern Ireland, although I answer for those matters here. I shall use any provisions available to me to answer questions during the evening. I certainly need to seek advice from those who deal with these matters on a day-to-day basis.

Rev. Ian Paisley: When the Minister makes inquiries, will he ask Lord Arran to hand over to him the large file which I presented to him? Will Lord Arran hand over to the Minister the correspondence about that file? Will he hand over his reply to the Minister so that the Minister can study it and see how the people concerned have been treated?

I am sure that the Minister agrees that the order is intended to help all people who want to help the elderly and to run homes up to standard. I do not want to hear any Minister saying that we are pleading for special cases or that we are pleading that there should not be the right standards. That is not our business here tonight. We want the highest possible standards, but we also want the people who have been engaged in the matter to be consulted and helped.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's comments and I should like to answer a question that he raised earlier. He wanted to know the main difference between the order and the Registered Homes Act 1984. The order attempts to put the registration and inspection of residential care homes and nursing homes on as much the same basis as possible. Unlike the 1984 Act, the order requires the manager of both types of home to be registered together with the persons who own or control the home.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) wanted to know whether home owners would have to pay for the key workers required to be appointed by the board. Key workers will be appointed by boards under the new community care reforms from next April. They will be board employees who will have to keep under review the care needs of all vulnerable people, including those placed in homes. The hon. Member for Antrim, North was interested in the costs. The cost of case management and key worker provision will not be borne by proprietors of homes. I hope that that reassures the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North also wanted to know why my noble Friend Lord Arran did not receive a delegation from the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association. The association's representations were not about the registered homes proposal. They were about allegations of how boards were treating home proprietors at the moment. That is different from the subject that we are concentrating on tonight. I shall willingly look into the statements made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North and let him know about the other matter in due course.

Rev. Ian Paisley: There were representations on that very subject from 160 home owners controlling 3,600 beds. They were aware of the draft order but wanted their current problems to be addressed. Those homes have already been registered and the owners control 3,600 beds, but they cannot get to the Minister to make representations. That is the issue.

Mr. Hanley: Knowing how willing my noble Friend Lord Arran is to meet people throughout the Province, I am very surprised at the hon. Gentleman's statement. I shall readily take up the hon. Gentleman's point with my noble Friend and I am sure that we can arrange a meeting in due course. The representations that we received were not about the registered homes proposal, so they were not specific to the legislation that we are considering tonight.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does the Minister accept that the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association is operating in the field covered by the order? It recognised deficiencies in the existing regime. It had some knowledge of the changes that were to be made and it wanted to make representations that would have affected the order. The association would like to address the Minister on many issues now and it would still like to meet the Minister. Many issues will be more dependent on the regulations that will ultimately appear as a result of the order. May we have an undertaking that the Minister will meet the association, which represents 60 per cent. of the beds in their care in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hanley: I shall certainly pass the comments of the hon. Members for Antrim, North and for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) to my noble Friend Lord Arran and suggest that he does what the hon. Member for Belfast, East asked. As I said, I am surprised that that meeting has not taken place. However, we must remember that the health boards also deserve a meeting with the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association. I hope that they will continue to talk to that association, because that is obviously the way to resolve grievances.

The order will make a significant contribution towards safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable people living in private and voluntary sector homes in Northern Ireland. I believe that the order should be welcomed and I commend it to the House.

6.14 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The order brings registered care homes in Northern Ireland into line with the legislation which applies throughout Great Britain. The Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Act 1992, which began its passage in the other place and which was considered in Standing Committee in this place in June, laid down future plans for community care throughout the United Kingdom. The Government intend the community care reforms to be implemented in full on the same day throughout the United Kingdom next April.

As the Minister said, private care homes have mushroomed throughout Northern Ireland as they have elsewhere in the United Kingdom. As the number of homes has increased, so have the problems. I want to refer to some of those problems and difficulties later.

As I have said, Standing Committee E considered the Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill in June and significant and important issues arose from those deliberations which apply to Northern Ireland through the order. They are important and significant because accountability in Northern Ireland in respect of registered homes is almost non-existent.

The need for more accountability is clear from the questions that were put to the Minister. There were references to requests for meetings and observations. The Minister applied the rules and regulations about the consultation period having passed. Therefore, it is a matter of this order or nothing. The Minister made it clear that our only alternative in the House tonight is to vote against the order if we do not accept its terms and conditions.

Paragraph 6 of the order states that the health boards must keep a register and specifies that it is the health boards' responsibility to maintain that register and keep it up to date. The local authorities in England and Wales are the registration authority for sheltered schemes.

Paragraph 29 refers to inspections. It is the health boards' duty to ensure that inspections are carried out and that standards are maintained and, where necessary, improved. In addition to registering and inspecting residential care homes, health boards are also responsible for ensuring that people who do not require medical treatment in hospitals are discharged into nursing homes or residential care homes or into their own homes.

The Minister said that the order also provides that people who can no longer maintain themselves in their own homes would be covered when they move into a registered home, whether in the voluntary sector or otherwise. Therefore, health boards have considerable interest in the order. It is laid down in the order that health boards can also purchase residential care facilities on behalf of people whom they discharge from hospital.

Health boards have authority to close hospital beds, including geriatric beds, and to discharge patients into the community, some to be cared for by relatives or friends and others to be cared for in private or voluntary residential or nursing homes. The Minister explained that that is part of the function of health boards. It is accepted also by the Minister that health boards purchase care from residential and nursing homes and that they also accept residential and nursing homes for registration. Therefore, to a large extent health boards set the standards which apply in private and voluntary residential and nursing homes. Health boards are responsible for inspecting homes. The Minister pointed out that one of the responsibilities of health boards is to appoint inspectors to monitor conditions in registered homes and the way in which they operate.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I fully agree with what the hon. Gentleman is saying—the health board will be the boss —but what will happen when a health board objects to a care home employing a certain person? We have very strict employment regulations in Northern Ireland, but if a health board says, "You cannot employ that person," and refuses to tell the owner or manager the reasons for that, the manager will be liable if the applicant takes out a case against him under the fair employment legislation.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the board should take responsibility for refusing to allow the manager to employ a certain applicant? It should not be the responsibility of the home manager to face up to the fair employment legislation; it should be the responsibility of the board which refuses to allow him to employ that person.

Mr. O'Brien: The hon. Gentleman raises a matter to which I intend to refer, because employment in such homes is significant and important. I hope to reveal that health boards are accountable only to the Minister and will direct operations in registered homes. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the issue.

The Minister mentioned inspections to be carried out by people who are appointed by health boards. Health boards will monitor the quality of services. That is part of their function. They will consider the state of a building and ask, "Is it clean, attractive and well heated?" Families will consider those issues when an elderly parent or a disabled relative seeks residential care. They will ask, "Is the building in a good state of repair? Is it decorated? Is it heated well? Are the rooms single or do people have to double up? Are private toilet facilities available in the bedrooms?" Many issues must be considered.

People will ask, "Are the staff qualified? Are the employment regulations written down and made clear?" I have personal experience of this. Unqualified staff are employed in some homes because lower rates of pay apply to them. There are problems because of the shortage of qualified staff, particularly at night when there is a greater need for the surveillance and care of elderly and chronically sick people.

Health boards are responsible for every aspect of registered homes. They create the need for private homes because they are closing hospital beds, particularly geriatric beds, and they then purchase care from those homes. They are responsible for the registration and inspection of homes and for the standards of service in them. To a large extent, health boards are responsible for the charges that are set. Therefore, if a home closes because of substandard service or lack of staff, the health board could be responsible for taking care of the people who are discharged.

It is accepted by the Minister that, because of the circumstances in a registered home, a health board might have to take steps to close it down. If it does that, those who are discharged could become the responsibility of the health board. Therefore, health boards will ensure that homes remain open, regardless of the standard of service or the standard of the home. The reason for that is accountability.

In Northern Ireland there is no independent watchdog similar to the health councils in Great Britain, and no local authority committees exercise a watchdog role to supervise the provision of services and the condition of a home and to consider whether residents are happy there, whether they are receiving proper care and attention, and so on. Such accountability does not exist in the draft statutory instrument.

Mr. John D. Taylor: I welcome what the hon. Gentleman is saying. There is absolutely no accountability in Northern Ireland in respect of the control and administration of our nursing homes and residential homes. The health boards are, of course, quangos. The personnel are appointed by the Minister and are answerable to him only. In no way are they answerable to the people of Northern Ireland. We have no say whatever in the health boards or in the way in which they carry out their affairs. I was glad to hear the spokesman for the official Opposition pinpoint that deficiency in public life in Northern Ireland. Should there ever be a Labour Government, will he be prepared to restore to the people of Northern Ireland participation in health boards?

Mr. O'Brien: If the right hon. Gentleman reads the policies on which the Labour party campaigned earlier this year and at other elections, he will see that we believe that there should be accountability and that that accountability should be to the people who are employed in the service and to those who rely on the service. I refer to trade unions and to people who use the services. Accountability is very important if standards are to be maintained and if people are to have the care and protection that the homes should provide. When one authority is the agent for creating the homes, the agent for registering the homes, the agent for maintaining standards, the agent in many instances for setting the fees, and the agent for keeping the homes open, that is a serious problem which the Minister should address.

Mr. Hanley: It would be wrong if we did not recognise that each health and social services board, as part of its "People First" community care changes, has established the registration and inspection unit at arm's-length. I must stress that the unit is at arm's length. Therefore, it is totally separated from the management of the board's own homes as well as from the board's contracting departments. There is a Chinese wall, as it were, between the arm's length inspection unit and any of the other departments in the health boards, just as we find in a local council in England. It would be wrong for anyone to give the impression that the inspection unit will be somehow tainted because of the board's other interests.

There has been talk of there being no accountability. Health and social services councils are doing excellent work in the Province. No doubt they will take a deep interest, as they have traditionally over the years, in the activities of all sorts of homes—board homes, voluntary homes and private homes. Therefore, the refusal of some people to recognise that health and social services councils exist and play a valuable role is less than fair.

Mr. O'Brien: I am grateful to the Minister for that intervention. Obviously questions arise from it. Who nominates the people in the arm's length organisation? Who nominates the people who sit on the care councils to which the Minister referred? How many are elected and how many are nominated? Will the Minister give some indication as to how the bodies are set up and to whom they are responsible?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman puts a question which I believe I can answer because for the past six months I have been trying to find a way of devolving those responsibilities to the elected representatives within Northern Ireland. We are trying to devolve those responsibilities by agreement with all the parties in Northern Ireland. Until that time, we shall administer fairly the government of Northern Ireland.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister is now admitting that for six months he has been trying to get representation on these boards——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. John D. Taylor: I am sure that the spokesman for Her Majesty's Opposition, who is developing the theme in a way which will appeal to us in Northern Ireland, will agree with me that not only are the health boards appointed by the Minister but that it is dishonest of the Minister to try to give the impression that the health and social services councils are distinct, independent and separate from his administration. Does the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) agree that it is the Minister who appoints also all the members of the health and social services councils and that they are also quangos whose members are yes-men and not answerable to the people of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hanley *rose*——

Mr. O'Brien: I will allow the Minister to answer that point in a moment. First, I want to put another question to him. Is it a fact that over the past few months some members of health boards and of the various councils have been removed because of their views on some issues? Perhaps the Minister will address that point in addition to the point made by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor).

Mr. Hanley: The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) said that all the members of the health and social services councils are yes-men. That is deeply insulting to the dedicated people, many of them district councillors, who work on the health and social services councils. It is extremely unfair to speak in that way of those who carry out that task.

[Mr. Hanley]

In regard to inspection units, I am intervening to answer points now rather than leave them to the end when some hon. Members may have departed. Standards are governed by subordinate legislation and by guidelines prepared by responsible professional bodies. I am talking about guidelines such as "Home Life" and "Homes are for Living In", which have been published. In addition, the work of the arm's-length inspection units will be monitored. Indeed, they are being monitored by the Department's social services inspectorate and also by the nursing advisory group which I met not long ago. Also, each board has had to establish an advisory committee to provide a link between the units and the public interest.

It would be wrong to try to give the impression that somehow the inspection units are tainted. They are doing and will do valuable work. I should not like confidence in their work to be tainted by any deficiencies which may be commented on in the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Interventions have been very long. I have allowed them to go on because I thought that it was helpful to the debate. However, I ask hon. Members to bear in mind that interventions are not supposed to be as long as those that we have heard.

Mr. John D. Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you confirm that we have a further five hours available for debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is correct.

Mr. O'Brien: The significance of that must be that hon. Members have a great deal to contribute to the debate and that much will be said on the points made by the Minister, particularly about the arm's-length inspectorate. I assure the Minister that no hon. Member would seek to taint the work of the people who are employed by the inspectorate. We are concerned about their terms of reference and the fact that they are responsible to the Department or to the health boards. Obviously they have to work within the terms of reference set by the Department or by the health boards.

It is against that backcloth that I make the point that there should be more accountability and some local input into how the homes are supervised, maintained and inspected. However much the Minister intervenes and tries to explain how the quangos work, every road goes back to the Department or to the health boards. I should like to see that changed and more democracy and accountability introduced. I sense from the issues raised as a result of the Minister's interventions that hon. Members representing Northern Ireland want some accountability for the way in which the order is applied.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will the hon. Gentleman take it from me, as an elected representative from Northern Ireland, that I am alarmed at what has happened to a delegation I met? If they raise matters with the board, they and their homes are harassed. One man, who was on the executive of the body, always had a clean bill of health. Immediately he took part in making representations to his Member of Parliament, the board came down on him. Inspectors were sent in and he was told that he was doing everything wrong. One person told me that he was taking no further part because it would place his home and his livelihood in jeopardy, which demonstrates the massive power of the board. That power must be limited.

Mr. O'Brien: If trade unions representing people employed in homes and services provided by the health boards were allowed to give evidence and to make representations without the fears outlined by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), we would have a different picture of the case that the Minister has presented for supporting the order.

The Minister should widen the representations. There should be consultation and meetings. We were told that only 13 representations were made during the consultation period. This legislation is important and it will apply to all private and voluntary registered nursing homes in Northern Ireland. Yet when people were asked to make representations there was a lack of response. One reason is that people were afraid of the repercussions, because of their employment or their involvement with the various boards.

Mr. Hanley: I hesitate to intervene again, but I must make it clear that the new legislation will make it easier for home owners to appeal against decisions taken by boards' registration and inspection units, because it will set up a registered homes appeals tribunal, which will benefit from a panel of professional experts who will doubtless build up a body of useful case law. We are establishing a system which will be fairer to home owners.

Lastly—with your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the hon. Gentleman mentioned 13 representations. There were 13 on the draft order, but there were more than 100 replies to the broad consultations carried out before the order was drafted. There have been wider consultations and responses.

Mr. O'Brien: What will be the make-up of the appeals tribunals? How will the panel be chosen and what will be the deciding factors? Will the Department or the health boards decide on the arrangements for setting up tribunals? Further accountability is necessary in all the matters that we have mentioned.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that once an order is published in draft form, there is widespread recognition throughout Northern Ireland that any consultation is a farce and that no further meaningful changes will be made to it? That is why such a small number made further contributions.

Mr. O'Brien: I must bow to the experience and knowledge of local people, because they are nearer to the situation than I. There has been a lack of interest and of co-operation because the people of Northern Ireland fear that when an order is drafted and the purpose of the order is implemented, everything changes. The Minister has outlined certain principles, but it appears that there is a lack of spirit and principle in the Province. I shall allow the Minister to intervene to say that that is not correct. If it is, the Minister ought to join us to demand increased accountability.

The people of Northern Ireland are entitled to better facilities and services. The health boards are accountable to the Minister or to the Department of Health and Social Services, and if changes are to be made or there are any criticisms of the health boards, the Minister should be answerable.

Relatives and friends of people in the homes and the residents have little or no say or influence in services or in the way in which homes are run. In many cases, organisations have been set up within homes to try to improve services and to maintain facilities.

I should like to think that the greater involvement of relatives, friends and residents would result from the legislation. If the Minister believes that that is one way in which services should be provided, perhaps he will assure us that such a facility will be made available.

Hon. Members present in the Chamber who are worried by the lack of support and accountability want the Minister to say that he will take back the statutory instrument and write greater accountability into it.

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): As I have expressed hostility to the Eastern health and social services board in my area on many occasions, and although there has been a friction between me and the Earl of Arran—the Minister responsible for health in another place—I may speak with an independent voice. I would not ask the Minister to take the order back. He said that the elderly are among the most vulnerable in our community and I agree. Their welfare is paramount. If the statutory instrument in any way protects them from unscrupulous owners of residential care homes, I welcome it. It is an improvement on existing legislation. I have made many representations to the Department of Health and Social Services and to the board about homes. I am concerned about the standards imposed in some homes. The order is not perfect, but let us pass it, operate it and then try to get something more perfect still.

Mr. O'Brien: I have no reason to doubt the hon. Member's sincerity about maintaining care accommodation for the elderly and the mentally and physically disabled. If he thinks that the order will improve facilities, I hope that my contribution has pointed out the dangers inherent in the instrument—dangers which could result in a deterioration in facilities and services. Because we have the interests of the most vulnerable people at heart, I ask the Minister to look at the order in detail.

If the hon. Member for North Down (Sir James Kilfedder) has read the order, he will see that paragraph 29 gives almighty power to the health boards. I fear that tomorrow, together with other public expenditure bodies in Northern Ireland, the health boards will find that they have to trim their expenditure. If so, the order will do nothing to improve the services—and hence the lot—of the elderly, sick and disabled in Northern Ireland. If the hon. Gentleman believes otherwise, he is misled, but that is up to him.

Mr. Peter Robinson: I fully concur with the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I should make it abundantly clear that a corpus of law relating to the registration, carrying on and inspection of homes in Northern Ireland is already on the statute book. If we are to make changes, it is far better to get it right and to ensure that orders which we pass in the House have real meaning and effect and do not exacerbate the problems.

Mr. O'Brien: As the Minister said, the order will amend certain laws which now apply to inspections of and applications for homes and how homes are run. It brings Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the United Kingdom and the legislation passed in the House of Lords, which has gone through the Committee stage of this House. We are now providing facilities for community care in Northern Ireland in line with those in the rest of the United Kingdom. However, the difference between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom is that local authorities have an input into community care in the rest of the United Kingdom which they do not have in Northern Ireland. Against that background, I stress that there are dangers in what we are discussing tonight.

A group called Disability Action, which is an alliance of all the groups in Northern Ireland interested in promoting the rights of disabled people, whom the order covers, has published a commentary on a report drawn up by the policy, planning and research unit—an in-house Government research body set up by various Departments in 1988. Its first report on the prevalence of disability among adults in Northern Ireland says:

"The evidence now being published from this Study"—

a study carried out by a body set up by the Government—

"commissioned by Government, is a landmark in the development of policies which will address the real issues faced by disabled people in Northern Ireland . . . The essential message is that the rate of disability among the adult population is 20 per cent. higher than in Britain, between one fifth and one sixth of adults are disabled and that by virtue of living in Northern Ireland a person has a 56 per cent. greater chance of being disabled than someone living in Britain. It argues that these facts put disability at the heart of social and economic policy debate in Northern Ireland. Disability is in a real sense, an essential measure of the state of Northern Irish Society and should be treated as such."

I do not know whether Disability Action was on the list of those who contributed to the consultation procedure. If not, the document should be given careful consideration. It says:

"There is a very close link between disability and ageing; the older someone is, the more likely they are to be disabled."

Therefore, the crux of what we are discussing today is covered by that document, published by a voluntary body which cares for disabled people in Northern Ireland. The fact that it cares for the disabled means that it also cares for the elderly.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in view of the high incidence of disability in Northern Ireland, any Government proposal to tax disability living allowance would have disastrous effects in Northern Ireland?

Mr. O'Brien: We must accept the hon. Gentleman's point. The observations that I have made are not mine but those of people from Northern Ireland who have their finger on the pulse when it comes to disabled and old people. The order will cater for the disabled and elderly, so if we do not get it right, those vulnerable people will suffer most. It is accepted that people in Northern Ireland need such an order more than those in the United Kingdom. It is therefore important that the debate should highlight those issues and that the Minister should note that the order needs to be looked at further.

The report goes on to say:

"there are proportionately more disabled people in Northern Ireland than in Britain and this holds true for every age group and every severity category."

Although we speak of homes for the elderly and disabled, people in every age group should be considered in this debate. The report says:

[Mr. O'Brien]

> "The only conclusion which can be reached from this evidence is that a substantially higher proportion of adults under pensionable age are disabled than might be expected if experience in Britain is taken as the norm."

It is accepted in Northern Ireland that that is a fact, so the order should deal with that. The document also says:

> "There is growing concern that while there is legislation to divert money from Social Security to the Health Boards to help pay for services for people who might otherwise end up in an institution, no decisions have been made yet on how much money will be available or how it will be calculated. This is despite the fact that the new system should be in place by next April, only 10 months away"—

it was only 10 months away when this document was published—

> "With this level of uncertainty over money, planning becomes a virtual impossibility."

Not only are elected Members saying that the matter should be watched carefully, but organisations which cater for the most vulnerable in Northern Ireland are saying that we need more information about how and where resources will be applied once a decision has been taken. I hope that I am wrong to predict that, tomorrow, that document will be intensified by the Chancellor's autumn statement. Because of what I have outlined in my contribution and the lack of accountability, we intend to oppose the order today.

6.59 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I shall not attempt to take advantage of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who has a semi-detached relationship with the Department for which he speaks and for which he is answering today. However, having listened to the apologia that he was asked to present to the House, I found it refreshing to listen to the studied consideration of the order presented by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). He made a most helpful contribution, and I shall attempt to avoid simply endorsing and duplicating the issues that he raised. Instead, I shall try to deal with some of the other matters dealt with in the order.

It is fortuitous that the forces that came into play in unforeseen circumstances earlier today have allowed the order to be given considerable attention when it might otherwise have received only scant consideration of about 90 minutes after 10 pm. I am not sure whether the Minister is as pleased about that prospect as hon. Members from Northern Ireland. I think that he is finding it difficult to keep up the show of delight on his face. However, circumstances have given us an opportunity to debate the order in greater detail.

The Department received 13 communications during the consultation process. The association to which a number of colleagues and I have referred, and which represents 60 per cent. of the care beds in Northern Ireland, did not exist in its present form when the letters seeking consultations were sent out. One of the 13 communications that the Minister received was from someone who is now that association's executive officer. Although 13 replies may not seem very many, they represent the substantial majority of carers in private sector nursing homes in Northern Ireland. The Minister will appreciate that there is a need to allow small, private and voluntary homes in Northern Ireland to have the same opportunities as both statutory homes and the one or two major private nursing homes.

The most unusual and perhaps most dangerous part of the order is contained in schedule 1, which seeks to introduce a new article—article 14A—into the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. That appears to be a radical departure from normal Government procedures and practices.

Section 14A(2) allows the Department to

> "assist any body or person carrying out any arrangements under paragraph (1)",

which states:

> "The Department may make arrangements for the provision by any other body or person of any of the health services on such terms and conditions as may be agreed between the Department and that other body or person."

It is not clear from the drafting—perhaps the Minister will clarify this when he replies—whether that provision will operate on a commercial, voluntary, gift or preferential basis. I do not know, and cannot determine from the legislation, whether open tendering is to be the order of the day. I believe that many in Northern Ireland will suspect that the Department may have made arrangements with large care providers, of which there are two in Northern Ireland, to give them some form of preferential treatment. Alternatively, the Department may have already entered into arrangements with those major carers in Northern Ireland to give them some care provision.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does not the order give power to the board to hand over properties to its chosen people? In fact, does it not give the board power to hand over the properties without asking for payment?

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend is correct. I think that it is article 14 of the order that allows the Department to give away its own premises. It does not state the basis on which that might occur. It also allows the Department to make available to anybody the vehicles, equipment and materials as well as the services of any of the staff employed at the premises.

The order needs further clarification by the Minister, and I am delighted that he will have an opportunity to do so. However, it is suspected that the order will allow unfair commercial advantage to anyone who receives favourable treatment from a Government Department. Such treatment may well be in contravention of the European economic treaty and may show that, within the context of Northern Ireland, the Government are prepared to give preferential treatment to national or local organisations. When he responds, will the Minister assure us that the Department will make commercial open tendering an important aspect of care provision in Northern Ireland?

Article 15 of the order follows on from the main provisions contained in article 14. It appears that the Government may even dispense with public property—certainly its use—for nothing, a negligible amount or whatever charge they think fit without reference to the considerations of either the public or the Exchequer. How much accountability will there be within that process? What overall controls will be applied on the execution of the order?

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): The hon. Gentleman raised an issue that I want to refer to later. Is not article 15 of the order a sneaky way of overcoming the legal difficulties in which the Government found themselves in relation to social services? If article 15 is read in conjunction with the 1972 order, the Government will be able to create social service trusts. The order, which refers to registered homes, appears to be a misnomer as it relates to the setting up of trusts, despite the fact that Lord Arran promised separate legislation to set up trusts.

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point and I shall listen to his contribution with great interest if he is called to speak later. The matter is of particular concern to those in Northern Ireland, which does not have the degree of control and accountability that exists elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The new article 50 increases the inspection powers of the Department's inspection unit. May I make it abundantly clear that no hon. Member is suggesting that the standard of inspection or care should be reduced, or that the degree of accountability in the system should be removed. Everyone wants the highest standards in Northern Ireland, and I shall later outline the distinctions and comparisons between the inspection levels in Northern Ireland and those elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Nobody is suggesting that we should stop inspections or make it easier for unscrupulous people to get away with an unsatisfactory standard of care.

The Department has set up an inspection system, and proposed another one. The association to which I referred has a natural desire to ensure that it admits only those who provide the best care and attention. Article 50 increases inspection powers and 50(2)(a) states that an inspector may

"make such examination into the state and management of the premises and the services provided therein as he thinks fit;".

Inspections should be limited to matters that are relevant to the health and welfare of patients. The legislation should not be drafted in wide terms that will allow the examination of accounts, business practices and confidential information. That may well be an invasion of privacy even under the Data Protection Act 1988.

Article 50(2)(b) gives the power to

"inspect any records (in whatever form they are held) relating to the premises, or any person for whom services have been or are to be provided there;".

That is also an unwarranted invasion of the privacy of residents in those homes. Medical and personal records are private and should not be made available to any person who is not medically competent or qualified or properly authorised to inspect them.

Sir James Kilfedder: I have many residential care homes in my constituency, but I have not received any of the criticisms mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. From whom did he get those criticisms, and has he expressed them to the Secretary of State for Health?

Mr. Robinson: If we were to have a competition——

Sir James Kilfedder: The hon. Gentleman has spoken about dangers in the order. I heard at the weekend from a friend who owns a residential care home, but I have not heard from anyone else or from the association to which the hon. Gentleman refers. Has the hon. Gentleman made representations to the Secretary of State for Health? When did he receive representations from the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association?

Mr. Robinson: I would be delighted to respond to all those questions. If there were a competition to see which Northern Ireland constituency has the most nursing and residential home beds, my constituency by far would take the prize. Over many months I have spoken to the owners of those homes who are greatly concerned about how the Department is currently operating.

As I said earlier, the association to which I refer was not formed when the Department called for various issues to be clarified and for presentations. Representatives of the association came to the House today and it is only within the past few hours that a number of hon. Members were alerted to the concerns. I assure the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) that if many of us had had the details that we now have we would have been pounding on the door of the elusive and noble Lord who has refused thus far to meet representatives of that association.

Article 50(2)(c) states that an inspector may

"require the owner of, or any person employed in, the premises to furnish him with such information as he may request."

That is another wide provision. The Minister should say that it must be construed that the information can only be that which is "reasonably required" that is covered by such a provision.

Article 16 defines a nursing home. Why are children's homes, which are covered by the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, not to be included? It is improper and unfair to exclude either voluntary homes or homes covered by that Act. Children and young people have every right to live in premises that are every bit as comfortable and well maintained as a private sector home. The best way to do that is to keep those children and young people within the same inspection and regulation system that governs the private sector.

Article 16(2)(b) states that exemption from the legislation will apply to

"any premises managed or provided by a government department, a Board, an HSS trust, or by any other body constituted by a statutory provision or incorporated by Royal Charter".

There is no logical reason for that: they should be treated in exactly the same way as private sector premises.

Under the order, any property owned by the board does not have to be inspected or registered. That will lead to a rapid deterioration in all the services therein. Refusing to grant the children and young people of Northern Ireland the benefits and protection of an independent inspectorate and placing them in a regime where they will not be adequately and properly inspected means that they will not be adequately protected. The order should be changed to take account of that.

Article 25 covers representations to the tribunals about which the Minister spoke in such glowing terms. I think that article 14 covers the tribunals. The wording may give a false impression and perhaps the Minister can allay any fears. Owners of homes are worried that they will have to make oral or written representation in person. Will they have the right to be represented legally or in some other way at the tribunals?

Article 25 allows the board to give a home owner the opportunity to state his case. The Minister will appreciate that many owners will think that they are not the best people to present a case. They should have every opportunity within the law to be represented by solicitors or barristers. As the regulations are not available to us, we cannot determine the basis upon which the tribunal may sit and the procedures that it may adopt.

I said earlier that I would comment upon the comparison between inspections in Northern Ireland and those elsewhere in the United Kingdom. There seems to be

[Mr. Robinson]

a feeling that in some way inspections in Northern Ireland are of a lower standard than those that pertain elsewhere. That is not true. I shall provide some figures for the House which will help our consideration and allay any worries, and, when the Minister is persuaded, as I have no doubt he will be, not to press the order but to take it away there will be adequate inspection in Northern Ireland.

I understand that the inspectorate in Northern Ireland is three or four times the size of the inspectorate in Great Britain. One inspector in Great Britain with whom the association has had discussions looks after about 63 homes and works part-time for two days a week. The Southern board has about 84 homes, four inspectors, a unit manager and a secretariat. As one might imagine, homes in Northern Ireland are closer together and much easier to reach. I do not know exactly how many homes are in the Eastern board area—there are probably about 200—and that board has about 12 inspectors. Therefore, Northern Ireland has a much higher inspection rate than elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Perhaps the Minister will confirm that much of the legislation is directed at making the provision self-financing and that, consequently, the cost of the inspectorate will be passed to the home owners. If that is the case, there will be a substantial difference between the cost applied in Great Britain and that applied in Northern Ireland. Because it will be significantly greater in Northern Ireland, it could make a difference when it comes to the viability of homes, and therefore make the situation even worse.

I am grateful for the patience of the Minister and the House, and I trust that the Minister will be able to respond to those points. I hope that the many other matters that will relate directly to the regulations that will flow from this legislation will be matters that the Minister and the Department will be prepared to go into in great detail with the association representing the majority of the homes in Northern Ireland so that they can deal with any misunderstandings and take into consideration any changes that the association might wish to be made.

7.20 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): The matter before the House is the care of the elderly in Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) hit the nail on the head when he said that there was little that was more important than that. We have many facilities for caring for the elderly in Northern Ireland, including private homes, the residential nursing homes that are the subject of the order, homes provided by public authorities such as the Eastern health and social services board and private homes such as the Sandown homes, which provide an excellent service across the Province.

We also have homes provided by the Churches—I am thinking here of the excellent residential unit, appropriately named Taylor court, run by the Baptist church in Belvoir in my constituency. Other homes are organised by local authorities—for example, Mount Alexander at Comber, Loch Cuan house in Newtonards and Northfield house in Donaghadee. Housing associations also provide excellent facilities for the elderly.

Whether it is through the public service, the Churches, the voluntary organisations, private enterprise or local authorities, Northern Ireland provides well for the elderly. However, there is a growing problem, because, as with the rest of the United Kingdom, the demographic trend means that there will be a greater need, year by year, to provide for the ever-increasing section of our community that can be described as "elderly".

Normally, debates on Orders in Council last for 90 minutes. The Minister is lucky this evening because he has managed to get five or six hours for the debate. That is an unusual experience for Members representing Northern Ireland because, for once, we have time to speak about something that affects our people. However, the Minister looked like a guilty man—he had guilt written from one ear to the other. I rather suspected that he was upset that he was not able to push through the order in 90 minutes. He was horrified that he had to take on board and present a proposal which would be debated for five hours and to which there would be opposition from all parts of the House.

The Minister has mentioned various organisations, which have already been dealt with by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), whose speech I commend because he articulated the concerns of the ordinary people of Northern Ireland, concerns with which the Minister could not identify. The Minister simply identified himself with a system of government that is repugnant to the people of Northern Ireland and that we reject.

The Minister spoke about health boards and the health and social services councils. At one stage, he said that the role of the boards was similar to that of councils in England. That is nonsense. The councils in England are elected by the people of England. The boards in Northern Ireland are appointed by the Minister and are not responsible to the people of Northern Ireland. That is the difference between the administration of health and social services in Northern Ireland and in England. That is why the Minister is guilty.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Anglo-Irish conference in Dublin can put forward names of people to serve on the boards? Therefore, people are nominated to the boards by the Minister and by Dublin, through the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which the Secretary of State was trying to tell us is a good thing.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is correct. That is another reason why the Minister is a guilty man.

The boards are hand-picked by the Minister, after consultation with the Dublin Government, but with no consultation of the people of Northern Ireland. They are quangos. They are part of a dictatorship in which we have no say. The Minister unashamedly declared that only 13 representations had been made during the consultation period, but that is only the result of the evil system of government in Northern Ireland, which the Minister represents. People did not make representations to the Minister, because they knew that, apart from a few minor recommendations, they would be ignored and the Minister would come to the House with an Order in Council, which would be pushed through in 90 minutes.

Earlier, when asked a question, the Minister spoke in reply but did not answer. The question was whether Members representing constituencies in England, Scotland, Wales or even Northern Ireland—more so Northern Ireland in the context of tonight's debate—could amend an Order in Council. The answer is that they cannot. Because we cannot amend the Order in Council, people do not take part in the consultation process. They know that, even if they make representations, they will be automatically ignored by a dictatorial Minister, who will then introduce an Order in Council that cannot be amended and that goes through on the nod.

The Minister spoke of the wonderful part played by the health and social services boards. Throughout Northern Ireland, they are known as a joke. Members of boards are hand-picked by the Minister. They are his stooges. They have no respect in the community. Anyone who stands up against the Minister and the Department has his knuckles rapped and he then resigns, as happened with a constituent of mine. Sir Edward Archdale had to resign because he did not want to be a yes-man for this Northern Ireland administration, which operates as a dictatorship through the health and social services boards.

As the hon. Member for Normanton said, the Government are not answerable to the people of Northern Ireland. This is the seventh anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which was signed in 1985. We have had that deadlock for seven years, and the Minister represents that evil system of government in which we are ruled by quangos and which the people deeply resent.

The quango in my area, the Eastern health and social services board, which operates in the council area of North Down, Ards and Castlereagh, is intent on closing most of the hospitals. North Down and Ards together cover the most rapidly growing population in Northern Ireland. The Minister praised that board, so I must respond to him. It operates in an area where 80 per cent. of the people are Protestant, but 65 per cent. of its employees are Roman Catholic. The Minister refuses to hear anything about the underemployment of Protestants and the discrimination against them by that board. I must raise those subjects, because the Minister referred to the health boards and their role in the supervision of homes.

I am sorry to have to make those points, but it is important that the nonsense of Orders in Council being presented to the House is exposed and that the British people should know that we in Northern Ireland are coming to the end of our tether and will not accept democracy as it is presented by the Minister. We rebel against it. We reject it. The time has come for a change in Northern Ireland, where, as the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) has said, in matters of health and social services the administration should be answerable to the people. That is what we must have. Only when we do can we approve orders of this nature. That is why we shall join Her Majesty's Opposition in opposing the motion tonight.

7.30 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in tonight's debate. In the interests of the inhabitants of residential homes, be they care or nursing homes, and given the problems and concerns of home owners, I intend to deal exclusively with the order. I do not intend to make political points.

The Minister referred to consultation, and it may be that he did not have to hand the information to deal adequately with the questions that were put to him about the number of responses received. However, if he would care to look at it, I have with me ministerial correspondence regarding the draft order. The inflection in the Minister's voice when he referred to the 13 responses suggested criticism.

That contradicts the Minister's explanatory document, item 4(c) of which stated that the recent consultative exercise in Northern Ireland invoked widespread support for the new legislation. That widespread support is not particularly evident tonight, nor is it particularly evident among those to whom I speak in Northern Ireland. However, the document might be referring to a different set of people altogether, with whom we are not acquainted. The consultation was early and adequate, but little cognisance was taken of the recommendations and suggestions that would have improved the order.

None of us can pretend that our contribution tonight will change the order one iota. Therefore, we must bend the Minister's mind to its consequences. I emphasise that we are all aware that of paramount importance is the quality of life for the inhabitants of the residential care and nursing homes—the old, the sick, the infirm, the mentally disabled, alcoholics and drug addicts. Those are the people with whom we must all be primarily concerned. What I say must be taken in the context of that overriding consideration. Nothing that I say tonight must in any way detract from or diminish the quality of provision and care that the less fortunate in our community, those who are disabled in the ways that I described, should have.

The order is important, because of the current transition in Northern Ireland from the statutory provision of residential care to its provision by the private and voluntary sector. That is endemic in my constituency, and I note the remarks made by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) in the same context.

Within a small area, three statutory homes have recently been closed. When I pointed out to the Minister responsible that one of them, Morne house in Newcastle, had been closed, he was shocked and surprised. Such homes cannot be closed without his authority and imprimatur, but he did not know that it had been closed. That is the extent of the Eastern board's authority, and the same is true of the Northern, Southern and Western boards.

They all have an almost dictatorial attitude towards closing homes by stealth. They create the atmosphere that something will be closed and, before a month is out, people who cannot fend properly for themselves cannot obtain the right advice or seek accommodation elsewhere, the residential role diminishes and it becomes a self-fulfilling activity. I have seen it, I despise it and I hope that the Minister will intervene and stop such action by not only the Eastern health and social services board but the Northern, Southern and Western boards.

I am in favour of the principle of patient choice in private and statutory accommodation. However, we are in a transitional period——

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman knows something about the closing of the homes. He will be aware that board members told residents in the homes that were to be closed and their relations that, if the residents did not go into a certain home quickly, it might fill up and they would have to move perhaps 20 miles away. Therefore, instead of a proper choice, there was no choice at all because only one home was available. Surely that does away with an individual's personal choice.

Mr. McGrady: I thank the hon. Gentleman. That is the very point that I was trying to bring out. The very activity that he describes has occurred on several occasions. I have described it as an unacceptable way for any board to act. As a consequence of that activity, choice is diminishing week by week and month by month. It is the consequence not so much of board policy as of departmental policy —the so-called care in the community regime. More importantly, it is the consequence of the shortfall in funding which has befallen the health boards and which they are about to experience even more drastically. The Eastern health and social services board, to which the right hon. Member for Strangford referred, faces a shortfall of £20 million in the next tranche.

Those of us who are familiar with the new private homes in our constituencies will readily accept that they have a high standard of provision. As far as a lay person can see, they provide a high standard of care and nursing. According to rumour, many of those private and voluntary homes, which are superior to the statutory homes but were built 10, 15 or 20 years ago, will be required under new regulations to make considerable improvements to bring them up to the standards required by the new regime. That is acceptable on the basis that there is full consultation and that financial assistance is available to assist the transition.

The subject of consultation has been much discussed this evening. Would it not have been more appropriate for the Department, rather than sitting in the ivory tower of Stormont, to write asking the registered homes for their opinion of the order? After all, Government Departments are very good at writing letters, or at least sending out circulars: I receive a good many, most of which are consigned to the waste paper basket. Surely that would be more positive than sitting back and saying, "No one told us what they wanted."

One of the order's main defects is not what is contained in it but what it empowers the Department and the Minister to do following its passing. Built into almost every part of it are virtually open-ended powers to make further regulation in regard to inspection, registration or tribunals. The Minister spoke in his opening speech of a requirement for detailed and substantial regulations to be made; but they have not been made, so we cannot debate them tonight. Moreover, once they have been formulated and published, we shall have very little control over them.

Let me sum up my point about consultation. I think that the Government should ask the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association—and the voluntary and private sector homes that do not belong to that association—to help in the preparation of rules and regulations that will benefit both residents and owners. That, surely, is the best way forward.

The order has some extraordinary features. The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) mentioned the exclusion of children's and young persons' homes. Given recent history both in this country and in Northern Ireland, I feel that that sector should be brought within the scope of the order. The Minister may say that it is dealt with in other legislation; if so, I hope that he will undertake to review and update that legislation, because it clearly is not working properly.

As others have pointed out, it is inexplicable that health and social services trust homes and homes governed by chartered bodies or statutory boards have been excluded from the inspection provisions. According to a one-liner in article 3(2)(g), the board can exclude any establishment that it wishes to exclude. That drives a horse and cart through the legislation. Under article 4(4), small homes are excluded in certain circumstances; but no one seems to have decided how a small home should be defined. Certainly, the Minister did not do so in his opening speech. How small is small, and how big is big? The conditions governing registration, refusal to register and the cancellation of registration are not at all clear. Moreover, they are subject to further rules and regulations which I understand are to be published a month after the order comes into effect.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Could that not betray a slip on the part of the Department? Effectively, the order is a charter for the boards to give away all their homes; the Department, and the boards, may well intend to end up with no homes at all, so that they need not include them in legislation. They may intend to give them away, either to the big operators or to someone else.

Mr. McGrady: Indeed. I think that the hon. Gentleman drew our attention to that possibility earlier when he referred to the provision in article 14A under schedule 1, which empowers the Department to hand over premises, property, fixtures and fittings to another person's custody and usage. If the boards were to use that vehicle, they could rapidly denude themselves of all their homes—and, given the budgetary restraints that will have been imposed on them, that is very likely. The intention is for homes affected by the provision to be transferred to more or less recognised charities such as Help the Aged, but that will not necessarily happen. It could be argued that such organisations are not equipped to deal with the administration involved.

The implementation of the inspection provisions is also in doubt. The order tells us nothing about how inspections will be carried out. It mentions self-financing, but I do not know whether that phrase is used in the context of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland or the boards. Standards are not mentioned either. Presumably, they will be the subject of yet another series of regulations, to be published after the order has been passed. Nevertheless, the question of standards of medical care, staffing, buildings, equipment and the general ambience of homes is problematic. Both the boards and home owners should be consulted, so that common standards can be agreed and applied to everyone's benefit, not least that of residents.

I am bothered by what is not in the order, rather than by what it contains. We know the mechanics: the motion will be passed, and no passage, phrase or word in the order will be changed. It is a fait accompli. Let me make a special plea to the Minister: that he will not publish a series of regulations about registration, inspection and tribunals until he has engaged in full consultation with the people and the boards concerned in what, for want of a better word, we must call an industry—an industry that cares for the aged, the sick, the mentally ill, the infirm and the addicted. That is the proper way in which to protect the interests of the less able and favoured members of society —interests which we should have most at heart—and also to protect those who provide the premises in which such people are cared for.

7.48 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Let me begin—as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor)—by complimenting the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) on his speech. Unfortunately, he is not in the Chamber now, but his useful contribution dealt with a number of serious issues.

Before I deal with the details of the order, I must, as always, register a protest at the way in which the legislation is being introduced. As is usual with Northern Ireland legislation, this is being done by Order in Council. As the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) said earlier, Orders in Council are usually debated for 90 minutes. Tonight, because of the collapse of business earlier in the day, we have more time. Had we been proceeding according to the normal amount of time allotted to orders, the debate would have ended nearly half an hour ago, in which case I should have been unable to speak. There is some small mercy, therefore, in the collapse of the earlier proceedings. However, the collapse of the earlier proceedings and the fact that the order is being debated earlier than expected has caused embarrassment to at least one of my hon. Friends.

Mr. John D. Taylor: He is in very good company.

Mr. Trimble: He is indeed.

As other hon. Members have mentioned, the collapse of the previous business means that we have five and a half hours in which to debate the order, but it does not matter whether we take five minutes, five hours or 50 hours, because nothing that we say tonight will have any effect. The order is unamendable: whatever the Minister may say in his wind-up speech, the order will go through virtually on the nod. It is a form of law-making that is indefensible.

Mr. Beggs: And offensive.

Mr. Trimble: And offensive, as my hon. Friend says.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has noticed that, according to the Order Paper today, the business managers of the House thought that the first business would go beyond 10 o'clock, for there is a 10 o'clock motion on the Order Paper, so we should have had one and a half hours—perhaps from 11.30 onwards, because the first business could have gone on for another hour and a half at least. The point is that this issue, which is so vital and which needed time, might not have been debated at all tonight due to lack of time.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Gentleman is correct. When I saw the 10 o'clock motion on the Order Paper this morning, my heart sank. I thought that it meant that our business would not come on until the small hours of the morning. Instead, it has come on a little earlier than expected.

The Minister was on the Treasury Bench when we discussed the first business on the Order Paper. I think that he heard me comment that the Bill that we were then debating extended to Northern Ireland and contained substantive Northern Ireland provisions in primary legislation. I notice that the explanatory document relating to the order states that this order brings Northern Ireland legislation into line with legislation in this matter in England and Wales—the Registered Homes Act 1984 and the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991.

It ought surely to have been possible, at least with regard to the 1991 Act, to take the same course as was taken earlier today on the Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) Bill—that is, to have included the equivalent legislation in the 1991 Bill when it was going through the House. We could then have had it a year earlier. We have had to wait at least a year—perhaps longer when it comes to some aspects—for this order. There is no reason why Northern Ireland legislation should not be included in the English equivalent when it is going through the House. There is no technical reason why that cannot be done. It would have the added advantage of enabling a more serious and more purposeful debate to take place. Moreover, more interest might be taken in the legislative process if things were done that way.

In reply to an intervention during his speech, the Minister said that only 13 representations had been made during the consultation period and that none of them was made by political parties. The Minister shot himself in the foot in a massive way by saying that, because the interventions of other hon. Members made it clear that considerable representations had been made by various parties and that the Minister involved, who is represented tonight by the Minister on the Treasury Bench, had on occasions declined to see people.

As the Labour party spokesman, the hon. Member for Normanton, said tonight, there is a tremendous absence of accountability in Northern Ireland: it is non-existent there. That is absolutely correct. My right hon. Friend the Member for Strangford has made the point absolutely clear with regard to boards and councils appointed by the Minister. All the new health and social services boards are appointed by the Minister. The health and social services councils are also appointed by him. There may be the odd elected representative on a council, but that person owes his place to the Minister's favour. He is swamped by the Minister's nominees, who are drawn from a remarkably narrow segment of social and public opinion within Northern Ireland.

It may be a little better with quangos. Quangos are objectionable in themselves, but things would be a little better if the appointments made by Ministers to quangos in some way represented the community as a whole, instead of taking people from a narrow social band—largely from the hangers-on to the Stormont castle system: persons who generally have no roots in that society and who cannot be regarded as representing the community at large, let alone identified political groupings.

It is extremely rare for any person who is in any way connected with the political party that I represent ever to be apointed to a quango. If one or two slip through and are appointed, it is usually a sign that that person suffers from some moral or other defect.

Mr. Beggs: I am aware of an elected Unionist councillor who serves on one of the most recently established quangos. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees with that councillor's observation—that the chairman was tame and had been selected purely and simply because he would never vote or allow members of that council to raise any controversial matter.

Mr. Trimble: That is right. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. It echoes the point made earlier by my right hon. Friend the Member for Strangford who referred to the experience of one of his councillors, Sir

[Mr. Trimble]

Edward Archdale, who found the situation so intolerable that he resigned. I did not intend my earlier comments to be interpreted as meaning that the limited number of councillors who are appointed to the boards are persons who are not struggling against the system. Some of the councillors who have been appointed were appointed because they were malleable. Others are not so malleable. Lest there be any misunderstanding about this, my comments were directed towards the non-elected representatives—the vast number of persons who are appointed.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues with his speech, I should say that although I am trying to follow his argument as best I can, it seems to be straying rather far from the subject of registered homes.

Mr. Trimble: Registered homes are supervised, Madam Deputy Speaker, by health and social services boards, to which health and social services councillors are supposed to give advice. Consequently, the constitution of the health and social services boards is, I suggest, a matter that one can touch on, since it relates also to the greater problem of the complete absence of accountability within the public service in Northern Ireland. That is a matter of great and general importance.

As the explanatory document says, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of residential and nursing homes in Northern Ireland in recent years. Many of those residential and nursing homes are admirable and provide a good service. However, there have been exceptions. Some have given cause for concern. On a number of occasions I have had communications with the Minister regarding homes. In some cases, I have even had to ask for inspections to be carried out.

In general, I would welcome a measure which provided for registration and greater regulation. In broad principle, we welcome registration, regulation and inspection. My right hon. Friend the Member for Strangford said that because of the way in which the legislation is being enacted we shall vote against the order, but that should not be interpreted as rejection of a system which would lead to better regulation and control of this sector. We welcome the principle of greater control and supervision.

I am worried about the extent of that control. The grounds for refusal of registration relate to the character of the applicant and the nature of the premises—their physical condition, equipment, and so on. Another ground for refusal is

> "that the way in which it is intended to carry on the home is such as not to provide services or facilities reasonably required."

The grounds for refusal are set out in article 8(1). The refusal of registration provides a degree of control.

The order contains nothing further about the way in which it is intended to carry on the home being such as not to provide services or facilities reasonably required. It would have been helpful if regulations had been provided. Under article 28, the Department is given the power to make regulations on several matters. Some of the matters with which the regulations may deal are set out in the Bill. They include facilities, numbers of staff, the number of staff to be on duty at any time, the information given to residents about complaints procedures, and notification of events which occur in the home.

I am worried about the range of matters that will be covered by the regulations. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that the matters covered by regulations will provide the basis for detailed control through inspection, refusal or withdrawal, or registration. If the regulations do not cover a certain matter, it may slip out of the net. I am thinking of simple complaints such as those that I have received from persons in homes that they were deprived of pocket money. Will it be possible to take such matters into account in an inspection? The order does not refer to small matters of that nature. We should like to know what matters the regulations will cover.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) complained about the extent of the power to make regulations. That reminds me of a debate that we had last week on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill. Important asylum and immigration matters were to be covered in regulations. For that debate, the Home Office made available draft regulations so that, when we discussed that Bill, we had the draft regulations in front of us and hon. Members were able to talk about them. That resulted in a sensible debate on the Bill. Where are the draft regulations to be made under the order? Why is the procedure followed last week not adopted for Northern Ireland legislation? Why do we not have the regulations before us when so much of the meat of the legislation will be in the form of regulations?

I suggest that, in future proceedings, the Minister and his officials take account of the need to ensure that the House has sufficient information before it in the debate to make an effective judgment. If we had draft regulations on the conduct of residential care and nursing homes, we would be able to comment more about the extent of regulation and the Department's control which may be exercised.

It has been said that the regulations will be published shortly. However, when the regulations are published they will not be subject to any effective parliamentary control; they do not come before the House. There is no practical way in which such regulations can be brought before the House. That is another defect of the procedure for Northern Ireland legislation.

Linked to the power to carry out inspections are the regulations which lay down the conduct for residential homes. That is a key matter. I welcome a power of inspection. It is necessary. Again, important matters in article 29, which provides for inspection, will be dealt with in regulations. I deprecate that. Reference has been made to some of the provisions in schedule 1 and a new article 50, which is to be inserted by schedule 1(7) into the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. That new article 50 provides powers of inspection. The article says:

> "Any person authorised by the Department may at any reasonable time enter and inspect any premises (other than premises in respect of which any person is registered under the Registered Homes (Northern Ireland) Order 1992)",

That relates to premises which are not registered. There is a need for such a power to ensure that a home which should be registered is covered by the legislation and the regulations so that it may be inspected. That is a good provision.

The new article 50(4) refers to the way in which the inspection is carried out. It caught my attention as a good provision. New article 50(4) says:

> "Any person inspecting any premises under this Article—
> *(a)* may interview any person residing there in private"—

There must be an express power to speak to residents in private. Elderly people in residential homes are sometimes nervous about their circumstances and feel vulnerable to the management of the home. They may feel worried and afraid. Perhaps their fears are groundless. It is easy for elderly people to be worried about the future. When homes are perhaps not run as well as they could be, the residents may be afraid to complain. I have had experience of that when complaints have reached me in my capacity as Member of Parliament.

I would be delighted if a similar provision for the inspection of registered homes were inserted in new article 50(4). It is a small point, but effective inspection is necessary and important. The power to inspect may be abused. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) referred to a way in which the power to inspect had been abused. Such abuse is not a reflection on the regulatory system provided; it is a reflection on the character of the boards and the way in which they have developed, free from any accountability, parliamentary control or supervision.

I shall mention a few other matters. The legislation provides an emergency procedure. That is good, but I wish to query one aspect. Under the emergency procedure a board may apply to a justice of the peace for an order cancelling registration. If the justice of the peace thinks that there will be a serious risk to the life, health or well-being of the residents, he may make the order.

The order also contains an appeal provision. Presumably, the appeal provision is intended to be a hurdle or filter to ensure that a board does not act capriciously, that it has some grounds and that those grounds are examined by another person. That provision may appear reasonable to a person who is not from Northern Ireland. Here in England, justices of the peace have judicial functions. They are magistrates. They appear on magistrates' benches and discharge an important range of civil and criminal business, so they are persons accustomed to acting in a judicial manner and having an important judicial function to discharge. That has not been the case in Northern Ireland since 1935. Ever since then, all the functions that people think of as being discharged by magistrates have been discharged by a professional judiciary—people who in England and Wales would be stipendiary magistrates.

The post of justice of the peace continues in Northern Ireland, but it is an honorific title, given to worthy chaps, and their function is simply to sign warrants occasionally——

Mr. John D. Taylor: And passport applications.

Mr. Trimble: Yes, passport applications and other such matters.

Rev. Ian Paisley: And election returns.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Except in West Belfast.

Mr. Trimble: The comments being made underline the fact that a justice of the peace in Northern Ireland has no significant judicial functions. It is eccentric to put our justices of the peace in the position of having to decide whether to close a residential or nursing home immediately, with all the implications involved for the person carrying on the business and the people employed in it. Why was it not thought proper, or possible, for the applications to be made to resident magistrates? That would be the equivalent—the sensible thing to do. When the Minister replies to the debate, will he deal with that question? Yes, let us have an emergency procedure, but let us have a sensible procedure.

Mr. William Ross: (Londonderry, East): As the order is supposed to apply the 1984 Act to Northern Ireland, does my hon. Friend not consider it highly possible that the draftsmen did a straight lift, without realising that the provision was not applicable in Northern Ireland conditions?

Mr. Trimble: When it comes to the origins of the drafting of legislation, anything is possible, especially in view of the fact that the Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) Bill, which went through all its parliamentary stages so rapidly earlier today, was needed to correct an error made in earlier legislation. The order before us may not be a similar slip, or error, but I believe it to be a misjudgment of a different kind.

The order does not apply the equivalent provisions in the English legislation with regard to mental nursing homes. The explanatory document says:

> "The Department believes that the registration and inspection powers proposed for Boards in respect of all nursing homes should enable Boards adequately to safeguard the welfare of all residents whatever their individual disabilities and needs."

The Minister touched on the point briefly, but I did not get a clear picture of the thinking behind the decision not to include the category of mental nursing homes. I should like him to deal with the matter in more detail in his wind-up speech. Is it envisaged that persons with mental disabilities should be in ordinary nursing homes, or that there may be homes catering specifically for such people? Is it thought that the existing regulations are sufficient?

It is important that we know what the Government think, because we can see the way in which their policies are evolving, so that much provision in residential and other homes will move into the private sector. It is important that the Minister should give us a clear picture of the sort of private sector provision that is intended for persons with mental disabilities. It may be thought that there will be no private sector provision. I should like more detail on that.

Other hon. Members have raised another matter in connection with facilities and services moving into the private sector. The amendments being made to the 1972 order by schedule 1(2), which inserts the new article 14A—

Rev. Ian Paisley: I have a document before me issued by the Southern health and social services board, which includes reference to private nursing and residential care for persons with mental handicaps. it contains a whole series of proposed regulations for the private sector, so the Government must have it in mind to include provisions for such persons.

Mr. Trimble: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that information; it underlines the need for a more detailed and open approach from the Minister, to explain what will happen.

[Mr. Trimble]

I shall not go in detail into the new article 14A and 15 to be inserted into the 1972 order, because I believe that another hon. Member, who I suspect is better informed than I, wishes to deal with the subject.

The provisions permitting property and equipment to be used by private sector bodies say that such use is to be

> "on such terms and conditions as may be agreed between the Department and the body or person".

I echo the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) to ensure that there is a level playing field and that certain organisations are not treated more favourably. If there is to be a degree of private sector involvement and competition in the provision of services, let it at least be introduced on a proper commercial basis.

Significant services are moving out of the state sector and into the private sector. My hon. Friends have explained earlier the consequences involving the closure of hospitals, nursing homes and residential homes in some areas. The Minister gives me a brief wintry smile. He may recall the correspondence that I had with him when he was also responsible for Spelga house, in Banbridge in my constituency; it was part of Banbridge hospital, and involved state provision of long-term continuing care for elderly persons.

For years there have been proposals implying that Spelga house will be run down and closed. In his opening speech, the Minister talked about lack of representations on such matters. Yet he will recall the occasions on which we made representations to him, and the occasions on which he refused to meet us, saying that we should have the opportunity to meet him only when the official closure procedure, was brought into operation. Spelga house has been effectively closed: no new admissions have been made for a long time, and as the elderly residents age and die their number is diminishing. So there is no state provision of continuing care for elderly people in the Banbridge area; people now have to go further afield, because Spelga house is effectively closed.

The closure procedures have not been operated, and still no provision is made for effective consultation. Yet with the new-fangled boards without elected representatives, and the councils with elected representatives being effectively smothered, there is no way in which local people can make their voices heard.

All that highlights our concern—especially in view of the fact that, as the Minister knows, in the case of Spelga house there has been a trail of broken promises under both the previous board and the current board. That increases our concern about the way in which the new semi-privatised and private provision has been introduced into the health service—the order facilitates that process. Although we welcome in principle the prospect of regulation, inspection and control of nursing homes, the context in which they are being introduced causes us nothing but concern.

8.18 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): My desire to intervene, albeit briefly, in the debate is prompted by two considerations. The first is that I like to think that, in a small way, I represent the interests of trade unionists in the House. A number of trade unionists have made representations to me about the draft order because they are legitimately concerned about its implications not only for their livelihoods but for the service to which they are dedicated, and which they think could be prejudiced by its implementation. Their anxiety is prompted by the effect that the order will have on the clients and patients whom they serve.

The second reason why I am pleased to have caught your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that I take seriously our role in Parliament of endeavouring to check the Executive. In the brief time in which I have been here, I have noticed that measures whose debates have the least attendance often justify the maximum scrutiny. That is true of this order.

When the Minister took us through the draft order in his opening speech, he was clever when he came to article 37, which relates to schedule 1. He said that the purpose of article 37 and of schedule 1 was to overcome some minor legal difficulty, but he did not amplify what that legal difficulty was. If I can do nothing else, I invite the Minister to amplify the point. I am greatly concerned that what will be slipped through in the guise of schedule 1 is a major change in the administration, not only of health care, but of social services in the Province of Northern Ireland.

A little while ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, you drew to an hon. Member's attention the fact that the order is called the Registered Homes (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. That was a legitimate point for the Chair to make. It crossed my mind that you, might not have had an opportunity to study the order in detail. Using schedule 1, the Government intend, under the misnomer of an order on registered homes, to introduce a major change in the administration of health and social services which transcends the narrow issue of registered homes.

The proposed change deeply concerns people who work in health and social services in the Province. I invite you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and other hon. Members to examine the new article 14A in schedule 1, which says:

> "The Department may make arrangements for the provision by any other body or person of any of the health services on such terms and conditions as may be agreed between the Department and that other body or person."

That provision is drawn widely and has caused some concern. The Minister should have given far more amplification of what was intended by its inclusion in the schedule.

My fear and that of Northern Ireland trade unionists who have expressed their worries to me is that the Minister intends to overcome the Government's difficulty in trying to implement health and social services trusts within the Province. The Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 has run into difficulty in that the Government are unable, because health and social services are integrated in the Province, to create a trust for social services under previous legislation. If the order goes through tonight, article 14A will be added to the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, coupled with article 15, which is also included in the schedule. The Government will be able to effect trusts without any further debate or consultation within the Province. It is disgraceful that a provision that will greatly affect the administration of health and social services in any part of the United Kingdom should be dealt with in this way.

I draw attention to one immediate flaw of this method of legislation. Bills applying to England and Wales and to Scotland have a long title. That acts as a useful check list for legislators and for the Chair who can see whether hon.

Members are keeping to the subject. However, there are no long titles in Northern Ireland orders. If there were, the Government and the Minister would have been rumbled when introducing, in the guise of the order, a major change in the administration of health and social services. I hope that consideration can be given to incorporating a long title in Northern Ireland orders so that hon. Members and the Speaker can see exactly what is involved.

The explanatory note accompanying the order buttresses my concern. It says:

> "Schedule 1 lists minor amendments to existing legislation mainly required as a consequence of the Order."

If one reads the schedule again and again, one finds that the explanatory document is wholly misleading. These are not minor amendments to Northern Ireland legislation; they are major amendments. To suggest that they are mainly required as a consequence of the order is demonstrably untrue.

If the Minister believes that my charge is unfair and unfounded, I hope that he will take it from me that others, especially in Northern Ireland public sector trade unions, will read reports of our debate and will want a categorical assurance that the order will not be the measure by which the Government remedy what they consider to be a flaw in or lack of legislation so that they can promote their desire of creating trusts in health and social services in Northern Ireland.

Lord Arran, who is the appropriate Minister in the other place, has promised that there will be separate legislation relating to the trusts, especially in relation to dealing with the services administered by the health boards, which in England and Wales would be local authority social services. Lord Arran has promised separate legislation, but the fear tonight is that, under the darkness of the evening, the power for the creation of social services trusts has been slipped into the order. I hope that there will be no equivocation. I trust that the Minister will either come clean and admit that the order will affect the trusts or say that the hon. Member for Thurrock is wrong.

8.27 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): As a Northern Ireland Member, I welcome the free exchange across the House tonight. I wonder what any hon. Member, including you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would think if he or she had to say to a constituent, "Oh, you should have written about Bill. You should have written about your opposition and about what amendments you wanted. My hands are tied. If you have not written in, when I stand up in the House, the Government will say that there was no real representation." That is the mess we are in tonight.

People in Northern Ireland expect their elected Members to deal with issues after they have lobbied them, not after they have written letters. I am amazed that the explanatory document on the order states:

> "the recent consultative exercise in Northern Ireland evoked widespread support for new legislation."

Only one Member from Northern Ireland supports the legislation. All the other Members who represent Northern Ireland oppose it.

I am told that the Minister will answer every question that he has been asked, so I want to ask him some questions. Are the 100 people who wrote in in respect of the first proposal to lay a draft the "widespread support" for new legislation? If 100 people write in, is that widespread support for legislation?

Mr. Peter Robinson: Or opposition.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On whose authority was the issue included in the background and scope of [illegible] draft? When and how was it decided that the matter should be included?

No hon. Member who has spoken tonight is for the irresponsibles. I am against the irresponsibles involved in the care of the elderly. I have taken up cases in that regard and I shall continue to do that. The irresponsibles in Northern Ireland must be dealt with. However, there are no people more irresponsible than those on the boards and they flout the law.

The Minister should consult Lord Arran about the home in Broughshane. The board gave me a categorical assurance that the home would not be closed until a deputation of the citizens and I met the Minister. However, the board proceeded immediately to pressure the people in that home. They were told that, if they did not pick another home close by, they would be sent 20 miles away. Those elderly people collapsed under that intimidation. How can the board officials love the elderly and care for them when they stoop to that level after having promised an hon. Member that no action would be taken?

Lord Arran can confirm that I raised that issue with him. I told him that his office had told us that the home would not be closed, but that that had already happened and the people had been shifted under severe pressure. The irresponsibles in Northern Ireland are on the boards.

It is terrible that the people comprising 60 per cent. of the representation of the homes cannot make representations to the Minister. When those people came to me, I advised them to become organised, because they were not organised. They were individual people who were running homes and they found that the board was exercising a heavy hand. I told them that, if they were not organised, they would not be able to speak with one voice. However, they found that, once they were organised, they ran foul of the board and its officials.

It is no laughing matter when board officials use threats on the telephone. I have raised such matters with Lord Arran. I presented him with a dossier of complaints and I had correspondence with him about those serious matters. I hope that the Minister will take them seriously. No one who makes a legitimate complaint should be intimidated for making that complaint. After all, the trade unions fought for the right to organise. Everyone has the right to organise and state the issues clearly before people whom they believe are dealing with the issues in a legal way.

I hope that the Minister will say that the people who run 160 homes and supply 3,600 beds will at least be listened to. It is amazing that I have to make that plea tonight. Those people should be consulted and the Minister must contact those homes. It is no good saying that, if we place a statement in the press, representations can be made and everything will be well.

Sir James Kilfedder: Is the hon. Gentleman telling the House that the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association or its predecessor was totally unaware of the order? That is not true. I understand that they had consultations with officials. The order does not come as a surprise to them tonight.

Rev. Ian Paisley: It may come as a surprise to the hon. Gentleman, who said that no representations had been made to him, to learn that those people met him in June. He gave them 12 minutes of his time and did not reply to their representations.

Sir James Kilfedder: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Let me finish. The hon. Gentleman need not get excited.

Sir James Kilfedder: I am not getting excited; it is the hon. Gentleman who is getting excited.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am not getting excited. The hon. Gentleman seems to believe that the 160 homes that supply 3,600 beds are run by people who are not to be depended on. Those people are open and they come to hon. Members openly. They declare who they are. If they were not responsible people, they would not want to reveal themselves. If they were a body of people with black marks against them which could be proved, they would not deal with the matter openly.

I remind the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) that he said that no such representations had been made to him—only representations from one. However, tonight I received a note to the effect that those people met the hon. Member for North Down in June. The hon. Gentleman gave them 12 minutes of his time and after they left there was no further comment or response to their representations.

Sir James Kilfedder: I utterly refute the allegation that the hon. Gentleman just made, and I treat it with the utmost contempt. It is contemptuous of him to make that allegation in the House tonight without consulting me beforehand and taking my word for it that I do not dismiss any complaint from a constituent in the manner that he described. I was the one who informed an owner of a residential home at the weekend that the order was to come before the House this week. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and his colleague the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) were then informed. They were surprised because they did not know that the order was to come before the House today.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Rubbish.

Rev. Ian Paisley: All I shall say to the hon. Member for North Down is that the gentlemen concerned are in the Strangers Gallery. Let him meet me immediately after the debate and meet them face to face. It was utterly despicable of the hon. Gentleman to try to attack the character of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) in that way. The hon. Gentleman knows that I do not make, and have never made, charges without dealing with them. So we will meet those gentlemen after the debate. The hon. Gentleman will be face to face with one of his constituents and he can answer to him.

This is a most serious matter. It is regrettable that any charge should be made against anyone who runs a home in Northern Ireland who is trying publicly to do something to canvass support for his point of view. If people are irresponsible, they must be dealt with. I would not support any proposal that would not deal adequately with the care of people in nursing homes and I would not tolerate any derogation from the proper standards and I am known for that. If anybody derogates from the proper standards, it is the boards.

A lady died in Waveney hospital, in the heart of my constituency, at the weekend. When I telephoned Lord Arran, he confessed to me that the board had not even told him. Her body was found at a rubbish tip. That should have been reported immediately to the Minister. The first man to tell the Minister's office was myself. The board members did not even think it worth while to tell the responsible Minister. Those are the people who are to have power under the order. It is time Ministers took those people in hand and dealt with them in the way that they need to be dealt with.

I have been a minister of the gospel for 46 years. I visit hospitals and I have pastoral concern for people. I will not cover up for anybody who runs a nursing home wrongly, but the people who have come to me are respectable people who run decent, honourable nursing homes. I object to any form of intimidation from board members because they do not like what is happening.

The whole board system is absolutely ridiculous. As we sit in the House tonight, a board of faceless individuals is making decisions. The hon. Member for North Down knows the position in his area. We know what is happening in County Down at present. It is already happening in my area. We will have more cuts tomorrow. What will happen to the elderly, the aged and the infirm? A country that cannot look after its elderly does not deserve anything. We all should have concern for such matters, and that is why I speak on this issue tonight.

It is essential for the Minister to get the message. He should consult the Secretary of State now, withdraw the order and let us all sit around the table together. Speaking about getting around tables, what better subject could motivate every party in Northern Ireland than care for the elderly and care for those who need our help? The Minister should take the order back. What difference will it make if he takes it back for a month? The difference will be an order that will be better, more substantial and more helpful—

Mr. Peter Robinson: And more acceptable.

Rev. Ian Paisley: And more acceptable to all the people concerned.

The tragedy is that, no matter what we say, we cannot alter a dot or stroke a T in the order. No hon. Member from outside Northern Ireland would like to have that system of government. It is utterly detestable that that is how we legislate for Northern Ireland. As I often say when I speak outside Northern Ireland to people who want to know what is happening, "It is interesting that, as a Member from Northern Ireland, I can help to amend legislation for Scotland, England and Wales, but I cannot amend legislation for the people who sent me to the House of Commons". That system needs to come to an end as quickly as possible. We are now reaping what the sowing has been. If we sow the wind, we reap the whirlwind. Why should the elderly, the aged and the people who need help have to reap the whirlwind? I appeal to the Minister to take action.

Will the Minister help us and say, "Before the regulations are finally drafted and laid, we will have proper discussions about them so that they will be made as acceptable as they can be to all the interests concerned"? Surely that would be a step forward. We have never before been able even to glance at regulations. They just rode on the back of an order and that was it.

I am particularly worried about two aspects of the order. The first is in regard to employment in homes. As far as I can gather from the order, board officials can say to the owner of a home, "You cannot employ that person," and they do not need to give any reason. The owner of the home is bound to ask, "Why can I not accept that person?" We have intimate, close, so-called fair employment legislation—my attitude to it is well known in the House—but the employer has to abide by it. An applicant can say to the employer, "All right, I am going to take you to law. You will not give me a job, but I have all the necessary qualifications." Why can he not be given the job? It is not because the owner would not employ him; it is because the board says that he cannot employ him.

Will the Minister assure me that the board will take responsibility and that the applicant can take action against the board and not against the person who was going to employ him?

Mr. Robinson: And that it pays the compensation.

Rev. Ian Paisley: And that it pays the compensation that would be meted out if the man proved his case in court. That important point needs to be hammered home to the Minister. We need an answer tonight. How can people who want to run homes and run them well be put in that position by this legislation?

The matter has not been thought out at all. What the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) said about justices of the peace shows that it was lifted from English legislation. Justices of the peace in Northern Ireland have very little power. Tory candidates who do not win elections usually get a JP-ship just to keep them happy. The Democratic Unionist party has a heavy slice of the vote, and among us we have three JPs. I used to have to go to an Official Unionist to ask him to sign my election returns. They were always absolutely accurate, of course, and I had no bother with him.

I was amazed. I thought that the Government were bringing justices of the peace back into action. "Justice of the peace" in Northern Ireland is just like an honorary title that is given to people of good standing. All that JPs are asked to do is sign warrants, and many of them do not want to sign warrants. When they see the police coming, they get away because they might have to sign a warrant against their friends and they would not like their signatures to be on the warrant.

The Minister should take care when he is lifting legislation from England into such orders. The draftsmen are not very competent. If they are drafting legislation for Northern Ireland and do not know what a justice of the peace in Northern Ireland is, how can they do the intricate work of drafting? I trust that the Minister will take that point on board.

The Government are giving away public property. As I read the order, board members can say, "You will do that, but we will do what we like." Board members are not tied by any regulations. They can change them. They can say, "That does not apply." At any time they can change any measure that we are supposed to pass tonight. They can do exactly what they like.

I should like a public inquiry into the many people who have been placed in certain private homes when public homes have been closed down. Why has there been discrimination? Why do some people in the private homes industry have all the beds that they want filled, and not only filled but paid for and held in trust for the board, when other people are doing their best to make a livelihood in that sector? Those matters need to be addressed by the Minister. The boards should not be given such massive powers.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) made an excellent speech in which he touched the very core of the matter. He referred to the boards' massive powers. It is amazing that in a democracy we are prepared to hand over such powers to a board. The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) has told us who the members of the boards are. The boards consist of defeated candidates who could not get elected and of people who were employed by the Government for years, Government pensioners. Does anyone think that they will rock the boat? If we refer to the biographies of the people who are on these quangos, we discover that many of them were in Government employment.

The chairman of a new quango was appointed recently. Who is he? He is the former head of the civil service, Sir Ken Bloomfield. Of course, he has to get a nice little job. Does anyone think that he would rock the boat? We had experience of him from the days of Terence O'Neill. We know that he used to write Terence O'Neill's speeches, and we all know what happened to Terence O'Neill.

Will the Minister give an assurance that no person who was employed by the Government will be on one of these tribunals? Will he give an undertaking that the tribunals will be independent bodies to which people can put their case?

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I hope the hon. Gentleman is not trying to convey to the House that this system of appointments to quangos is peculiar to Northern Ireland. It is peculiar to the Conservative Government, as we have seen in Wales, with the viceroys who operate as Secretaries of State both in Wales and in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Macklnlay: And in Scotland.

Mr. Rogers: And also in Scotland. With absolute impunity they appoint Tory party officials, ex-officials and the husbands and wives of Ministers even to quangos to run the affairs of our countries.

Rev. Ian Paisley: No doubt the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), speaking for the Principality, knows what he is talking about. However, the hon. Gentleman has two advantages. At least Wales has local government with some power and he can elect people as councillors. In Northern Ireland local government can only empty bins, look after cemeteries and build a few leisure centres; that is all it can do.

Of course, local authorities are consulted. The consultative programme in Northern Ireland is immense. Councils can sit till three o'clock in the morning just to be consulted, and they do. The pay is better after a certain hour. I do not blame them. Then they are abused by their constituents because they do not make decisions—but they are not allowed to make decisions.

In addition to having local government with some power, Welsh Members have the right to move amendments to legislation that affects them. We have no right to move any amendments tonight. This is the law of the Medes and Persians—we take it or we leave it. There

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

are many things in the order with which I agree but I cannot vote for one part and reject another. I must vote against the whole measure.

The subject is so important that it would be a fine gesture on the part of the Minister if he were to consult and were to say, "This is a troublesome order, and there has been much opposition from all over the House. We will take time to reconsider it." By doing that, the Minister would be doing good service to the people of Northern Ireland and to the House. When he meets me, his boss talks to me about morale outside. The best thing that he could do for the morale of the people of Northern Ireland would be to take the order back and reconsider it; then the people might say that there is some hope of politics succeeding. I make that appeal to the Minister. He should argue his case. I should be happy for the debate to be adjourned so that he might argue his case before we come back to the matter again.

We can do nothing now about what is in the order, but we can do something about the regulations if the Minister gives us the chance. That is not as good as having the order right, but at least it will help us to satisfy those who have the interests of the residents of homes at heart.

I have various documents here about key workers. I have one entitled "New Key Workers", which was sent to a home. It says that everyone in the home will have a worker who will be in charge of that individual person to deal with pre-admission work, admission work, record keeping, care programmes, reviews, bathing, clothes, personal shopping, beds, hair care, appointments, liaison with relatives, liaison with other professionals and special interests. We are told in the Minister's document that all that is to cost nothing.

I had better read it to the Minister so that he will know what his document says. By the way, this is the same document that was said to have evoked widespread support. It states:

> "What is it going to cost? The order will not lead to any significant increase in public expenditure. The introduction of fees is intended to make the board's work of registering and inspecting private and voluntary sector residential care homes and nursing homes self-financing."

Are the homes to pay for the resident worker? We are told that the only increase in public sector staff will arise with the establishment of a registered homes tribunal, and that only a part-time secretary will be needed for that.

The Minister should get the document which has been issued for consultation. He should not ask me how I got this document but I have got it. It is entitled "Private Nursing/Residential Care for Persons with a Mental Handicap". It is a draft document issued by the Southern health and social services board. In regard to key workers it states:

> "The board will identify a key worker for each service user. The key worker will maintain on-going links with the service user and home staff and will monitor, on behalf of the board, the well-being of the service user. The role of a board appointed key worker should be seen as distinct from the role of a primary care worker identified for an individual service user as part of a home's operational policy.
>
> Key workers will:
> have access to service users;
> have access to care plans and be involved in care reviews;
> be informed of any significant developments that may occur concerning the service user;
> except in emergency situations be consulted regarding any change in care objectives for service users."

Is all that to be paid for by the home?

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will my hon. Friend take into account that not only will the key worker have to be paid for by the homes if the system is to be self-financing, but the inspectorate, which is three or four times greater in Northern Ireland and therefore three or four times more costly than in Great Britain, will also have to be paid for by the homes?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes, I take that into account. That will tell against people who will be able to give proper care, because finances will be cut and a major cut in the finances of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland will flow from what happens in the House tomorrow. The future is bleak. The Government seem to be saying that they will do away with the public sector and put such provision in to the private sector, but the private sector will have to finance it. The Government will not have that responsibility. The Minister must come clean with us about that tonight.

8.58 pm

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): I shall speak briefly to welcome the order. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) requested the Minister to withdraw the order, but I ask him not to do so.

First, I do not like the Order-in-Council procedure and I have criticised and attacked it in the Chamber on many occasions. I find it unacceptable, but it is the way in which legislation has been introduced in Northern Ireland.

Secondly, I do not like the Eastern health and social services board, which is the bureaucracy in charge of the health service in my area of North Down. The bureaucrats spend most of their time looking after their own welfare rather than the welfare of the people that I represent.

I must make plain my approach to the order. One subject which concerns me deeply is the welfare of the elderly in residential homes. Within the scope of the debate, strangely enough, we have heard mention of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and of Protestantism and Catholicism, and Dublin has been dragged into it. We have heard mention of pay for councillors for sitting long hours, of the last Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, and of a former head of the civil service there. Allegations were made about dictatorship; and a personal attack was made on the Minister. I ask him to brush such personal remarks aside. As I have said before, he is recognised as a person who has shown that he is genuinely sincere about Ulster and the Ulster people.

I care about the welfare of elderly people in residential homes, and I welcome the order for that reason, because it requires all residential care homes to be registered and and to be inspected regularly and properly. What is wrong with that? I am concerned because many of my constituents are in such homes. I have talked to them and have visited many of the homes in my constituency. I have also talked to relatives and friends of residents in care homes for the elderly. I am worried about the way in which they may be treated by unscrupulous proprietors.

As I said in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), elderly people are among the most vulnerable in our community. We must do everything possible to defend them.

Certain matters have been mentioned in the debate which would give cause for consideration, but if the order is defective let us put it into effect as quickly as possible and then introduce amendments to it.

For every day that goes by an elderly person may be left at the mercy of someone who cares more about profit than about the welfare of the people in their accommodation. There is nothing wrong with the profit motive. It acts as an incentive to encourage interested people to offer accommodation to those in need of care because of age and infirmity. The overwhelming majority of owners of residential homes look after residents properly.

I am worried about the unscrupulous few—and it is no use saying that there are only a few. If one elderly person is ill-treated by a proprietor of a residential home and we do nothing about it, we are as guilty as the people in charge of the home. That is why I praise the Minister for introducing the order. It is not his Department, but he has brought such matters before us in the past on behalf of the Minister with responsibility for health, the Earl of Arran, who is in another place. I know from my experience that he is only anxious to do what is best for people in Northern Ireland.

In the past five years residential care homes have mushroomed throughout the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland is no exception. As in the rest of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland has a few unscrupulous owners who are not as caring about their residents as they should be. The order can deal with those few who, lamentably, have little or no regard for elderly residents. We all know what can happen to an elderly person in someone else's care. It may involve a tight budget for meals, providing food of a quality and quantity below what elderly residents should have. I have heard that accusation made against a particular home and I have relayed the complaint. It may also involve an unacceptable degree of sedation. We have read in the press—the report applied only to Britain but we must be aware that it happens elsewhere—about armchairs that were deliberately used to detain the person placed in them.

The order is to care for people in residential homes and ensure, on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland, that elderly people who are placed in the care of others for payment are not treated in a manner that insults their dignity, robs them of their pride or undermines their health.

The vast majority of residential care home owners are caring and the homes are well managed. Having seen some homes in my constituency, I have been impressed by the attentiveness of the staff and the homely atmosphere. It would be wrong of me to mention particular homes, but when one enters certain homes one feels the warmth of the staff—the matron and others—and when one talks to the elderly residents one knows that the staff really care for those in their charge. It gives me a great feeling of joy when I enter such homes, but makes me extremely concerned about other homes where things may be happening which we would not like to see happen to our elderly relatives.

Mr. Peter Robinson: That is precisely the point that I made during the course of my remarks. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if it is right to regulate and license those homes in the private sector, homes that are under the control of the board or any other statutory body and children's and young persons' homes should also be brought under the same inspectorate? If it is right in the case of one, is it not right in the case of the other? If the hon. Gentleman believes that it would be right to include them under the order, why pass defective legislation?

Sir James Kilfedder: It is a strange logic to say that, because the legislation is defective, legislation that would be beneficial to so many people should be denied to them simply because it could have incorporated something else. If I thought about it, I could probably extend the hon. Gentleman's list. The list has been put forward as an excuse for delaying the introduction of the order. It is not a justification for delay.

Naturally, I would welcome the extension of the order to other statutory homes, but I do not think that the Minister should delay the order. He is doing his duty by the people of Northern Ireland. He knows that I would be prepared to criticise him if I felt that he was failing in his duty. He would welcome suggestions from me or any other hon. Member who wishes to see the order approved, and I have no doubt that he will take them on board in the implementation of the order.

Mr. Rogers: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and excuse myself, as a fellow Celt, for interfering. I am in a dilemma. Earlier the hon. Gentleman said that we should accept the legislation although it might well be defective, as we could later alter it. He also said, as did other hon. Members, that the legislation cannot be altered. Does that mean that the hon. Gentleman is imploring us to support defective legislation because it can later be altered, when it cannot be? Does he mean that, in order for the legislation to be amended, it has to be thrown out and completely new legislation introduced?

If I understood him correctly, the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) asked the Minister to take the order away for a month, look at it again and iron out the problems that have been highlighted. I know that I am making a rather lengthy intervention——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that that is an understatement, and the hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Sir James Kilfedder: I am only repeating what people have said, which is that there are defects in the order. If there are, I would welcome improvements to the order.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Sir James Kilfedder: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, as we must get on.

I would welcome improvements to the order, but we should allow it to proceed. I have not received any representations from the registered home owners stating that the order should be amended line by line. I have heard from only one lady at the weekend, who told me about one aspect of the order. I have a high regard for her; she runs a home of excellent standards. That is the only representation that I have heard.

If the order were defective, surely the Minister would have received a stream of complaints, recommendations and amendments. I am sure that hon. Members present would have been briefed about the order's defects; I have not been briefed about any.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir James Kilfedder: Yes, I will.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) must make it snappy.

Mr. Rogers: I can tell the hon. Gentleman of one defect in the order, having made a quick perusal of it. If the so-called justices of the peace, who are symbolic in Northern Ireland, are asked to allow an appeal, action to close down the home is taken by a board, and any appeal is made to the board. Therefore, the board acts as judge and jury in its own action. Surely that is fundamentally wrong in any legislation.

Sir James Kilfedder: I cannot find the place now, but I think that if the hon. Gentleman studies the order he will see that there is a right of appeal to a tribunal against any of the board's decisions.

I believe that the order will result in better protection for elderly people. The call that I issue from the House tonight is that residents in residential homes for the elderly, and their relatives and friends, should be aware of the fact that they are now provided with a more effective opportunity to lodge complaints about poor standards or ill treatment. That call must go out. It will comfort the relatives of those in care to know that there is an effective means of dealing with complaints. Good registered home owners should welcome that. The lady of whom I spoke —I do not wish to mention her name—is an excellent home owner.

If the Care Homes Association wishes to maintain a high standard, it should support any legislation that deals with the unscrupulous few.

There is a clear onus on all hon. Members to safeguard the person of the elderly, their dignity and their rights. Every law and every regulation that flows from it may seem irksome to many good people, whatever their sphere of activity. However, they must realise that we are legislating to root out those who have nothing but ill will for their residents. By doing so, we shall safeguard the welfare of the elderly in homes throughout Northern Ireland.

Hon. Members have spoken about inspection. Up to now, the inspection of homes has been inadequate, and I am not sure how the new legislation will operate. However, more inspections should improve the standards of homes. I have always said that the Government should spend more money on carers—related or voluntary—who look after the elderly in their own homes with their possessions around them and a knowledge of the local shops and churches and so on.

Perhaps, when I was replying to the intervention of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), I should have mentioned statutory homes. In my area, the Banks statutory residential home for the elderly is threatened with closure. There are vacancies in the home but they are not filled because officials want to kick out the residents and take over the home. The officials already have a foot in the door and want to convert the home to palatial offices for Eastern board bureaucrats. The Minister must make sure that the board does not get away with that.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir James Kilfedder: No. The hon. Gentleman had his say. *[Interruption.]* I ask the hon. Gentleman to keep quiet.

I urge the Minister to look into that matter because it would be a grave injustice to the residents of that home if the board suddenly closed it. Those elderly people are worried about their future. I shall shortly present a petition on behalf of the people of Bangor urging the House to save the Banks residential home and to block the door to the bureaucrats in the Eastern board.

9.18 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The issues raised in the debate have general application in the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) said that we should be extremely concerned about the condition and care of the elderly in the community. I agree. The Government should provide more resources so that the elderly can be looked after in their own homes rather than in hospital or residential homes where, occasionally, the standard of care is not all that we would wish.

Rev. Ian Paisley: If the board is such a wicked, bad, rascally body that the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) wants the Minister to take it in hand, is it not strange that he also wants it to be given more power so that it can inspect all the homes where old people are in care?

Mr. Rogers: I would not want to get involved in the problems of any specific board in Northern Ireland, or in any other aspect of the government of Northern Ireland, with which I disagree entirely.

If the hon. Member for North Down is saying that there is a problem with that home, and he has to petition Parliament in an attempt to rectify the problem, then there is obviously something wrong. From my admittedly superficial perusal of the order, I should not have thought that it would put that right. As I understand it, if someone objects to what is going on in any of these homes, the right of appeal under article 27 is to a tribunal. But the tribunal is appointed by the Minister. If both the tribunal and the board are appointed by the Minister, where is the independent review of any issue about which, for example, the hon. Member for North Down wishes to complain?

There is something fundamentally wrong with the order, and we shall vote against it. The Minister should take it away and have another look at it. It would not be the first time that that had happened, but the Government are so arrogant in the way they govern the country that that is asking an awful lot. As I said earlier, my Northern Ireland colleagues should not feel too isolated on this. Scotland and Wales have the same problem all the time, with the arrogance of the viceroys who rule in the Welsh and Scottish Offices.

I wholeheartedly agree with Northern Ireland Members of Parliament and my own Front-Bench spokesman who have said that they will vote against the order. I am sure that I shall be told off for interfering in the debate, but as I have recently been appointed Front-Bench spokesman for foreign affairs——

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): My hon. Friend will be debating Hong Kong soon.

Mr. Rogers: I shall leave Hong Kong for another occasion, but I may have a locus in this debate, too.

Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and it deserves the best of legislation. Therefore, we should reject the order.

9.23 pm

Mr. Hanley: I am pleased to be able to reply to the debate. Right hon. and hon. Members will know how assiduous Northern Ireland Members of Parliament are in carrying out their duties. On occasions such as this they find it easy to fill any time that becomes unexpectedly available to them. This is my first night off after six months of the talks process and I could not have thought of a better way to spend the evening. I never expected that the evening would end early and I intend to fill it as best I can by answering the points that have been raised. The extra time is a blessing.

I was interested in the little vignette of a speech made by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Roberts) a few moments ago. I note that it is the first time that the Labour party has said that it will vote against such legislation. I had a cursory glance in the Library earlier and I noted that the legislation on which the order is based, the Registered Homes Act 1984, was apparently not voted upon in the House. The Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991, the other Act upon which the order is based, was also not voted upon and went through almost formally.

It is interesting, therefore, that the Opposition intend to vote against the order tonight. I shall return to the impact of a defeat, which I would take as a vote of confidence—*[Interruption.]*—in myself, of course. I want to answer as many points as possible, so I should be grateful for as few interventions as possible.

The decision to review the existing legislation governing the regulation of private and voluntary sector residential care and nursing homes in Northern Ireland was, as several hon. Members have said, the result of two major influences.

The first was the substantial growth in such homes in recent years and the growing pressure on the registering and inspecting authorities which existed at the time to ensure that there were satisfactory standards of care and accommodation and that they were maintained. The second influence was the legislation to which I have referred and its associated subordinate legislation. It is important to remember that that legislation was supported by the House without Division. The legislation gave registering authorities in England and Wales strength and powers to regulate residential care and nursing homes.

Following a comprehensive consultative exercise with a wide range of interested statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations and indviduals, the general consensus emerged that in Northern Ireland we should, as far as possible, bring our legislation broadly in line with that of the 1984 Act.

I mentioned earlier that there were more than 100 responses to the consultation on the draft order and then there were 13 responses. I mentioned that none of those 13 came from hon. Members. Hon. Members have explained why there were only 13, but the reason for such a small number of responses was not merely that no legislation could be altered at this stage in the House but that there was proper long-term consultation in designing that legislation. The legislation was therefore properly consulted on in advance.

The draft order has the great merit of drawing together in one piece of legislation all the primary provisions governing the registration and inspection of both categories of homes.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) asked if I could give an assurance that the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association would be consulted about regulations to be prepared by the Department. That was also mentioned by the hon. Members for South Down (Mr. McGrady) and for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

I can give a categorical assurance that such consultation will take place. Draft regulations will be issued to a wide range of private, voluntary and statutory sector organisations within the next week, including the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association. The draft regulations will go to all representative bodies and all

I welcome the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) to his new post, and congratulate him on his speech. He suggested that the boards were not truly accountable, and that they would allow standards to slip. Standards will be governed both by subordinate legislation and by guidelines prepared by responsible professional bodies. I dealt with that point earlier. I do not believe that standards will be allowed to slip, nor do I accept that the boards are not truly accountable. Each board has had to establish an advisory committee to provide a link between the inspection units and the public interest. Moreover, I took pains earlier to stress the arm's-length establishment of the units. I hope that no one who reads my speech imagines that the units will be anything other than independent and reliable.

The hon. Member for Normanton should realise that, if home owners have any genuine complaints about the way in which inspection units have treated them under existing Northern Ireland legislation, my noble Friend Lord Arran will be anxious to hear about it. I shall suggest holding a meeting with those who have specific complaints.

The new legislation will actually make it easier for home owners to appeal against decisions made by registration and inspection units. As I explained to the hon. Member for Antrim, North, that will be done by way of the Registered Homes Tribunal, to which a number of hon. Members have referred. The tribunal will benefit from the presence of a panel of professional experts who, as I said earlier, will build up a body of useful case law.

I must admit that the Department of Health and Social Services originally had no strong views about the need for a change from the existing courts appeal system, and doubted whether the likely number of appeals would justify the establishment of a separate tribunal system. In subsequently opting for such a system, it took account of several points.

First and most important, the majority of those who commented on the matter during the consultation exercise —in response to the initial consultative paper—were in favour of a tribunal system. Secondly, the positive feedback from registration authorities and proprietors of homes in regard to the performance of tribunals in England and Wales seemed to suggest that a similar system would be sensible in Northern Ireland. Thirdly, it was felt that Northern Ireland would benefit from the professional expertise of the tribunals' members and, as I have said, from the accumulation of a useful body of case law

[Mr. Hanley]

relating to a specialised aspect of health and social services activity. A fourth consideration was the speed with which cases could be dealt with, and the comparative cheapness of the process.

Some hon. Members have suggested that tribunals might be full of "tainted" appointees. I assure them that the Lord Chancellor appoints a panel of legally qualified people to act as chairmen of tribunals. The Department appoints an independent panel of other experts, but they must have the appropriate medical, nursing and social work experience, and no officer of the Deparment can be appointed to a tribunal.

Mr. William O'Brien: I thank the Minister for the kind remarks that he made earlier. We are told that the Lord Chancellor will nominate some tribunal members, and that the boards will nominate others. Will any of the users of the services—residents, or people who work in the homes—be able to sit on tribunals and express their views on issues that are raised?

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you confirm that this debate can run until 11.30 pm?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is correct. The debate can run until 11.30 this evening.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Member for Antrim, North ticked me off earlier in the debate. He said that I was laughing during his speech. I was not laughing; I was wincing. At the moment that I winced, the volume control in some part of the House had clearly developed a fault. It was one of the speakers, I think—the speaker at the time, perhaps. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that nothing that he said was a laughing matter.

To the hon. Member for Normanton, the answer is no. These are medically qualified people. *[Interruption.]* If there are any failings in the system, we shall try to address them in due course, but my feeling is that in that instance there are unlikely to be any failings.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hanley: I was about to refer to the hon. Gentleman, but if he would like me to give way I am prepared to do so.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, I should like the Minister to give way.

Mr. Hanley: I am trying to answer the questions that the hon. Gentleman raised in his earlier interventions, but if he would like to ask a few more questions, please carry on.

Mr. Robinson: I am grateful for the Minister's patience. In terms of many of the Northern Ireland tribunals—for example, the unfair constructive dismissal tribunals—it is recognised that a legally competent person should chair it, that somebody might represent the interests of the employers and that somebody else might represent the interests of the employees. Can the Minister not provide the same balance in the tribunals that he intends to set up?

Mr. Hanley: I have already answered that question. In answer to another comment, I said that we shall look at the issue. I believe that I have dealt sufficiently with that point.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) referred to inspection units and said that they employed four times as many staff as the inspection units of local authorities in England and Wales. Arm's-length inspection units in England and Wales are provided by local authorities to inspect only residential care homes. They do not inspect nursing homes. Therefore, it is unfair to seek to compare their work load with those of arm's-length inspection units in Northern Ireland, which will be responsible for inspecting both residential care homes and nursing homes.

Reference was made [illegible] the costs involved. It will be for the Minister concerned [illegible]et the fee levels. The boards will have to tailor their costs to fit that particular cloth.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East also referred to article 25. Was it not unfair, he said, that owners of homes should be expected to represent themselves? They will be allowed legal representation. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for enabling me to clarify that matter.

The hon. Member for Normanton referred to accountability for the regulation of homes, by reference to the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association. So far as I am aware, the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association's request for a meeting with Lord Arran did not include any reference to the need to amend the draft order, nor did it say that it wished to influence its contents. I have already stated that there was considerable consultation and that, as the hon. Member for Belfast, East also mentioned, all the bodies in existence in Northern Ireland in January 1992 were asked to comment on the order. The Northern Ireland Care Homes Association is in existence now. That changes the matter greatly for the future. I shall refer again to the association in a few moments.

The hon. Member for North Down asked whether there should be tighter regulation of standards in the interests of vulnerable people. If we stick with the existing legislation, home owners will not have to pay fees. When we examine the establishment of fees, it is right to consider whether such establishment would be fair and reasonable. I assure the professional associations that the establishment of such fees will be done carefully. We shall not try to establish levels of fees which are seen as unfair.

That leads to the point which was raised by three or four hon. Members about the costs of key workers. I shall come back to that matter when I refer to the speech made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North.

The hon. Member for Normanton referred to Disability Action's commentary on the policy and planning research unit survey. Although that may or may not have been out of order, it was nevertheless an important point. The commentary is simply the first of seven studies to be published under the policy and planning research unit survey. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the matter is being taken fully into account. Disability Action will be called to give evidence to a steering group which is overseeing the survey and considering its implications for policy. Disability Action was consulted during the drafting of the order.

This is the first time that I have met the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) across the Floor of the House. I met him for the first time a few weeks ago in Northern Ireland. I congratulate him on the keen interest that he takes in the affairs of the Province. We are grateful for the interest that he and his Back-Bench colleagues have shown. I hope that they benefited from their visit to Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member asked whether the order was a back-door method of creating trusts. The provisions which schedule 1(2) inserts into the 1972 order have nothing to do with any health or social service trust. They merely put the private sector on a level playing field with the voluntary sector.

Perhaps I should explain that in more detail. The existing Northern Ireland legislation contained in article 71 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 permits health and social services boards to enter into contracts with voluntary organisations—non-profit making organisations—to provide any of the health and personal social services. Unfortunately, similar powers do not exist to permit the boards to enter into contracts with private sector organisations for the provision of such services. Therefore, the provisions in paragraphs 2(1) and (2) in schedule 1 specifically ensure that, when implemented, boards will have clear powers to enter into contracts for the provision of any health or personal social services by both voluntary and private sector organisations. I can imagine the lobbying that would have taken place if such a provision had not been included in the order.

I should hate to see any delay in the implementation of provisions to allow local boards to enter into contracts with the private sector for the provision of health or personal social services. Such services include not only residential and nursing home care but day care, respite care and domiciliary support. If the House is saying that it does not wish the private sector to provide any of those services, I invite it to vote against the order tonight.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East referred to new article 50 which will amend the 1972 order. Proposed article 50, as amended, does not apply to registered homes. I assure the hon. Gentleman that it applies to other premises such as day centres. The rights of inspection and entry into registered homes are contained in proposed article 29. The hon. Member for Belfast, East asked whether children's homes should be included in the order. Children's homes are already protected through the provisions for registration and inspection in the Children and Young Persons Act 1969. That is probably what the hon. Member for North Down meant, too. However, I understand that my noble Friend Lord Arran intends soon to bring forward a new proposal for more up-to-date legislation based upon the children's order which operates elsewhere in the United Kingdom and to which other hon. Members have referred. That will all be taken into account shortly.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East also asked why schedule 1 discriminated against the public sector by allowing boards to sell their homes to voluntary organisations. There is no discrimination. As I have said before, schedule 1 is specifically designed to ensure that providers of services in the private sector can compete freely with voluntary organisations for contracts from health and social services boards to supply any of those services.

Another question asked by the hon. Members for Belfast, East and for North Down was whether the order applied to statutory homes provided directly by health boards. No, the order refers only to private and voluntary sector residential care homes and nursing homes, but the Government are determined that the same high standards of care should apply commonly across the statutory, the voluntary and the private sectors. With that aim in view, the four health boards created the arm's-length inspection unit, to which I have already referred.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East also said that the boards were not allowing open competition. The boards will purchase places from as wide a range of homes as possible. After all, it is their duty to offer their clients choice. It would not be in their interests to negotiate only a small number of block contracts. Boards are being encouraged to draw up clear specifications for their care requirements and to invite tenders from those interested in providing such care. That would include members of the association which the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

My noble Friend will wish to ensure that the boards' contractual operations are monitored carefully, so that clients' needs come first. The boards' primary duty will be to seek tenders against very precise specifications.

The hon. Member for South Down asked about approval for the closure of statutory homes. I can assure him that the case for the closure of any board homes must be defended by the board concerned and presented to the Minister. Then the Minister has to decide whether he prefers to approve the board's decision. That process has led certain hon. Members to say that consultation with the Minister had been refused.

I was the Minister responsible for health and personal social services for nearly 18 months, and I remember that there were many requests for meetings and consultations on behalf of homes and other organisations. The practice is that, if there is a decision to be taken by a health and social services board, that decision must be taken first. Then, if the matter is passed to the Minister because it is major or controversial, consultations with him are welcomed, and are carried out. If we refuse to meet a delegation, that is merely because the proper time for such a meeting is after the local board has made its decision.

Mr. McGrady: The Minister has missed the point. De facto if not de jure, the homes are closed before the Minister has an opportunity to say whether they should be closed. The action on the ground by the health board is to run down the home by whatever means possible so as to ensure that it is not viable. The board then presents a valid case for closure to the Minister. The point we made was that representation should be allowed to take place with the Minister before that process is entered into.

Mr. Hanley: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. If he wants to put specific cases to my noble Friend Lord Arra[illegible] I should be grateful if he would do so. I would certai[illegible] deprecate practices such as he has described.

The hon. Member for South Down asked wheth[illegible] all homes had been consulted. As I have said, there was [illegible]arlier consultation. In 1988, the consultation document was sent to every home owner and the published proposals went to every home owners' body in existence at the time. I have already mentioned the subordinate legislation—the regulations—which will be issued next week. I have already promised hon. Members that if they want a copy of those, they can receive one.

The hon. Member for South Down said that small homes were not defined. They are defined in paragraph 4(5) as homes providing

"residential accommodation with both board and personal care for fewer than 4 persons".

[Mr. Hanley]

The important point is that we do not clutter up small homes with a tremendous amount of legislation. That would be wrong. The small homes should be of the right standard and they should be subjected to some tests. However, the full rigour of the law would mean only that small groups of people helping others out would feel that they were under a weight of legislation.

I was asked why it had taken so long for the legislation to come through from 1985. One reason, as I mentioned earlier, is that legislation already exists to regulate the registration and inspection of residential care homes in Northern Ireland and there is separate legislation to regulate the registration and inspection of nursing homes.

Until the early 1980s, there was no significant increase in establishments. We have referred to the new establishments which have been created. The House may not know that between 1982 and 1987, the number of places in nursing homes rose from 347 to 1,564—an increase of 350 per cent. Consultation began at that stage.

I do not deny that there have been unavoidable pressures and priorities within the Department, such as the major review of community care policy, and the need to consider and to provide at short notice for the legislative provisions required to implement the Government's other policy objectives on community care in Northern Ireland. However, the delay enabled us to gain valuable experience from the Registered Homes Act 1984, so it has helped us in providing for vulnerable people in a community setting.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) asked why the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991, which refers to the registration of small homes, was not made directly applicable to Northern Ireland. That is a fair question. The answer is that it would not have been possible. The 1991 Act amended the 1984 Act, which does not apply to Northern Ireland. The existing Northern Ireland legislation already required small homes to be registered. The order re-enacts the existing Northern Ireland provision and states specifically what will be required of small homes as opposed to larger homes.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann also pointed out that mental nursing homes are a separate category in the 1984 Act and he wanted to know why there was no mention of such homes in the order. In providing for the registration of mental nursing homes as a separate category of nursing home, the Registered Homes Act 1984 seeks to make special provision in the case of cancellation of registration or the death of the registered person for patients in the home detained under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Replication of such a provision in Northern Ireland legislation is not required because a mentally disordered person can be compulsorily detained under the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 only in a statutory hospital or institution—in practice, a psychiatric or mental handicap hospital or unit—or in a private hospital as defined in article 90 of part 7 of the 1986 order. There are currently no such private hospitals in Northern Ireland. Therefore, article 90 has not been brought into effect.

It is not thought necessary to define a special category of mental nursing home because in Northern Ireland people with a mental illness or mental handicap may be admitted to nursing homes, but only on a voluntary basis. The registration and inspection powers accorded to boards by this order in respect of nursing homes will enable the boards to safeguard the welfare of all patients of nursing homes whatever may be their individual health status or care needs.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann and the hon. Member for North Down referred to justices of the peace. The hon. Member for Antrim, North believed that there was sloppy drafting of the term "justice of the peace". I pay tribute to the noble people who take up the responsibilities of justices of the peace in Northern Ireland.

The 1984 Act in respect of England and Wales refers to justices of the peace. We followed the term in the drafting of the order because the Northern Ireland courts service had to examine the issue. Once the issue had been examined, the service felt that it should be approved because of the need for urgent cancellation of a licence. As the hon. Member for North Down said, if an unsuitable person is running a home, that person should be put out of business as soon as possible.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North asked me to define "widespread" in terms of consultation. Clearly, that is a matter of opinion. The hon. Gentleman also referred to the home at Broughshane. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will write to me or to my noble Friend Lord Arran. The hon. Gentleman said that my noble Friend is aware of the case, but I assure him that I shall ask for the matter to be investigated again. That applies also to the serious case involving the death to which he referred.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I have already contacted Lord Arran.

Mr. Hanley: The Department has assured me that it is not aware of that. If it is meant to be aware of it, we shall certainly look into it again.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The Minister's colleague has replied to me. I have a letter on my desk saying that he had received my message and that he had taken care of it. He was indignant that the board had done in Broughshane what it should not have done.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful for that information. Neither I nor the officials advising me today were aware of that and I apologise for that. However, if my noble Friend Lord Arran knows about the matter, I am sure that he is dealing with it properly.

There are four or five other points to which I could refer. However, I hope that the House will have heard enough about the order to give it the same treatment as was given to the main legislation—that is, to allow it to go through without a Division. I am grateful to the hon. Member for North Down for his comments. If the order is lost, however, it will not be just for a month, as some hon. Members have stated. We shall have to republish a proposal, reconsult and queue again for parliamentary time—and the very people to whom the hon. Gentleman referred will suffer. We would not be waiting for the Danes before enacting the legislation—it might take a lot longer than that.

Hon. Members will agree that I have listened carefully to the points that have been made and I hope that I have dealt with the vast majority of them. I remain convinced that the provisions in the draft order will make a significant contribution to safeguarding the welfare of people in Northern Ireland who require care in private voluntary sector residential care homes and nursing homes. I commend the order to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 187, Noes 147.

Division No. 85] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.

Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Tyler, Paul
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Jones and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Registered Homes (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 19th October, be approved.

PETITION

Pit Closures

10.12 pm

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): I rise to present a petition, which has been signed by 16,000 of my constituents and other residents of north-east Wales, in support of the Point of Ayr colliery, which is threatened with closure.

The petition draws attention to the increasing reliance that Fiddler's Ferry power station places on imported coal, which is unacceptable, and to the fact that new mining methods have been introduced at the pit which have not been taken into account when assessing its viability.

The petition ends by asking

your honourable House to instruct British Coal to withdraw the proposal to close Point of Ayr colliery.

I fully support the petition and I am pleased to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), who represents the area around Fiddler's Ferry power station, is here to support it.

To lie upon the Table.

Sex Offences (Clinics)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

10.13 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): This issue is serious and difficult to talk about. It is certainly difficult for Parliament to discuss and for the children who are the victims of sexual abuse. I raise this matter with some sadness because I had an Adjournment debate on a similar issue three years ago. One of my main questions this evening is, what progress has been made on that sensitive and important matter since I first raised it in the House? It is clear that we need to do far more to help the victims of the sexual abuse of children—the children themselves—and to develop preventive measures to reduce the incidence of that horrendous crime. We must stop it before it can occur.

The problem that I highlighted in the Chamber some three years ago has not gone away. Indeed, the fact that we find it a little easier to talk about it these days means that the full extent of the phenomenon is only just becoming known. I want the Minister to lay before the House tonight the progress that has been made in the past three years and, more importantly, the Government's plans to extend the victims' ability to be assisted and society's ability to ensure that the perpetration of those crimes cannot take place.

It is customary in Adjournment debates for the time to be split between the person who raises the debate and the Minister who replies. Having spoken to the Minister, I hope to do it slightly differently this time. I spoke at great length on the subject in 1989 and I am happy to send a copy of my speech in *Hansard* to any hon. Members who wants further elaboration of the case. With the Minister's permission, I want to allow him a little more time to outline the Government's progress and future plans on the matter.

I say that with all due respect to the individuals and organisations that have briefed me in the past few days since I was fortunate enough to draw the Adjournment debate. Those organisations included the National Children's Home; the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children; Nottinghamshire county council's social services department, which has been doing an excellent job in individual cases recently; the child abuse studies unit at the university of North London; and many others. They are all deeply concerned about the debate but want to hear what the Government have to say rather than another exposition of the case from me.

I wish to make three brief points for the Minister to consider, not only tonight but also in more measured time outside the Chamber. First, there is only one private clinic for the treatment of sex offenders. It is important that, where those people are seen to need treatment, treatment should be made available for them. I have proposed in the past that there should be not just one private clinic to try to break into the problem but a clinic in each region of the United Kingdom. There should be a centre so that we do not have to reinvent the wheel whenever a horrendous case comes to the public's attention. There would then be a body of knowledge so that victims could be assisted wherever they were found.

Secondly, we need a national centre so that all the research done by the police, the social services, voluntary bodies and academics can be brought together centrally. With that knowledge pooled, the best practices can be better distributed around those who need to know the information.

Thirdly, I want the Minister to consider a question which I have pursued since 1989 and which I shall pursue again this evening—the total funding for research into how victims of child sexual abuse can be helped even more than they are now. I appreciate that there are tremendous difficulties currently and I am sure that the Minister has been battling valiantly to save existing programmes, let alone extend them. However, for an investment of £1 million, £2 million or £3 million—peanuts in public expenditure terms—the sum total of human misery can be dramatically reduced by ensuring that victims of child sexual offences are properly assisted to rebuild their shattered lives. With that remark, I shall leave the remaining minutes to the Minister, who has kindly consented to take occasional interventions.

10.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): I congratulate the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on securing this debate on an important subject. I know that his interest in the subject goes back over a number of years, and I read the report of his earlier Adjournment debate on the issue in 1989.

We are in complete agreement in the House on the seriousness of the issue and the fact that it needs to be considered by the House from time to time. Therefore, I am glad of the opportunity to update the hon. Gentleman on the progress that we have made in the past three years. The subject is highly sensitive, and one that, for too long, society has regarded as taboo. That fact has inhibited discussion on the subject, and the fact that there is now a greater openness in our thinking and discussion of it is itself a prerequisite, and helpful in achieving the sort of solutions that we both want. It is appropriate to take this opportunity to clarify the current position on the treatment for sexual offenders and their victims, who are all too often children. The subject obviously affects Government Departments other than my own, but I am glad to have the chance to respond to the hon. Gentleman.

In the case of convicted sex offenders, the provision of clinics or treatment centres based within the community to deal with their offending behaviour is essentially a matter for local provision. I heard with interest the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that there should be more regional centres. It is important to recognise that, before a perpetrator of sexual offences is referred or directed to such centres, he would, of course, have been tried in the courts and a decision taken as to whether he is suitable for a sentence other than that of imprisonment. The paramount interest has to be one of public protection. In the great majority of more serious cases, the court decides that it is right for sex offenders to go to prison. Some of those men may come later into treatment as a condition of parole after serving their prison sentence.

For the small number of men who are convicted of sexual offences but do not go to prison—currently fewer than 1,500 a year—we believe that, in carefully controlled circumstances, community treatment can have an important and effective role in reducing their sexual offending behaviour. The probation service has played a major part in that development in collaboration with local authorities, the national health service and the independent sector.

A recent Home Office study found that nearly all of the 55 probation areas in England and Wales has in place community-based treatment programmes for sex offenders, and those that did not have such programmes were planning them. The majority of those programmes are not residentially based but require the offender, as part of his probation order, regularly to attend a session at which, probably in a group with other sex offenders, he is confronted with his offending behaviour, and his distorted thinking about it, and its consequences for his victims. The work, which is sometimes called "victim empathy", means that, although the probation service cannot claim to "cure" sexual offending, it can aim to contain it so that sex offenders are helped to a position where they are sufficiently aware of their cycle of offending behaviour and sufficiently in control of it not to commit further offences.

In some cases, where it is not possible or appropriate for sex offenders to continue living in the home, they can as part of probation orders be housed in a probation hostel. Whilst treatment does not normally take place in those hostels, they provide a supportive but a challenging background to it; hostel staff have a part to play in encouraging offenders to continue the process of confronting their offence, begun by their colleagues in treatment.

In other cases, the probation service may have taken a decision that it would be an appropriate use of resources to place sex offenders on probation orders, and also on parole licence—for example, in the Gracewell institute. That institute combines treatment and residence, and provides more long-term supervision than can be achieved without an accommodation requirement. The decision on whether to use the institute is at the discretion of individual probation areas and will become increasingly dependent on both the resources that they have and on the sort of in-house provision that they can provide. Increasingly, that in-house provision will draw heavily on the practice developed at the Gracewell institute.

The individual needs of sex offenders do, of course, vary. So do the health and social service responses, which include a range of behaviourial and psycho-therapeutic techniques, as well as medication. There is a good deal of professional debate about the management of sex offenders, whether all or only some are amenable to treatment, and the presence or otherwise of links between sexual offending and any mental disorder.

As a result, sex offenders are assessed by psychiatrists and psychologists and other professionals in a variety of settings. Some may then attend specialised services or be seen at out-patient or day clinics; others may not be suitable for health care intervention. Some with mental health care needs may be in hospital or other mental health provision. They will include some people detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 who meet the criteria of that legislation relating to mental disorder. The Act makes it clear that a person may not be dealt with under its provisions by reason only of promiscuity or other immoral conduct or sexual deviancy.

The Department of Health and the Home Office review of services for mentally disabled offenders, known as the Reed review, whose final report we shall be publishing shortly, produced a discussion paper on sex offenders with mental health needs. That was issued for consultation in

[Mr. Tim Yeo]

June and focused on the introduction by the prison service of structured programmes for sex offenders, the implications of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 for health and social services, and proposals for further research. We shall be looking at the recommendations made in that paper as part of our consideration of the review.

The Criminal Justice Act is likely to increase calls on health and social services in two areas—at the point of sentence, and in support of treatment programmes. Such involvement is necessary to ensure that offenders receive a proper multidisciplinary assessment and, leading on from that, possible access to services. Health and social services will be involved in validating and monitoring programme content and in professional supervision.

At present only a small number of clinics are known to be providing specialised care for sex offenders as a specific client group. These do so mainly as part of services for a broader range of clients. Apart from the Gracewell clinic in Birmingham, probably the best known is the Portman clinic in London, which receives Government support through top-sliced funding. The allocation this year for the Portman and the adjacent Tavistock clinic is £4·5 million.

Some of the specialised mental health services that provide in part for sex offenders with a mental disorder are also supported through central capital or revenue funding. These include regional secure units, for which capital funding this year has been increased to £18 million, from £3 million last year. They also include the special hospitals, which provide psychiatric services in conditions of high security. The future of these services is being examined by a working group announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health in the light of the Reed review and the report by Sir Louis Blom-Cooper on Ashworth hospital.

The Gracewell clinic, which is currently being evaluated, is the first residential clinic of its kind and receives a number of its referrals from health and local authorities. It provides full-time treatment programmes for sex offenders who need intensive therapy to gain control of their behaviour. It can also provide assessments of adult and young offenders, as well as risk assessment reports. Training and research are important elements. The Home Office is currently helping to fund the evaluation project, which is based on the Gracewell clinic and on several probation areas. This will be helpful in determining future service development.

I now turn to the question of child victims of sexual abuse. The Department of Health launched a centrally funded child abuse treatment initiative in 1990-91. The first stage of the initiative was the National Children's Home survey of existing treatment facilities for abused children and young perpetrators. The Department of Health is currently making grants to support a number of projects by voluntary organisations providing different types and ranges of treatment. These include a residential therapeutic centre for children, family service units working with families facing severe difficulties and children who have been abused, a child and family therapy project addressing the problems of child sexual abuse, a treatment facility for adolescent sex offenders.

Two studies, one of sexually abused children and adolescents, the other of young sex offenders, which will be evaluated to establish the characteristics of the treatments which are associated with more and less successful outcomes, are also under way. Various projects undertaken by the National Children's Home include a telephone and face-to-face counselling service, a child protection system and a pilot study of projects working with young offenders. There is additionally a research project by the Institute of Child Health to evaluate the effectiveness of the various models of treatment for sexually abused children and young sex offenders.

In 1991-92, £300,000 was made available for projects undertaken under the treatment initiative. This has increased to more than £400,000 this year. The total made available over the five-year period since the inception of the initiative will be £1·8 million. Many of the more severely abused children will require treatment by the NHS. Every child suspected of having been sexually abused will need to be assessed under the child protection procedures set out in the Government's guidance "Working Together". Not all these cases will be proven. Of those who are, all will need protection, but not all will show emotional disturbance significant enough to require additional specialist therapeutic intervention.

I should like to focus briefly on another aspect of our work in relation to child sexual abuse—the importance that we attach to up-to-date, properly targeted and thoroughly evaluated training. In this respect, we have achieved a great deal through our centrally funded child abuse training initiative. This is now a well-established scheme to stimulate training of staff from different agencies in child protection, through support for selected projects and courses. Since the initiative was announced in 1986, we have given nearly £3 million in grants to a diverse range of voluntary organisations and institutions for different training materials and events.

We began the first phase of the initiative with two projects. One, which we have now supported for several years, took the form of a course designed for experienced professionals from a range of disciplines, working at the sharp end with child sexual abuse. It aims to give trainers additional skills both in training and in promoting assessment and treatment services provision for abused children and their families. The course has been administered at the department of psychological medicine based at the Institute of Child Health, Great Ormond Street hospital.

The second of the earliest projects was a training advisory resource based at the National Children's Bureau. We are now supporting the successor to that resource, in the shape of the child abuse training unit, also based at the bureau. As well as producing its own material, it offers an evaluation and consultancy service on training related to child abuse including child sexual abuse.

Since those early longer-term resources were established, the child abuse training initiative has enabled us to support an increasing number of specific projects with different voluntary organisations. One major partner has been the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, with a grant of £800,000 over three years, ending last year, towards the national training centre in Leicester. Other projects have been designed to stimulate multidisciplinary work, such as work by the English Nursing Board, to determine an effective model of teaching and learning in child protection among social services and health professionals.

In the crucial area of investigation of sexual abuse, we are funding the Open university to produce a training pack on interviewing in cases of suspected sexual assault on a child.

Mr. Allen: I am sure that the Minister will want to join me in paying tribute to members of staff of voluntary organisations and social service departments who have to deal with these offences. Those of us who have had to deal with them on a constituency basis have found them stomach-churning, and those who have to deal with them from start to finish, certainly in Nottinghamshire, are often in need of therapy to help them to come to terms with some of the horrific details. I am sure that the Minister will agree that these people are nothing less than heroic.

Mr. Yeo: I am happy to join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to those professionals working for the voluntary organisations and the local authorities. Their work is among the most distressing that I have ever encountered, dealing with situations which are horrific to those of us who have what I would call normal instincts. Some difficult and sensitive judgements often have to be made about whether a family is capable of being rebuilt, whether relationships can be retrieved, or whether more direct intervention is needed.

The Open university work will build on and amplify the memorandum of good practice issued by my Department and the Home Office last August. The memorandum was drawn up in consultation with a number of voluntary organisations in the light of the implementation of the important child evidence provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. I shall be launching the Open university training material early next year.

Only last week, I was glad to welcome the training manual produced by the voluntary organisation Kidscape, which provides material for people directly caring in some way for children, many of whom may not think of themselves as having a child protection role at all. With the benefit of this material, first-line carers such as health visitors, child minders, foster parents, day care workers, school nurses and nursery nurses may be able to help children to protect themselves, and the carers themselves will have a greater confidence about the work that they undertake with children who have suffered sexual abuse.

The hon. Gentleman will be familiar with a recent case in Nottingham, which he did not mention but which has been in all our minds recently. It was a case of alleged sexual abuse in which the local authority wanted the person concerned to leave the family home. It was not a criminal case, but it was the subject of an application to the High Court, so I do not want to make any detailed comment about it, but the example is instructive in a number of ways.

It is for the local statutory and voluntary organisations to assess the need and provision of treatment services for child sexual abusers, in co-operation with one another.

In the Nottingham case, local arrangements were eventually made to fund the person concerned at the Gracewell clinic. The Department looks for opportunities to promote best practice in suspected cases of sexual abuse of children and it is due to host a continuation of the series of annual national conferences of the chairmen of area child protection committees. Those should provide a chance to raise the issue of the treatment of suspected sexual abusers and make the subject a high priority on the agenda of those committees for future action.

Mr. Allen: I hope that the Minister will take a personal interest in the way that that side of the problem develops. The question of best practice is fundamental to achieving a solution where a solution is humanly possible. The best practice was not being deployed in the case to which the Minister referred, through no malice on the part of any of the parties involved.

It is instructive that the Nottinghamshire social services department, one of the best in the country, sadly with all too much experience in dealing with such cases, did not immediately make the connection that the district health authority could, in certain circumstances, step in and pay the £15,000 cost for a year's treatment for this particular individual at Gracewell. That in itself tells us something. Even where there is awareness of the problem, best practice connections are not always made.

The Minister, from his privileged vantage point at national level, could do much to ensure that local authorities, voluntary organisations and district health authorities pull together to make sure that such a situation does not occur again.

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. There is a variety of sources from which funds may be available to pay for treatment at a place such as the Gracewell institute, and the health service route will certainly be the appropriate method of referral and financial support for some patients.

If we are to promote good practice around the country, it is clearly crucial to establish the closest possible relationships and the best possible collaboration between the social services and health authorities, in this context and, indeed, in others. We are keen to promote that spirit of co-operation so that alternatives are considered for each case. I hope that, in that way, we can arrive at the right solution for every offender or potential offender.

Our research initiative on child protection should be ready to publish some of its findings next year, and the subject of sexual abuse continues to be a priority on our agenda. Back in 1988, we identified five key issues—whether to remove the people concerned from the home; the co-ordination of services; parental experience of investigation; control within the family; and routine treatment and outcome. New research projects have been funded as other issues concerned with the subject have been identified.

So far, the research initiative has consisted of 13 projects, centring around three areas: patterns of abuse, the operation of a child protection system, and questions addressing intervention and outcome, especially routine intervention. In addition to spending on projects covering both physical and sexual abuse of children, the amount allocated for research into child sexual abuse has increased considerably over the equivalent sum three years ago. In the Department of Health, it is about four times greater than it was in 1989; and across my Department, the Home Office and the Scottish Office social work services group, this type of expenditure has more than tripled over the same period.

The effective dissemination of research is also vital to ensure that findings are effective in practice, and that they influence the delivery of services. In 1985, my Department

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produced a document, "Social Work Decisions in Child Care", which provided a digest of research findings of the time. Last year it was followed by an equally successful publication, "Looking After Children: Assessing Outcomes in Child Care", produced by an independent working party. A dissemination programme, now in the discussion stage, is planned for next year with the intention of publishing the findings of the studies in their own right. That will allow the material to be more accessible to practitioners, trainers, managers and students.

Dissemination of information about child abuse is vital. I welcome the recent issue of a "Strategic Statement on Working with Abusers" from the interdepartmental group on child abuse. The group comprises representatives from several Departments, and provides a forum in which relevant child protection issues can be considered. The group noted that, although the major focus of work in the field of child abuse had been concentrated on the investigation and management of abuse, there was a growing interest in the treatment of the abused child and the abuser.

To forestall piecemeal development in that regard, the group has established a sub-group on working with offenders, with the dual remit of pooling information about the range and nature of available treatment facilities and developing a strategic approach to the subject to include both research and development work. The strategic statement on working with abusers——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at seventeen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 12 November 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Madam Speaker *in the Chair*]

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Boundaries Commissions Act 1992
Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) Act 1992
London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) Act 1992
Price's Patent Candle Company Ltd. Act 1992
Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 4) Act 1992

PRIVATE BUSINESS

British Railways (No. 4) Bill *(By Order)*

British Waterways Bill *[Lords] (By Order)*

Crossrail Bill *(By Order)*

East Coast Main Line (Safety) Bill *(By Order)*

Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords] (By Order)*

Woodgrange Park Cemetery Bill *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 19 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Subcontractors (Payments)

1. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new proposals he has to assist the prompt repayment of debts to subcontractors from contractors employed by Government Departments.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): All contractors to a Government Department are required to commit themselves by contract to their subcontractors to pay promptly, ordinarily within 30 days.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Chief Secretary realise that many prime contractors do not consider paying their debts until writs have been issued and that that adds greatly to the climate of fear that is paralysing much of British industry? Will he assure us that the 30-day limit will be rigidly applied? At the moment, there are many exemptions. Will the Chief Secretary consider introducing the right to claim interest on all debts that are not paid within 30 days?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman has pursued that matter assiduously with me in correspondence and parliamentary questions. It is a requirement that there should be a commitment within the contract to pay within 30 days. That has been with us since April and the Government take it very seriously. I should be happy to take up on the hon. Gentleman's behalf any case that has arisen. It is possible, as he said, for a company to pursue the matter through the courts. It is also possible for the Government to take account of poor performance when awarding future contracts. Those are the best remedies, rather than imposing interest payments, but the hon. Gentleman may wish to pursue a particular case with me.

Mr. James Hill: Is my right hon. Friend aware that that system is not working, particularly in the private sector? If a subcontractor objects to the main contractor about non-payment within 30 days, he will probably never be given another contract. It is impossible to legislate for such an event. This must be part of the moral factor of a contract that the Government should emphasise in both the public sector and the private sector.

Mr. Portillo: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is easier to see this as part of a culture than as a matter where legislation would be effective, although I do not rule that out entirely for all time. The Government have made efforts to improve the small claims court procedure, which requires large companies to report on their performance in their report and accounts. As I said to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), we have taken steps with our own contractors regarding the way in which they deal with subcontractors.

Mr Beggs: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it is desirable that subcontractors are protected? A serious problem, which must be addressed, is that after a main contractor has taken over a contract, the subcontractor having been approved by a Government Department, the main contractor could go into liquidation, with no protection for the subcontractor. Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to look into that problem and endeavour to protect subcontractors?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting and difficult problem. I am not sure to what extent Government protection can be extended in these cases. It might help me, however, if the hon. Gentleman were to refer to me the case that he has in mind and we could see whether any general lessons could be drawn from it.

Inflation

2. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of the rate of producer price inflation.

7. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest assessment of the prospect for inflation.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): Producer price inflation for manufacturing, excluding food, drink and tobacco, is estimated to have been 2·5 per cent. in October—the lowest rate of increase since May 1969. I shall outline my latest assessment of the prospects for inflation when I present my autumn statement later today.

Mr. Evennett: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that information. Does he agree that low inflation gives British industry a great opportunity? Furthermore, will he urge British business men to build on the Government's achievement of low inflation by going out into world markets and selling more British goods?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Low inflation is the most important aspect of competitiveness. As long as other countries have low inflation, we cannot afford to have high inflation. That is why it is good news for our exporters to Europe that our level of inflation has been below the European Community average. I hope that our exporters will take the maximum advantage of that.

Mr. Carrington: The news about inflation is extremely good. Does my right hon. Friend agree, however, that the dangers of an increase in inflation are ever present in the economy, particularly given the decrease in the value of the pound? Will he reassure the House that his determination to continue to fight inflation is undiminished?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise that excessive depreciation of the pound would endanger our inflationary objectives. That is why I have consistently made it clear that I am not prepared to take risks with inflation or the exchange rate. Having said that, the depreciation that we have experienced and the fact that our inflation is lower than the European average mean that our exporters have a considerable opportunity.

Mr. Beith: As the Chancellor often pointed out that the exchange rate mechanism partly helped us to achieve low inflation, is there a level below which he would not wish the pound to sink because of inflation dangers? If he will not tell us what that level is, how are markets to believe that he will pay more attention to the level, which may be in his mind, than to all the pressures from behind him?

Mr. Lamont: As I have repeatedly made clear, we do not have a formal or informal exchange rate target. But I have made it crystal clear that we believe in a strong exchange rate. The right hon. Gentleman asks why people should believe that we care about inflation or that we will do what is necessary. The one thing that cannot be denied is that in the past couple of years we have fought a tough battle, stuck with difficult policies and succeeded in getting inflation down from nearly 11 per cent. to under 4 per cent.

Mr. Skinner: Has not the Chancellor of the Exchequer got a cheek telling the House that he is capable of bringing down inflation, or anything else, after the misery of the past few weeks? Is this not the Chancellor of the Exchequer who borrowed £7·25 billion not to bolster social services but to throw money at the stock exchange, and the same Chancellor who condemns the Labour party for borrowing money to provide services despite throwing £10 billion down the black hole at his City *friends*?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong—I do not know whether intentionally or otherwise—if he is implying that money spent on supporting the pound might have been available for public expenditure. As he knows, we exchange one currency for another by using reserves or by borrowing. The cost to the public sector depends on what happens to the trend of the exchange rate. Much of the reserves that were deployed to support the pound were acquired at a lower level than that at which they were sold and we made a profit.

Mr. David Martin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the battle against inflation remains the central aspect of the Government's economic policy and that, in the long term, policies based on debauching the currency will lead only to economic ruin, as we saw for so many years under Labour Governments—when we last had them?

Mr. Lamont: I hope that I have made it clear that we have not gone through the past couple of years—the sacrifices, effort and difficult policies that have been pursued—to throw it all away. As various of my hon. Friends have said, a low rate of inflation is vital for our competitiveness and the future of jobs and therefore important to the country as a whole.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Given all that the Chancellor says about the prospects for inflation, will he explain why, in the months after devaluation, input prices for manufacturers rose by 2·5 per cent. in only four weeks? In answer to a question on inflation several months ago, the right hon. Gentleman said that unemployment was a price worth paying. Will he now apologise to the million people who have lost their jobs since he made that statement? Can he now tell us when unemployment will come down?

Mr. Lamont: The most important thing for unemployment is, first, that we get recovery and, secondly, that we have low inflation. Those are the most important factors that will affect unemployment.

I am certain of one thing about input inflation: those figures in that one month do not reflect the depreciation of the pound. The hon. Gentleman may have noticed that producer output inflation, minus food, drink and tobacco, was the lowest since May 1969. The trend of producer prices is a good guide to future inflation and is extremely encouraging.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. Friend agree that low inflation figures are one of the factors that are crucial for restoring consumer confidence? Will he deplore the practice of certain business organisations, political and economic pundits and Opposition Members who constantly talk down every good statistic that is published, thereby undermining any increase in confidence?

Mr. Lamont: I agree with my hon. Friend. Indeed, I have made the same point from time to time. My hon. Friend is also right to say that low inflation is vital for consumer confidence.

Devaluation

3. **Mr. Betts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the future effect on United Kingdom inflation of the devaluation since he suspended the United Kingdom's membership of the exchange rate mechanism.

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): As my right hon. Friend said just now, he will be publishing a revised forecast of prospects for inflation in the autumn statement in the usual way.

Mr. Betts: Given the Chancellor's previous statements of confidence about the level of inflation—a confidence which is not shared by many private sector analysts, including the London Business School—why do the Government wish to rejoin the ERM? Do they intend to rejoin the ERM before or after the Danish referendum?

Sir John Cope: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we pay tribute to the ERM, for the way in which it has helped us to get inflation down. That is part of the reason why we will re-enter the ERM when times are right.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the recent easing of monetary policy is by no means inconsistent with a policy of keeping inflation low, provided that we maintain controls over public expenditure, particularly revenue expenditure?

Sir John Cope: Indeed, and we shall hear more about that later today. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has reaffirmed that he is not prepared to take risks with inflation.

Mr. Darling: Notwithstanding what the Chancellor said about the 2 per cent. rise in input prices last month, does the Minister not accept that, although there is spare capacity in the United Kingdom economy, our economic base is so weak that, unless remedial action is taken, there will be a substantial risk that inflation will rise beyond the upper estimate of 4 per cent. which the Chancellor gave? Can we take it from the Minister's comments about the ERM and his tribute to it that the Government regard a managed exchange as being dead?

Sir John Cope: On the contrary, I said that we would rejoin the ERM when times were right. As we have made clear before, that is what we shall do. There are still strong deflationary pressures in the pipeline.

Civil Service Relocation

4. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what payback period his Department demands for civil servant relocation projects; and what plans he has to bring these into line with those pertaining in private industry.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): In common with private industry, we require relocation proposals to offer good value for money.

Mr. Bruce: I am disappointed that my hon. Friend does not appear to know that the answer that I received from the Ministry of Defence about a week ago was that there was a 25-year pay-back period on relocation whereas private industry has a three-year pay-back.

My hon. Friend will see an announcement at 4 o'clock which will add to the relocation out of my constituency. A total of 2,300 jobs will be moving. The Treasury has approved some of these moves, at a cost of £60,000 per move. Will the Minister give an assurance that he will look at the matter with renewed vigour?

Mr. Dorrell: Of course, I understand the considerable impact that the proposals will have on my hon. Friend's constituency. He will know that the proposals are being announced, subject to discussion with the trade unions. Of course, we shall take those discussions seriously.

It is not correct to imply that there is a firm rule or a piece of algebra that exempts decision makers from the necessity to make a judgment. We do not define a piece of algebra. We ask people to apply a wide range of tests so that when proposals to relocate staff from one part of the country to another are put into effect, they can insist that good value for money is delivered to the taxpayer, taking all taxpayers into account.

Housing Market

5. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to assist the housing market; and if he will make a statement.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): A package of measures was implemented to reduce the number of repossessions. I also announced recently two measures—top-up loans and security substitution—to help borrowers with negative equity. The fall in mortgage interest rates should bring relief and help stimulate a revival of confidence in the housing market.

Mr. Duncan: I am grateful for that answer because the problem of negative equity is simply that, more often than not, people cannot move house even if they have a willing buyer. As it does not worsen the risk position of the lender in any way if a borrower moves into a similar house, will my hon. Friend put as much pressure as possible on lending institutions to allow people to move within the new guidelines? That would inject much-needed activity into that sector of the housing market.

Mr. Nelson: I agree with my hon. Friend. I acknowledge that negative equity can be a problem for some borowers. *[Interruption.]* For some borrowers, yes; for others, it is not a problem. The Bank of England recently estimated that up to 1 million people may find themselves with negative equity. I hope that the two measures that I have announced will help tens of thousands of negative equity borrowers. However, it will require the assistance of the building societies and their schemes. I hope that they will heed my hon. Friend's words.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Will the Minister consider making capital financing available, through either the borrowing allocation or the use of capital receipts, so that local authorities and housing associations can help people trapped by negative equity to buy houses that are empty, under do-it-yourself or other shared ownership schemes?

Mr. Nelson: Even under existing spending plans, it is anticipated that by the middle of the 1990s housing associations will spend about £2 billion a year; so a considerable commitment has already been made. I ask the hon. Lady to await the statement that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will make later.

Mr. Watts: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that mortgage lenders are as quick to pass on reductions in base rates as they are to pass on increases in base rates?

Mr. Nelson: I hear what my hon. Friend says, as will the building societies. Of course, the building societies also consider the competitive interest rates offered by other savings products. I, too, am mindful of that when influencing the rate of national savings products. I hope that the building societies will heed what my hon. Friend says if there are any further reductions in interest rates. Their alacrity in passing on reductions to borrowers will be welcome.

Ms. Harman: Given that the Government's policies have left 60,000 families homeless, 400,000 construction workers on the dole and 1·5 million families in houses that are worth less than their mortgage, does the Minister recognise the failure of the Government's policies? Does he recognise that the housing market will not pick up until the economy recovers? It is because the Government have no policies for recovery of the economy that the housing market continues to look gloomy.

Mr. Nelson: I acknowledge that the housing market has gone through a difficult period, as has the construction industry. However, to listen to the hon. Lady, one would think that there was no good news on the scene at all. Indeed, the good news is welcome. For example, there was strong growth in housing transactions in the third quarter of this year and a significant drop in the number of repossessions in the first half of this year. The affordability of homes for first-time buyers is extremely good. We do not want to fuel house price inflation and have the sort of housing boom that put housing beyond the reach of ordinary people and first-time buyers.

Mr. William Powell: Is my hon. Friend aware that a significant part of the problems in the housing sector has arisen as a result of negative equity in home income plans? Is he aware that all right hon. and hon. Members have constituents who have been adversely affected by the lending institutions' refusal to come to terms with some of the ruthless consequences of the sale of such plans? One of my constituents committed suicide because of it. Will my hon. Friend take a more active stance than hitherto in trying to bring the building societies and others to realise that they must solve the problems?

Mr. Nelson: I share the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend, and I know that they are shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House. The Government, too, have been concerned by the marketing of some of the home income plans—I replied in a debate on the issue in the House recently. The problem has been largely resolved for the future, but many people have still lost out in the meantime. That is why I welcome the fact that the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Organisation has set up a one-stop shop to try to resolve some of the problems. Again, that will require the assistance of the building societies and other lenders, which I hope will be forthcoming.

Balance of Payments

6. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he is taking to reduce the United Kingdom's balance of payments deficit.

Mr. Portillo: The recent reductions in interest rates, our low inflation and the competitive level of sterling offer significant opportunities to exporters and to firms competing against imports in domestic markets. The key to long-term success remains United Kingdom producers' ability to keep costs down and quality high.

Mr. Hall: Is the Minister aware that PowerGen has decided to import 6 million tonnes of coal from Colombia and China through the Liverpool docks? That will serve only to increase our balance of trade deficit. It will result in the closure of Parkside colliery, the only remaining pit in the Lancashire coalfield, and it has threatened the jobs at the Point of Ayr colliery. Will the Minister join me in condemning the politics of the madhouse, which we see here this afternoon?

Mr. Portillo: If coal is imported, clearly the balance of payments suffers to that extent—but that is not by any means the end of the story. If British industry is obliged to take electricity and other fuel supplies at prices higher than those paid by our competitors, that is bad for both imports and exports. The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is considering a broad range of issues in relation to the coal industry. The hon. Gentleman should not be allowed to get away with such a simplistic statement about the economics as they affect this country.

Mr. David Shaw: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the balance of payments deficit is relatively small compared with our gross national product and that it is well financed by the massive increase in overseas earnings from interest and dividends from successful British companies and investment overseas?

Mr. Portillo: The balance of payments is indeed financeable, but I should not like to say that it is small—clearly, it is a matter of concern to the Government, and that is why we pursue policies to enable our economy to grow and our manufacturers to do well in export markets. My hon. Friend made a good point about inward investment. As a result of Nissan's investment in this country, that company now exports half what it produces in Sunderland, and the United Kingdom is set to become a net exporter of television sets.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Is it not a measure of the Government's utter industrial failure that our balance of payments deficit is now running at £1 billion a month? When will the Government start backing British exporters, as other countries back theirs? What action will the Minister take to cut the export guarantee insurance premiums which so undermine the efforts of British exporters?

Mr. Portillo: There has been a substantial increase in the cover provided by the Export Credits Guarantee Department for our exporters. Last year, that cover provided for £2 billion worth of British exports. We have been fighting hard in the European Community to reduce trade barriers, and I believe that the single market is worth £400 million in savings to British business. We have successively cut the rate of corporation tax on businesses, which has given them a tremendous competitive advantage. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has led the fight to keep alive the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations, because that is the most important development possible for British exporters. All those measures have been substantial commitments to British business.

What is more, we have created a climate in Britain that has enabled us to attract half the investment into Europe from Japan and the United States. All that improves our export opportunities.

Public Sector Debt

8. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for net public sector debt as a proportion of gross domestic product; and what the equivalent figure was 10 years ago.

Sir John Cope: At the end of March 1992, net public sector debt amounted to 28¼ per cent. of GDP, compared with 47 per cent. at the end of March 1982.

Mr. Shersby: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his answer to what I can only describe as the Uxbridge question is most satisfactory and that my constituents will regard it as a record of prudent financial management by the Government, in sharp contrast to that of the last Labour Government? How does the position of the United Kingdom compare with that of our Community partners?

Sir John Cope: Yes, my hon. Friend is quite right. It is a great tribute to Conservative government over the years that we have such a strong position in that respect. Only Luxembourg in the Community has a better ratio of Government debt to GDP.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: How much of the change is due to debt repayment and how much to inflation? What contribution has privatisation of public assets made to the change—privatisation which has been carried out, as the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) could tell the Paymaster General, at a substantial loss to the public purse?

Sir John Cope: A whole series of factors have gone into it, not least tight control on Government spending over many years. Debt repayment has been very significant and places us in a much stronger position now.

Public Expenditure (Index Linking)

9. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many items of public expenditure are index linked.

Mr. Portillo: Certain social security benefits, public service pensions and some debt interest are linked to increases in prices either by statute or ministerial pledges.

Mr. Field: Does not indexation amount to institutionalising inflation, something the private sector can never afford and which the British taxpayer should not be asked to underwrite? With the retired population exceeding the working population for the first time in the nation's history by the year 2005, is not indexation the economics of the mad house?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good case for low inflation because inflation causes indexation to be a burden. I believe that people who have contributed all their lives to social security benefits are entitled to see those benefits rise in line with inflation. It is the Government's duty to ensure that inflation is kept to the minimum. My hon. Friend raises a most pressing problem for all economies in the west. As time passes and the retired population becomes larger, so the burden falling on the working population becomes very large indeed. That is one reason why the Government have been so keen to help people make provision for themselves beyond and outside the state sector with personal and occupational pensions.

Mr. Sheldon: On a day when even Sam Brittan accepts the need to learn from John Maynard Keynes, does the Chief Secretary to the Treasury agree with him? Will the right hon. Gentleman do something to promote sensible public investment?

Mr. Portillo: I do not think that I have seen the article to which the right hon. Gentleman has referred. However, we have made it perfectly clear throughout the public spending round that we believe that we should do all we can to protect capital spending. However, the extent to which we can do that depends on the extent to which we can find savings in current spending. Given the present levels of borrowing and spending, I believe that it would be irresponsible to propose, as the Labour party proposes, that we should borrow more.

Mr. Oppenheim: Are not we fortunate that spending on health in Britain has not been strictly index linked since 1979 bearing in mind that under this Government spending on the health service has increased far faster than inflation? In contrast, were not we unfortunate in the late 1970s that health spending was not index linked, bearing in mind that Labour slashed the hospital building programme and on one occasion cut nurses' pay in real terms?

Mr. Portillo: Yes. The instinct of the Labour party when it concerns itself with controlling public spending is to cut capital projects wherever it can. It always takes the short-term, short-sighted view. That is not the view which we would want to take. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that spending on the health service has increased far faster than inflation. But the case is much stronger. Because of our efficiency gains and the reforms that we have made to the health service, the output which we get from that money is even greater than the amount would suggest.

Mr. Salmond: Some public expenditure items are linked to inflation and some to population. Now that the right, hon. Gentleman has routed the Scottish Secretary of State on the Barnett formula, is not it convenient for him to judge these things on population since it means that the more he depopulates Scotland the less he has to spend on it? If expenditure on Scotland is to be judged by population why is not expenditure on the London docklands judged similarly?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman's last question is completely beside the point. He will find this afternoon that a very fair settlement has been made for Scotland. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be able to announce proudly the outcome of the public spending review. He has protected Scottish interests in a difficult round and he will have every reason to come away with considerable pleasure.

Debt-income Ratio

10. **Mr. Duncan-Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many G7 countries have achieved a fall in their debt-income ratio since 1980.

Mr. Nelson: Only the United Kingdom of the G7 countries has reduced its ratio of general Government debt to GDP since 1980. The ratio has fallen by over 19 per cent. to 35·4 per cent.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that these are significant figures? The simple fact that we are the only G7 country to have reduced the ratio, coupled with the earlier answer that, bar one, we are the lowest in the EC, makes a mockery of what the merchants of doom in the Opposition say when they make their comparisons with international figures. Does my hon. Friend agree that we should welcome these figures and trumpet them, which of course the Opposition will not do?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Our public sector debt of £195 billion is relatively low compared with other G7 countries. We are in that strong position partly because of the repayment of significant amounts of public debt in the late 1980s and also because of the significant growth that has taken place under the Conservative Government.

Mr. Tony Banks: Do not the figures that the Minister has just announced to the House make a clear case for massive public sector investment by the Government?

Mr. Nelson: That is typical of the hon. Gentleman. His party has always been the party of big spenders at somebody else's expense. His party has no qualms about handing on an inheritance of increased debt to the next generation and it has no worries about the impact of extra borrowing on interest rates and inflation.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. Friend agree that to reduce national debt as a proportion of GDP to the level of 1991 means that we will have to bear down heavily on public expenditure not just this year but for the foreseeable future?

Mr. Nelson: Again, my hon. Friend is absolutely right to make strictures about the need to restrain public expenditure. Unless growth is to increase dramatically, we will need to restrain the extent to which the public sector borrowing requirement is allowed to rise. That has implications for fiscal policy as well.

Government Deficits

11. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what date he estimates the United Kingdom will have met the convergence criteria on Government deficits as laid out in article 104c of the treaty of Rome, proposed under the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government have a long-standing commitment to avoid what the Maastricht treaty describes as "excessive budget deficits".

Mr. Soley: Given that the Government could already meet the criteria of article 104c, can the Minister tell us why they have deferred signing it? Is it for the political reason that if they sign it the European Commission could fine Britain? If so, does not that indicate that the Government have no serious intention towards the long-term convergence of the economies of Europe?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood completely the relevant provisions of the treaty. There is no provision there for the Commission to fine any member state for transgressing a single rule. The treaty provision requires the Commission to present a report to the Council in the event of a member state finding itself in a position where the Commission believes that it is running an excessive budget deficit. It is nowhere near as automatic as the hon. Gentleman's question implies.

Mr. Paice: Is it not abundantly clear that many countries that signed that treaty do not expect to reach those convergence criteria? Whereas this country decided not to support the move to the single currency until we know what the situation is, many other countries such as Italy will have to renegotiate because they will not be able to fulfil their obligations.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right to point out that, from the beginning of the negotiations, our position has been that we cannot reasonably commit ourselves to joining a single currency years in advance, when we are unaware of the circumstances in which that currency will come into effect. My hon. Friend is also right to suggest that other member states, and the people within them, are coming to realise the wisdom of that position.

Mr. Cryer: Does not article 104c imply an enormous handing over of economic power to the EEC? Would not Mr. Martin Bangemann be among those Commissioners who would initiate proceedings if the Government acceded to the full section of the treaty, which could result in the Council of Ministers taking a decision to fine the United Kingdom if we failed to raise taxes or to cut public expenditure? Also, is it not true that the United Kingdom Government would not be allowed to vote in such proceedings if we were subject to them?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman is advertising the importance of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's achievements in allowing us to make a decision to join, or not to join, a single European currency when we are able to take into account all the circumstances in which that currency will come into effect. Those circumstances are not yet clear.

Retail Sales

12. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his assessment of the latest trend in retail sales.

Sir John Cope: Retail sales volume has risen by a half of 1 per cent. in each of the past two quarters.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the figure gives some encouragement? Is it not a sign that the cuts in interest rates are working through? Does he agree that the prophets of doom and gloom, who thrive on bad news and who rubbish the economy at every turn, do great harm to this country?

Sir John Cope: My hon. Friend is right. It does no good to talk down this country in the way that some people do.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Can retail sales be expected to improve while the purchasing power of people is so low, with more than 3 million people unemployed, and while the incomes of large numbers of other poor people are deliberately kept low by the Government?

Sir John Cope: That is exactly the point. Retail sales have risen and that reflects the *fact* that people have had some money in their pockets and have been prepared to spend it.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the interest rate cuts since the 1990s, down from a peak of 15 per cent., have helped to generate retail sales and have meant lower mortgage rates—some of the lowest since the 1960s—and that, although those interest rate cuts have been welcome, another cut, sooner rather than later, would be most welcome?

Sir John Cope: I hear what my hon. Friend says. He is obviously right about the effect on retail sales.

Interest Rates

13. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he takes into account in setting the level of interest rates.

Mr. Dorrell: The level of interest rates is set so as to meet the Government's objectives for low inflation and sustained economic growth.

Mr. Cohen: Although lower interest rates are most welcome, is there not an underlying concern that the main criteria for setting the rate is the Chancellor's whim? Does not experience in the United States show that lower rates will not succeed unless they are matched by sustained investment?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman must be one of a relatively small group of people if he believes that there was not a case for reducing interest rates in recent months. We have set the interest rate at the level that we believe holds the balance between our inescapable obligation to hold down the rate of inflation, to safeguard long-term economic prospects, and our desire to create room for growth in the months ahead. Our success in reducing inflation in the past two years has allowed us to plan for growth.

Mr. Alexander: Will my hon. Friend remind the House that the inflation rate was 15 per cent. only two years ago? Will he tell the House about the great amount of money that must have gone into the economy as a result of people being able to spend more because they no longer have to pay so much in interest rates? Will he also remind the House, however, that if we reduce interest rates too far, that will work its way through to the value of the pound, the cost of imports and, eventually, the inflation rate and the cost to people of buying things?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is precisely right to identify that risk in the second part of his question.

On the first part of my hon. Friend's question, the reduction in base rates since their peak has reduced the cost base of British industry by £9 billion and has reduced the cost to a typical family with a £30,000 mortgage by £110 a month. It is precisely because we recognise the value of those reductions that we are so determined not to jeopardise the success that we have achieved in bringing inflation down and creating the opportunity for stable growth.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Garrett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Garrett: Today's unemployment figures confirm that Britain is in the longest recession since the 1930s and is still heading for the deepest recession since the 1930s. How would the Prime Minister describe his stewardship of the economy, when to most people it has been incompetent and callous?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman has been in the House long enough to know the difficulties that are faced not only here but elsewhere across Europe and beyond Europe. What the hon. Gentleman characteristically forgot to mention is that, this morning, notwithstanding the fact that every single figure in the unemployment increase is a personal tragedy, that increase is smaller than the average monthly increase has been for some considerable time. I hope that that will prove to be a welcome trend. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will set out some measures later on today of which I think the hon. Gentleman may approve.

Q2. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Devlin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, since his recent chat with Mr. Delors, it was reported in yesterday's American press that the French Government are hinting that a compromise on GATT may now be only just around the corner? I do not know what my right hon. Friend said to Mr. Delors when he popped into Downing street recently, but, for the sake of all those manufacturing industries in the north of England, will he keep on saying it please?

The Prime Minister: I shall certainly keep pressing the case for an early conclusion to the GATT round. I certainly welcome the assurance that the President of the Commission gave me last Friday about an early resumption of talks with the United States. I am delighted that that has subsequently been endorsed by the full Commission and equally pleased that Mr. MacSharry will be rejoining the talks. We will certainly continue to press for a very early conclusion. I believe that the Commission hopes to regroup on 20 November. It would be very agreeable if it were able to report a success with the United States so that the matter could then go to Geneva for final settlement.

Mr. John Smith: Will the Prime Minister tell us when he first knew that the Government guidelines on the export of arms-related machinery to Iraq were being breached?

The Prime Minister: Let me try, for the sake of the right hon. and learned Gentleman and a number of other hon.

Members of the House, to disentangle the true issues from some of the misunderstandings and wilder allegations of recent days.

Let me make the first and fundamental point that the issues raised by the Matrix Churchill case have been referred to an independent judicial tribunal. All the papers that the inquiry seeks will be available to it. All Ministers and officials who are asked to give evidence to that inquiry will be required to do so and the inquiry will be free to publish whatever material it wishes.

The second point relevant to the whole House, I think, is that every relevant aspect of the conduct of all Ministers will be open to scrutiny by the inquiry and I thoroughly welcome that. I will, if I may, clear a third point and that is that Ministers, in claiming public interest immunity, were doing what they were obliged to do by law. They signed such documents only as advised by counsel and the Attorney-General. It follows that they were not concealing information from the court. On the contrary, they were making available the relevant documents to the court. It was then for the judge to decide which of the documents should be protected by public interest immunity and which should not. I hope that that will clarify matters.

Mr. John Smith: Instead of answering a clear and direct question, the Prime Minister has issued a prepared statement. I remind him that this question goes right to the heart of the credibility of his Government. I ask him it again. When did he first know that the guidelines on arms-related exports to Iraq were being breached; what date, please?

The Prime Minister: It is not clear at all that they were breached. The first allegations that they might have been breached were made by *The Sunday Times* in late 1990. Following that article, I, together with the Cabinet Secretary, had a meeting with Mr. Alan Clark. At that meeting he told me that it was totally false to suggest that he was advising the companies concerned on how to prepare licence applications in such a way as to conceal military use. Mr. Clark took the same position in the written witness statement which he provided to the court. It was not until his testimony in the case, therefore, that I had any reason to believe that what he had told me and what was in the written witness statement might not correspond with his oral evidence.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister understand that if he thinks that the guidelines were not breached, he must be about the only person in this country who has arrived at that conclusion? Will the Prime Minister tell us whether, when he gave replies, in particular a reply to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) on the Liberal Benches on a previous occasion about exports to Iran being conducted in the light of the guidelines, that was the whole truth as he knew it at that time?

The Prime Minister: Every parliamentary answer that I have given or letter that I have dispatched has been based on the position as I understood it to be. I am utterly confident that that will be clear in Lord Justice Scott's inquiry.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that it is quite appalling for right hon. and hon. Gentlemen to go on the media and accuse my right hon. Friends of dishonourable conduct before— *[Interruption.]*—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will resume his seat unless he questions correctly. The Prime Minister has responsibility only for Government activities. Will the hon. Gentleman frame his question correctly or not?

Mr. Duncan-Smith: Yes, indeed, Madam Speaker. Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that all that he has said so far this week indicates that there will be a complete inquiry and that all will be revealed, honourable conduct included?

The Prime Minister: The House has that complete assurance. Indeed, if I had wished there not to be a complete inquiry and hon. Members to be open to questions, I might have followed the proposal of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and had an inquiry under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921, which would have made the matter sub judice in the House.

Mr. Ashdown: Is it not the case that the Prime Minister and the Government knew as early as July—that is, six months before the Prime Minister's letter to me—that the machine tools being exported to Iraq by Matrix Churchill and other companies were beyond peradventure being used to make munitions for the Iraqi army?

The Prime Minister: I have replied to the right hon. Gentleman's letter and the many media appearances that he has made. As he will see when he receives my letter, his second letter shows that he has completely misunderstood the position. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman asked a question; he might have the courtesy to listen to the answer. The right hon. Gentleman referred to my letter of 6 December and wrongly claimed that I misled him by concealing knowledge of the Matrix Churchill case when I explained the Government's policy on export licences for Iraq. That is not the case. If the right hon. Gentleman reads my letter, he will see that I refer in the second paragraph to an investigation by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise which was into Matrix Churchill. I made it clear that I could not comment in case I prejudiced any proceedings. That is the rational explanation for which the right hon. Gentleman asked. He failed to understand my correspondence.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the latest figures, for October, for manufactured car exports show an increase of no less than 37 per cent. on last year? Is he also aware that the Textile Alliance anticipates that the exports of the textile industry from the United Kingdom, at £4·8 billion, will be a record for this year? Does he agree that a newly competitive exchange rate will give British exporters the opportunity to improve even on that excellent performance?

The Prime Minister: Yes. That is certainly the case, and there is no doubt that car production rose very dramatically in September, and the figures for October, which were released today, suggest that production is holding up. I have no doubt that our present competitive exchange rate will improve that position.

Q3. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cryer: Instead of passing the buck continually to a vague and unsatisfactory inquiry, will the Prime Minister clean out the cesspit of the present Government by sacking all those Ministers who conspired to pervert the course of justice in the Matrix Churchill case in order to cover up a Government policy of encouraging the sale to Iraq of machinery which they knew was to be used for the manufacture of munitions and nuclear weapons? Or would that involve sacking himself?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is one of the foremost conspiracy theorists in the House and an acknowledged expert at muckraking. But not even he can call an independent judicial inquiry anything other than an impartial, clear-cut and independent inquiry. That is what we have ordered and that is what we shall have.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a great scandal that some local authorities are obstructing schools that want to become grant-maintained? Will he join me in welcoming the statement by the Secretary of State for Education that the law will be changed to make that obstruction impossible? Does he agree that most of that obstruction has come from Labour-controlled local authorities?

The Prime Minister: I think that that is a matter of fact and not conjecture. I very much welcome the action taken by my right hon. Friend in the Education Bill to ensure that parents have a proper choice. It is intolerable that some local education authorities should deliberately scare parents by claiming, entirely falsely, that by voting for grant-maintained status, they will damage their children's education. It is equally unacceptable that LEAs, as teachers' employers, should put pressure on staff to resist the ballots of parents.

Q4. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Mahon: Does the Prime Minister intend to retain the nurses' pay review body? If so, does he agree that, if that body is to have any relevance to the pay that nurses actually receive, the Government must accept its recommendations and fund them?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady will be able to hear my right hon. Friend's statement very shortly.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a private sector proposal to work the Markham Main colliery has been with British Coal for almost three weeks without any acknowledgement? Does he agree that that may suggest that British Coal does not want competition?

The Prime Minister: I shall pass my hon. Friend's remarks to the President of the Board of Trade. I have no knowledge of that particular proposal, but I have no doubt that it will be brought to British Coal's notice very speedily.

Q5. **Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Foster: Does the Prime Minister agree with those Conservative councillors in Bath who this week supported a motion expressing dismay at the deterioration of the national health service in Bath? Or does he support the comments of the Secretary of State who, on a recent visit, said of the closure of wards at the district hospital, of the loss of beds for the elderly mentally infirm and of the increased waiting lists for elective surgery that she thought they were "mere teething problems"?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman is just a little selective. He makes no mention of the fact that health service expenditure is up by more than 50 per cent. in real terms since 1979 or that, for every pound spent in 1979, nearly £4·50 will be spent this year. Neither did he mention the fact that the national health service will spend nearly £2,500 a year for every family of four in this country. No other Government would have provided those resources.

Mr. Ottaway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Sunday trading at Tesco superstore in Purley has resulted in an increased turnover, more jobs and a surplus of staff who want to work on a Sunday, and it is very popular with my constituents? Will he introduce legislation that clarifies that area of the law before an unacceptable compromise is introduced to the House in January?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, we have a manifesto commitment to bring forward proposals for reform once the European Court of Justice has settled the compatibility of the current law with the free trade provisions of the treaty of Rome. We expect that judgment in the Court in November and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will then make an announcement to the House about legislation.

Madam Speaker: Time's up. We now have a statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Autumn Statement

3.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make my autumn statement.

As usual, the main public expenditure figures and the full text of the Industry Act forecast will be available from the Vote Office as soon as I sit down. The printed autumn statement will be published next Wednesday, after which there will be a full debate in this House.

Following the announcement that I made in my Budget, next year the autumn statement will be brought together with our proposals for taxation in one annual Budget statement. This is, in my opinion, a long overdue reform. For one final year, however, I shall bow to tradition and leave my Budget proposals until the spring. But this autumn statement will also be the first occasion on which the Treasury's economic forecast will be presented alongside others. Two weeks ago, I announced my intention to establish a new panel of independent forecasters. That will be in operation for next year's Budget; but in the meantime, the forecast that I am publishing today will include some details of how the Government's own economic forecast compares with the view that other organisations have taken. I am sure this change is sensible and will be welcomed, in the House and outside.

This year's autumn statement has been drawn up against a background of continuing recession at home and renewed weakness abroad. Despite exceptionally low interest rates, confidence in the United States remains depressed. Industrial production has fallen sharply in Japan, and the countries of continental Europe face the prospect of continuing high interest rates and a marked slowdown in Germany.

It is not surprising, therefore, that here in Britain, the recovery which nearly all forecasters expected at the time of the Budget has still not become established.

There has been an encouraging increase in retail sales, but the housing market remains depressed and confidence has taken a severe blow from the turmoil in the foreign exchange markets that led to sterling's suspension from the exchange rate mechanism.

Against that difficult background, a strategy that brings renewed confidence and a return to growth is more essential than ever, but the Government have no intention of engineering a short-lived boom that would lead swiftly to higher inflation and higher interest rates. Our objective is sustainable, long-term growth and our strategy to achieve that is based on three clear principles.

First, with the pound floating, a completely new framework is required for monetary policy. Interest rates are now set according to British monetary conditions—to meet the target that I have established for inflation. Underlying inflation will be kept within the range of 1 to 4 per cent., and our aim is to get it down to the lower half of that range by the end of this Parliament. Low inflation is the key to sustainable growth and a lasting reduction in unemployment.

I have set out clearly the indicators that will guide our assessment of how far we are on track to meet our inflation objectives. The exchange rate, asset prices and the growth of narrow money are all taken into account. Today, I can announce the monitoring range that I intend to use for the broad measure of money, M4. For the second half of this financial year, that range will be 4 to 8 per cent.

Madam Speaker, as I have explained to the House before, in the past few months of our ERM membership, monetary policy was tighter than was actually needed to deliver our inflation objective. It is crucial that monetary policy should not be so lax that the private sector faces higher inflation, but nor should it be so tight that money demand is inadequate.

Outside the ERM, I have been able to rebalance policy by cutting two percentage points off interest rates. That, in itself, will provide a significant boost to the economy, without re-igniting inflation. Despite the fall in the exchange rate, I expect underlying inflation to be below 4 per cent. by the end of next year. In common with most economic forecasters, I expect gross domestic product to rise next year, by about 1 per cent., following a fall of a similar magnitude in 1992.

My second principle is that there must be an appropriate balance between fiscal and monetary policy. Above all, public spending must be kept under firm control. The Government therefore put in place last July a clear medium-term strategy for the control of public spending, designed to ensure that public expenditure declines as a share of GDP over time. The new system is based on a top-down approach. Clear and affordable limits are set for the total level of public spending, and the Government can then settle their priorities through a process of collective discussion—involving first a new Cabinet Committee, and then the full Cabinet itself.

The third key principle of the Government's strategy is that the best way to increase the long-run growth rate in the economy is to make markets work better, so we will be pressing ahead with our policies on privatisation, deregulation, cutting out waste, and keeping the tax burden on companies and individuals as low as we can. We must also fight for the interests of British business in world markets, and provide them with the best environment in which they can compete and succeed. In the short term, that means securing a successful outcome to the GATT round.

Low inflation, tight control of public spending, open markets, competition, and a vigorous supply side policy—those are the principles of the Government's strategy, and they provide the right framework for economic growth. I do not believe that Governments can spend their way out of recession. It is individuals and companies in the private sector that are the engine of economic growth.

But that does not mean that, once the right economic framework is in place, the Government's task is complete. The Government too are investing for the future, in the nation's infrastructure and the development of human capital. As I said in my Mansion house speech, the Government have also been looking at specific policies to ease the path to recovery. I shall be announcing later in my statement a series of measures to rebuild confidence, to help industry and strengthen the economy.

Taking account of those measures, I expect the public sector borrowing requirement in the current year to rise to about £37 billion. Of course, that is high, but borrowing is bound to rise in a recession; and it would be damaging to seek to prevent it from doing so at this moment. As the economy recovers, it is absolutely vital that borrowing is brought back towards balance. We have made an excellent start today with a tight overall settlement for public spending.

Much of the recent increase in the PSBR reflects the rapid growth in expenditure on social security benefits, and that has also damaged the financial position of the national insurance fund. In normal circumstances, it would have been necessary to raise national insurance contributions, to reduce that shortfall; but, given the current weakness of the economy, I do not believe that this would have been appropriate.

Accordingly, while the upper and lower earnings limits and the thresholds of the bands for the employers' contribution will be indexed as usual, the rates for national insurance contributions will remain unchanged. I have agreed with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security that the fund should receive a Treasury grant to make up the shortfall.

Let me now turn to the Government's public spending plans. In this survey, the priority was clear. It was vital to put the needs of the economy first. Therefore, within a tight overall settlement, we have sought, wherever possible, to protect programmes, especially capital programmes, that will promote recovery and Britain's longer-term prospects.

At current levels of borrowing, the amount we have to pay in debt interest is rising rapidly, diverting billions of pounds a year away from spending on services. Against that background, the Cabinet decided in July to set a remit for the public spending round which would keep expenditure under firm control. That remit had two elements. For next year, we set ourselves the objective of sticking to existing cash plans. For the three survey years as a whole, our aim was to hold the growth of the new control total down to 1·5 per cent. or less, to keep the overall rate of growth in public spending to a rate below that of the economy as a whole.

Although our target for next year of £244·5 billion allowed a real increase of 4·5 per cent., the pressures for more spending have been intense, and we have had to consider carefully whether the original targets were achievable. However, I can now announce to the House that we have indeed achieved our target. The planning total for next year will be £244·5 billion. As a result of certain definitional changes, I should warn the House that the number which actually appears in the printed document will be slightly different. It will, in fact, be some £2 billion lower.

I can also announce that the new totals for 1994-95 and 1995-96 are fully consistent with the remit agreed in July. Despite the pressures that have emerged since the summer, the real growth in the new control total over the next three years will average just under 1·5 per cent. a year, half the rate of growth over the last three years.

I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friends will welcome the meeting of the remit; and let me at once pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary for his skill, perseverance and hard work in making his achievement possible.

To meet our objectives, we have had to look very carefully at every single programme, and particularly at current spending. The biggest single budget is, of course, social security. Indexing social security benefits in the coming year would cost £2·5 billion. If we are to protect capital spending, it is to areas of current spending such as social security that we must look first. I can tell the House that, despite the many claims on the available resources, the Government have been able to meet in full their commitment to index pensions and other benefits.

The other major claim on current public spending is public sector pay. The earnings of public sector staff have risen on average by 20 per cent. over the last two years, compared with just 13 per cent. in the private sector; but, if the gains in competitiveness from the recent fall in the exchange rate are not to be lost, it is vital that all employees keep tight control over their pay bills. The public sector cannot be sheltered from the difficulties faced by the private sector, where pay awards are now the lowest in a generation. I have therefore decided that, in the coming year, pay settlements in the public sector should be restricted to a maximum of 1·5 per cent. This, of course, is consistent with a lower growth in total pay bills. The aim must be to keep the growth in pay bills in each area of the public sector as low as possible.

The restriction will apply to the whole of the public sector and related bodies without exception, regardless of whether pay is negotiated, recommended by review bodies or subject to formula calculations. It will apply to all offers made from today, although formal offers already made will be honoured. The Government will in due course bring forward a resolution on Members' pay, consistent with this policy, but I can tell the House that Ministers will receive no increase at all.

Given the overall objective of restraining the growth in public spending, this survey has involved some difficult decisions. If some items are to be increased, it inevitably means that others must be cut back. Our tough decisions about public sector pay will lead to savings for other programmes and services of some £1·5 billion a year. As I say, that will permit higher levels of service to the public, and higher capital programmes as a result. None the less, in some programmes we have made reductions in the base lines which were set out last year; but, in many of those cases, expenditure still remains on a rising trend. What is more, the progress that we have made on inflation will help to ensure that reductions in base lines are consistent with continuing improvements in public services.

Even so, individual programmes have faced searching scrutiny, and hard choices have had to be made. Over the next few years, defence expenditure will continue to fall in real terms. The benefits of the "Options for Change" review will be secured, and some further savings, consistent with the policies which underlie it, will be made. The legal aid budget is a demand-led programme that has been putting immense pressure on public finances. The Lord Chancellor is announcing changes to restrict its growth, and they are fully reflected in the survey.

At a time when tight control over public spending is needed at the national level, it is clear that the same discipline should be applied at the local level. Central Government support for local authority revenue expenditure in England will therefore rise by 3·7 per cent. next year, and the total standard spending by 3·1 per cent. In addition, there will be a special grant of £539 million in England, to help local authorities to meet their new responsibilities for community care.

This settlement should be fully adequate to meet local authorities' requirements. The proposals assume that local authorities implement in full our policy of pay restraint. Provided that they do this, the savings made will enable them to ensure proper provision of services without exerting upward pressure on the council tax. The

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Government will not hesitate to use their capping powers as necessary. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be making a full announcement later this month. Full details of the new plans for local authorities in Scotland and Wales, and for other programmes, are being made available separately.

The population-related formulae which largely determine changes to expenditure provision more generally in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been updated. Expenditure plans for the territories will be announced by their respective Secretaries of State at a later date.

At the time of the general election, the Government made it clear that education and health would be among their key priorities for the longer term. Rising spending in these areas is fully justified, not just in terms of immediate needs, but as a contribution to the country's human capital.

The education programme is therefore planned to rise to a level £1·5 billion higher in 1995-96 than the equivalent spending this year. There will be some important changes over this period. The proportion of children staying on at school beyond 16 is expected to go on rising. The Government are providing for a higher proportion of school leavers to take up YT places. We shall finance a sharp increase in the number of students attending further education or sixth form colleges—25 per cent. up over the survey period.

At the same time, we have earmarked enough finance to maintain the present record level of participation of young people in higher education. All this is an important investment in our young people which will improve the quality of the country's human capital and benefit the economy in the longer term.

There will also be increases in the level of real resources provided to the national health service in each of the next three years. Spending in the NHS will rise by nearly 3 per cent. in real terms next year, compared with this year's plans. That means an increase of over £1·9 billion.

This is a very tight settlement overall. At the beginning of the spending round, there was widespread speculation that the Government would take the easy way out, by letting current spending rise and cutting capital spending instead. But what we have done is to take the tough but necessary decisions to put the needs of the British economy first.

Restraint on current spending has made it feasible to provide more protection to capital, and we have done so across a whole range of programmes. Next year there will be a significant increase in the volume of road building. We have maintained the national roads programme at a time when construction prices have fallen. Our new plans will ensure that in real terms, compared with 1979, we will have a doubling next year of the combined capital spending of British Rail and London Transport. Next year health capital spending in England alone will be at the record level of nearly £2·1 billion. The new plans should more than deliver our election commitment to provide through the Housing Corporation 153,000 homes over three years.

One major project for which we have expressly reserved provision is the Jubilee line extension. Subject to satisfactory completion of negotiations, the line will be able to go ahead. This will create many thousands of jobs and give an important boost to the construction industry.

The Government have taken seriously their pledge to do what they can for capital spending, but there is yet more that can be done.

I said in my Mansion house speech that I was examining ways to increase the scope for private financing of capital projects. Obviously, the interests of the taxpayer have to be protected, but I also want to ensure that sensible investment decisions are taken whenever the opportunity arises. I am now able to announce three significant developments.

In the past, the Government have been prepared to give the go-ahead to private projects only after comparing them with a similar project in the public sector. This has applied, whether or not there was any prospect of the project ever being carried out in the public sector. I have decided to scrap this rule. In future, any privately financed project which can be operated profitably will be allowed to proceed. This should be widely welcomed, particularly by the construction industry.

Secondly, the Government have too often in the past treated proposed projects as either wholly private or wholly public. In future, the Government will actively encourage joint ventures with the private sector, where these involve a sensible transfer of risk to the private sector. We may be prepared to consider such an approach, when the time arises, for projects such as the east-west crossrail, the central Scotland fastlink, the Birmingham western orbital road and perhaps also the channel tunnel rail link.

Thirdly, we will allow greater use of leasing where it offers good value for money. As long as it can be shown that the risk stays with the private sector, public organisations will be able to enter into operating lease agreements, with only the lease payments counting as expenditure and without their capital budgets being cut.

In addition, British Rail will be allowed to lease some £150 million of new rolling stock in the next three years. The new leases will be undertaken with a view to developing the leasing market for rolling stock, which will facilitate privatisation.

In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will publish a Green Paper early next year on the scope for motorway charging. If, in the light of consultation, the Government decides to proceed with charges for inter-urban roads, this would create significant new opportunities for private finance. As a possible transitional step, private contractors might be invited to design, build and operate roads, for which they would receive payments from Government relating to the use of their roads. Money contributed by the private sector under these arrangements will not contribute towards public spending; it will represent additional resources in the area concerned.

Those changes are only the beginning. I have asked my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to carry forward and develop our policy in this area, encouraging the private sector to bring forward proposals and to help us identify any obstacles which frustrate its success.

Many of the measures that I have announced so far today will take time to have their full effect. I therefore propose to introduce a supplementary package of time-limited fiscal measures. These will be aimed at sectors of the economy which have been hardest hit by the recession, helping to rebuild confidence and so foster recovery.

Housing and construction have faced particular difficulties in the past two years, but home buyers now have some of the lowest mortgage rates since 1978. The Government have responded in a number of other ways, most recently with measures to help those with negative equity who wish to move. Today, I propose to go further.

The overhang of empty properties in the owner-occupied sector is holding back activity in the housing market. I therefore propose to make available an extra £750 million to be used before the end of this financial year to buy up some of these properties. I hope that the Housing Corporation will be able to achieve a substantial contribution on top of this from private sector lenders. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will introduce parallel measures.

This measure, even without additional contributions from the private sector, should reduce the overhang of empty properties that has been holding the market back by more than 20,000 over the next few months, so providing a stimulus to activity. It will also increase the available stock of subsidised housing by a similar amount and make a real contribution towards housing families in need.

Many hon. Members are aware of the representations by many local authorities to persuade the Government to relax the rules on local authority capital receipts. Many local authorities have accumulated a stock of these receipts, rather than use them to pay off debt, as the Government advised. That remains the Government's view, and I do not intend to reward those who have ignored it.

I propose, however, to allow a time-limited relaxation of the rules governing local authorities' use of their future capital receipts. The existing rules allow them to spend only 25 per cent. of housing receipts and 50 per cent. of other receipts. With certain exceptions, local authorities will now be entitled to spend all the capital receipts that they realise between tomorrow and the end of December 1993.

This measure is expected to stimulate extra capital spending by local authorities of over £1·75 billion in the next three and a half years. The Government hope that local authorities will make early and effective use of the additional spending power before the end of this financial year across the range of local authority capital programmes, including housing, education, schools and roads. Any receipts which are not spent this year or next will provide an on-going stimulus to house-building and construction in 1994-95 and 1995-96, as well. The availability of the extra receipts will be taken into account in distributing credit approvals between local authorities. In that way, virtually all local authorities should receive some benefit. There will be separate measures for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The reduction in the exchange rate has offered immense opportunities to exporters, but our exporters of project equipment and other supplies which require medium or long-term finance rely heavily on the guarantees provided by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

I now intend to make available a further £700 million of ECGD cover and to ease some of the constraints on cover for individual countries. That will enable our exporters to compete more effectively in the increasingly difficult situation that they now face. I am sure that the measure will be widely welcomed by the engineering and capital equipment industry.

I have also considered the position on capital allowances. It remains my view that the reform of business tax by Lord Lawson in his 1984 Budget was the right one. Low tax rates and a broad tax base provide the best framework for the medium term. However, in the present circumstances, I am prepared to allow some changes which should help to bring forward private sector investment.

Accordingly, for a limited period of 12 months, I propose to raise from 25 to 40 per cent. the allowances available in the first year for investment in plant and machinery, excluding cars. I also propose to introduce an initial allowance of 20 per cent. for spending on new industrial and agricultural buildings for which contracts are placed before 31 October 1993 and which are brought into use before the end of 1994. That will help the construction industry. I propose to legislate for those changes, with retrospective effect to 1 November, in the next Finance Bill.

I have one final measure to announce. The motor industry lies at the heart of British manufacturing. In recent years it has seen a renaissance, with large increases in inward investment. However, the recession has brought a more difficult climate. I have considered what might best be done to help. Of course, any action in this area will have to be paid for in my next Budget by higher motoring taxes after 1992-93.

I have decided nevertheless to continue with the tax reform begun in my last Budget and to abolish car tax altogether from midnight tonight. That will mean a saving of about £400 on a typical family car. This measure will require a simple Bill, which I shall bring forward shortly. It will provide a direct boost to the motor industry and will, of course, benefit business more widely. I am sure that it will be warmly welcomed.

The measures that I have announced today should provide an immediate boost to confidence and welcome relief for some of the most hard pressed sectors of the economy. Taken together, they will add some £4 billion to borrowing over the next three years, but with no increase to the PSBR over the medium term. These measures come on top of the Government's new spending plans for the next three years and the proposals that I have announced to liberalise the rules on private finance.

Finally, there is the significant relaxation in monetary policy since Britain left the ERM just two months ago. Britain already has the lowest interest rates in the European Community; and the pound is trading at a level that gives British industry a sharp competitive edge in foreign markets.

That relaxation of policy has been possible because of the dramatic progress that we have made in getting inflation down; and it is precisely because our inflationary prospects remain excellent that today I can go further.

Alongside the tight public expenditure plans that I have announced, I believe that it is appropriate now to make a further reduction in interest rates. The Governor and I have agreed that the Bank will tomorrow set the minimum lending rate at 7 per cent. That reduction is, in my judgment, fully consistent with the Government's inflationary objectives.

Today's reduction takes British interest rates down to their lowest level for nearly 15 years; it means that our interest rates have been cut by fully eight percentage points over the last two years; it takes a further £1 billion off

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industry's costs on top of the £9 billion fall in interest payments that we have already seen; and it will provide further help to all those with mortgages.

British business now has the opportunity that it has been looking for—to bring the country out of recession; to increase sales, expand production and invest for the future. Industry can now seize the new opportunities, safe in the knowledge that the Government are playing their full part.

We have a new monetary framework that will deliver low inflation over the medium term. We have a new system for controlling public spending that will deliver annual spending increases which the country can afford. We have new spending plans, which protect the poorest in society and offer hope, help and opportunity by switching resources to programmes that support the long-term prosperity of the country.

We have the lowest interest rates in the European Community, and we have a carefully targeted set of measures designed to lift confidence and get the country back to work. This is a clear and comprehensive strategy. It is a strategy for growth. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Will the Chancellor first tell the House and his Back Benchers and then tell the country what he did not tell us in his statement —that, as a result of the publication of his documents today, unemployment will continue to rise; the balance of payments will continue to worsen; as a result of the underfunding of the health service, waiting lists and queues will grow; low-paid workers such as nurses and home helps will face even greater poverty; overseas aid budgets will be cut; and, despite the welcome interest rate cut today, for which the Chancellor has long been pressed by the Opposition, business bankruptcies will unfortunately continue to grow?

The Chancellor's detailed figures, which he did not share with the House, confirm that Britain is bottom of the league in the European Community for growth, investment, output and employment. Yesterday the Governor of the Bank of England admitted Britain's image as a second-rate economy. The truth is that, having been driven by events to signal a change of policy against his will, the Chancellor has not only failed to admit the scale of the mistakes of the past but has failed to measure up to the extent of the problem which the country faces. He has failed to give us an economic and industrial strategy for the future.

With regard to the credibility of the Chancellor's forecast this afternoon—*[Interruption.]* Conservative members will have to listen, because it is the Opposition who are speaking for the country, and about the need for change. Will the Chancellor confirm that national output, which last year he told us would rise by 2 per cent., has fallen by 1 per cent.? He promised us that consumer spending would rise by 2·5 per cent., but it has not recovered at all. Will he confirm that, according to the Government data in the report, investment, which he said would rise by 1·25 per cent., has fallen by 2 per cent.? Will he further confirm that manufacturing output, which he said would rise by 3·25 per cent., has fallen by 1 per cent., that exports, which he said would rise by 6 per cent., have risen by less than half as much, and that unemployment, which he told us last November would be at 2·4 million, has risen to almost 2·9 million—half a million more men and women than he predicted—as a result of his mistakes?

What credibility does the right hon. Gentleman have when virtually his entire economic forecast of last year has been proved wrong? Can he give us one good reason why we should believe anything that he says this afternoon, when not only his forecast but his economic policy has collapsed? Were not the Conservative Members who cheered and waved their Order Papers at the Chancellor this afternoon part of the group who cheered and waved their Order Papers at him a year ago, when he promised that we would stay in the exchange rate mechanism, that he would not devalue, that the exchange rate was at the centre of his anti-inflation policy, and that he would reduce unemployment—and when he promised a recovery which he has failed to deliver?

The Chancellor is being dragged by public opinion into accepting some of the measures which we proposed, and which he used to call fake remedies. Only a few weeks ago, his colleagues ridiculed export credit help as being unnecessary in a free market. In April, he himself described investment incentives as phoney measures, which would not be used, and his Housing Minister said only a few weeks ago that the release of capital receipts was fools' gold.

Will the Chancellor not accept, however, that, although he has been driven part of the way by the pressure upon him, through lack of conviction he has failed to adopt the full recovery programme necessary to bring the economy out of slump? He has failed to accept the employment measures and the industrial strategy that Britain needs —the essential direct construction measures which would lie at the heart of any recovery programme.

Is it not true that not one penny of the £5 billion in capital receipts which local authorities have amassed will be released as a result of the Chancellor's proposals? He is allowing local authorities to spend in a year when there will be very few council house sales. Is it not the case that, apart from the Jubilee line, which he has reannounced for the umpteenth time today, he has not announced one capital investment project in London or in the rest of England, or in the nations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

Is not the proof of all this the figures which have emerged from the autumn statement details? The combined total of all the Chancellor's proposals for the private and public sectors leads him to predict that investment will grow by only 0·25 per cent. in 1993, and that growth in the economy will be only 1 per cent. The result of that is inevitable—thousands more face unemployment.

When unemployment has today risen for the 30th month running; when male unemployment is worse than at any time since the 1930s; when, inevitably, unemployment will rise for a 31st, 32nd and 33rd month and more under the Chancellor's proposals, will he agree that, by his failure today to direct action against unemployment by taking up the new employment programme that we proposed, which would create jobs and rebuild Britain, he has failed to understand that, while unemployment continues to rise, and the fear of unemployment continues to rise, the confidence necessary to get the economy moving will not return?

In that context, is it not a disgrace that, when we face the single market, the industry budget of the President of the Board of Trade is to be cut by 32 per cent. by 1994-95 and that the training and employment budget of the Department of Employment is, according to the figures that we have seen, to be cut by £200 million? Is not the great recovery programme being launched on the basis that the training budget between 1987 and 1995—the whole Department of Employment budget—is being cut by the Government by £2,000 million?

What possible help can cuts in Department of Employment and DTI budgets be to reduce unemployment or ensure recovery? Is it not a tragedy that, while a few of the richest in the world made millions as a result of speculation, millions of the poorest in the world face starvation as a result of further cuts in the overseas aid budget—£75 million by 1995?

Will the Chancellor explain why he is setting an inflexible ceiling on public sector pay, breaking all agreements with review bodies, tearing up quite specific promises and making home helps, nurses and other low-paid workers the scapegoats for his economic failures? Will the Chancellor explain specifically why that is being done when the Prime Minister said:

> "heavy central control, uniform, rigid and monolithic pay structures will mean difficulties over recruitment and retention of particular skills, mean staffing problems and put the public services at a very severe disadvantage"?

Given that the Chancellor has also announced new road taxes from next year, does that include road pricing? When there are 1 million children in school classrooms built before the first world war; when two thirds of hospital wards are hangovers from the days of charity hospitals; when roads need repair and when the rail infrastructure needs not a pilot scheme, but proper and sustained—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I ask the House to settle down. Our fellow citizens are watching the debate on television. If the House were to realise the number of letters that I receive each day from people outside this place about the poor behaviour here, I am sure that there would be order on both sides of the House.

Mr. Brown: When there are nearly 1 million people on health service waiting lists—and people outside this place will be interested to hear what the Government are doing—why will health service spending not keep up with the needs of demography and technology? Why is the transport budget being cut by £270 million in one year? Why is local authority expenditure down £0·5 billion in a year? Why are the Government assuming that rents in local authorities will rise by 9 per cent. in a year?

How can the Government justify breaking yet more election promises that all public spending programmes in detail would be upheld? Those breaches of promises can only add to unemployment, prolong the recession, damage long-term efficiency and hit hardest the poorest and weakest in our community.

Is it not the case, in looking at the autumn statement as a whole, that having abandoned the unemployed, having abandoned the low-paid with the abolition of wages councils, having hit the sick and disabled by underfunding the health service, having made nurses and home helps pay the price for the Government's mistakes over public spending, and having promised a recovery that they have singularly failed to deliver after all the promises before and after the election, there is now no one left for the Government to betray? The election having been fought on the issue of trust, is it not the case that the country will never trust these men, these Ministers or the Conservative party again? Is it not also the case that the fresh start which the country needs is a fresh programme of measures under fresh leadership?

Mr. Lamont: I appreciate that it is very difficult to respond to statements quickly, but that was a pretty feeble showing by the hon. Gentleman. The programme contains a reduction in interest rates, a boost to private sector investment through increased capital allowances, £1·8 billion of capital receipts available to help the construction industry, and a boost to the motor industry by the abolition of motor tax. How he can say that that will add to unemployment I cannot understand. The only explanation for the hon. Gentleman's view is that he believes, wrongly, that employment comes from Government spending. It does not: it comes from the private sector. That is the mistake that the Opposition always make.

The hon. Gentleman again, I am afraid, was wrong in many of the points that he made about the individual programmes. For example, on aid there are cash increases in the next few years, not cash cuts. On health, the programme shows that spending is rising each year. We shall be able to finance increased throughput, increased treatment of patients and an increase in activities of 2·5 per cent. a year. What the hon. Gentleman looks at are the actual money numbers, but the health service is very much an employer of labour. The fact that we are putting a limit on public sector pay means that services can be improved with less money. That is the point. The hon. Gentleman thinks that the only way to improve services is with money rather than with efficiency and with having a limit on wages.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the budget for the Department of Employment. Again, contrary to what he says, there will next year be a real increase in that budget. The training and enterprise councils' budget will remain virtually intact. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It will be 99 per cent., to be precise.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the performance of the British economy, referring to how disappointing the outturn had been and how forecasts had been wrong. As always, he talked about the British economy as though no other country had any problems with growth. He seems to be unaware that in five out of the past six months Germany has seen unemployment rise, and that in six out of the past seven months it has seen industrial production fall. The hon. Gentleman seems to be unaware that in Japan industrial production over the past year has fallen by over 4 per cent., that in Germany it has fallen by over 3 per cent., that in Italy it has fallen by over 3 per cent., and that in Canada it has fallen by over 2 per cent. That is the difficult climate in which we are competing. That is the difficult world background to the autumn statement. That is why we have given a special boost to help exporters and to help industry at this time.

The hon. Gentleman referred to forecasts and made much of the fact that recovery had not appeared. May I remind him that it was not just the Government and the Treasury who were forecasting recovery? At one time, even he and his hon. Friends were saying that there would be a recovery. His right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the former Leader of the Opposition, accused me last autumn of creating a pre-election boom

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and said that the recovery had been managed in order to create conditions for an election. Indeed, an official fund-raising letter from the Labour party at the time explained:

> "Interest rates are dropping just in time to create a pre-election boom."

The hon. Gentleman talks about consistency. Let us remember the consistency of his party's policies. What did the Opposition propose at the election?—the biggest increase in taxes on incomes since the war. I remind the House that after the election the Leader of the Opposition stood by his party's policies and said:

> "I strongly defend these proposals."

A few days ago, the shadow Chancellor said:

> "Further tax increases at this time would be a mistake."

Who are the opposition to talk about consistency? Who are they to talk about forecasts? Everything that they have said has turned out wrong.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I congratulate the Chancellor on an extremely imaginative package, and welcome his acceptance of the idea suggested by the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service that a number of the measures ought to be time-limited to avoid a resurgence of inflation later. Will he make it clear to the foreign exchange markets that, given the degree of deflation in the economy, the amount of stimulus that he proposes is sensible and is likely to reinforce his view on the exchange rate, and that the package is likely to restore confidence and to be welcomed by the country?

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. When he was Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, he often emphasised the need for and the appropriateness of time-limited measures. That is a part of the package that we have put forward today. The measures that we have announced are prudent. As I have explained, they do not add to medium-term borrowing and have only a short-term cost.

I agree with what my right hon. Friend said about exchange rates. I have consistently made it clear that I believe in a strong exchange rate, and that remains my position.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Chancellor confirm that he is maintaining capital spending levels and not providing a large boost? Although the abolition of car tax and the capital allowances will significantly help some sections of industry, when set against the loss of spending power for the lowest-paid people in the public sector, the total effect is unlikely to give anything like the boost that he needs. How can it make sense to ask local authorities to sell land if they want to engage in capital expenditure when the market is at rock bottom?

Instead of a pay freeze for Ministers, would it not have made sense to put them on performance-related pay, so that, if these measures do not work, they will not get paid at all?

Mr. Lamont: The key requirement must be to control borrowing. I had hoped that I had spelt out clearly and frankly to the House the need to control public borrowing. That has to be done by one means or another. I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman seems to think that that can be evaded. It cannot be avoided—we have to face up to it—and there must be restrictions either on current or on capital spending. This year we have decided to restrict current spending to protect industry, especially the construction industry.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that I have also cut interest rates today, on top of the 2 percentage points reduction in interest rates in the past six weeks. There has also been considerable depreciation in the exchange rates. That is a considerable loosening of monetary policy, which confirms the outlook for British industry.

On the hon. Gentleman's final point about the prospects for sales, our estimate of £1 billion is based on a cautious assumption compared with the past, and with what local authorities have been able to sell.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on announcing a strategy for growth which will be widely welcomed and which deserves support? Although a public sector borrowing requirement of £37 billion is high, should we not bear in mind the fact that in 1931, when the country last found itself in a similar economic predicament for somewhat similar reasons, the PSBR was 7·5 per cent. of GDP, which is a significantly higher figure than the 6 per cent. I take to be the percentage of GDP represented by £37 billion. In 1931, that justified a reduction in interest rates to 3 per cent. which makes his announcement of a cut in interest rates to 7 per cent. fully sustainable and a step which can be pursued downwards as time passes.

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks and I am glad that he welcomes the reduction in interest rates. However, I must make the cautionary point that the PSBR, at some 6 per cent. of GDP, is, on a medium-term basis, far too high. When I look at what is happening in other countries, I am sure that it is in the best interests of everyone that it is brought down. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may disagree and people may argue about economic management, but, at the end of the day, the fundamental problem that remains is that debt must be paid for and interest must be paid. If we have too high a level of debt interest, it squeezes out other items of public spending.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for and approval of the reduction in interest rates, but I think that we should address the problem of the PSBR, and I will do that.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): What assumptions about the level of unemployment for the coming year has the Chancellor given to the Government Actuary?

Mr. Lamont: 2·8 million.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his courage and determination in tackling the problem of the growing budget deficit. His colleagues on the Conservative Benches believe that his package will increase confidence, stimulate investment, encourage exports, help the housing market and boost the motor industry. We now have a coherent economic policy for recovery, which we strongly support. Does he agree that it is now time for British business to take advantage of the lowest interest rates in Europe, low inflation, a competitive pound and incentives for investment and go out and sell?

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The measures that I have announced on capital allowances are designed to promote private sector investment.

The motor industry very much wanted to be rid of the car tax. It is one of the most important manufacturing industries and, in recent years, its decline has begun to be reversed. With the receipt of foreign investment, its prospects are excellent. It is right and appropriate to encourage that industry in such a difficult time.

The measures that we have announced on credits will help exports, so my hon. Friend is right to say that the depreciation of the pound gives our exporters a considerable opportunity. It is vital that business does not allow its own costs to get out of control, that it remains competitive, and that it takes advantage of the new opportunities that now exist.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I welcome the capital allowances concession that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has given. I would have preferred it to be more, but I am pleased that it is on plant and machinery. Up to four years ago, however, the Government believed that manufacturing industry presented no problem. In the past four years, they accepted that it was a problem, but they did nothing about it. Now, very late in the day, they are doing something and making some concession. Meanwhile, the industrial base of this country has shrunk alarmingly. We have lost 30 per cent. of our industrial base under the Government.

The measures announced are inadequate given that it is now assumed that the growth rate will be 1 per cent. next year instead of 3 per cent., as forecast at the time of the Budget, and there is a crisis in the manufacturing industry. Although the right hon. Gentleman has done something, he has not done enough.

Mr. Lamont: It is something that the right hon. Gentleman is able to give even a modified welcome to the measures, and I am grateful to him for that. He is quite wrong to say that we have not thought manufacturing to be important. It is, but we have to look at the economy as a whole, and manufacturing is a part of it—perhaps the most important part. We have always believed that it is important.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the modest growth forecast that we have made, and it is somewhat lower than most forecasters are projecting, but I believe that, in recent weeks, the prospects in the world have got considerably worse. It is therefore right that we should look to ways to help British industry to take advantage of the new situation. The right hon. Gentleman says that 1 per cent. is not enough. Of course it is not enough, but we cannot just conjure more growth out of the air. I do not know what the right hon. Gentleman would say about Germany, where the projection is that the economy will grow by 1 per cent. next year and by 0·5 per cent. the year after. This is a very rough world.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a warm welcome for his decision to encourage capital projects and to give the green light to them? It can truly be said that the Government are rolling out the cement mixers, and many people will think that that is quite right at this time.

I want to ask the Chancellor about a particular problem with regard to investment. Although his investment incentives will be welcomed, there is a problem for small and medium-sized firms, which are encountering difficulties in getting the right support from the banks because the banks themselves have got into trouble in recent years. Will he look at this problem, because, if firms do not have support for their productive investment, it will be difficult for them to take advantage of the situation as the country comes out of recession?

Mr. Lamont: What I have announced on capital allowances applies right across the economy; it applies to all purchases of plant and machinery, not only manufacturing. It is not just of help to the construction industry; it is of help to engineering, and metal-based industries in particular.

My hon. Friend mentioned banks. I very much hope that the reduction in interest rates today and the 2 per cent. by which I have reduced interest rates since 16 September will be passed on by the banks. Last year I had cause to discuss with the banks whether small businesses were getting the benefit of interest rate reductions, and the banks assured me that they were. Recently, I have been concerned to discover that some banks are operating a floor for interest rates beyond which they will not reduce them. I hope that they will consider this position very carefully.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Recently, the Chancellor said that every Government action would be evaluated as to its effect on increasing employment. In pursuance of the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), may I ask, first, how many more people will be in work one year hence? Secondly, when he said that pensions and other benefits would be fully indexed, the House assumed that he meant that all other benefits would be indexed. Was the House right in assuming that?

Mr. Lamont: The answer to the second question is yes. When the hon. Gentleman asks me how many people will be in work, or out of work, in a year's time, he knows that not only can I not but we never do make a forecast for unemployment. However, as a result of the measures that we have taken today, the outlook for growth and jobs is definitely better.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement deserves to generate confidence not only on the Benches behind him, which is useful, but also in the country? Does he agree with me that the main reason that this country is in a bigger hole than many other countries is our debt overhang, which is due overwhelmingly to housing debt? Therefore, while I understand the pressures that have driven him to throw another £750 million at housing, will he avoid giving the impression to the country that we can reflate our economy by reflating our housing and building some spurious prosperity on houses—which cannot, incidentally, be exported?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend makes an extremely telling point, and a very correct analysis, which he has made on earlier occasions. He will understand that the £750 million for the purchase of empties is not to reflate the housing market; it is to take the overhang of properties off the market. I agree with my hon. Friend's analysis.

I believe that the main thing that has been holding back recovery in this country, as in the Scandinavian countries, some of which have had recessions just as long as we have

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—indeed, Sweden is in the third year of recession—and as in north America, is the overhang of debt, which does not exist in continental Europe to the same extent. The measures that we have taken will help, but I agree with my hon. Friend that the position of housing is absolutely crucial. We would be making a great mistake if we simply tried to have a great house price boom again.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Is the Chancellor aware that the Unionist party is happy that he has reasserted his view today that the public sector borrowing rquirement must be kept under firm control? But I confess that seeing the PSBR for the current year rising from £28 billion to £37 billion between March and November could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as keeping it under firm control, especially when the right hon. Gentleman also said in his statement today that he expected it to rise next year. Can he say what it will be in cash terms in 1993-94?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also, when looking at the sums that should go to housing, ensure that a large proportion of those sums is directed to housing associations, which seem to make better use of the moneys than can be said of some public bodies that receive them?

Will the Chancellor look carefully at the situation of the north of Ireland block grant? In the past, certain sectors have lost money because of the need to pay compensation to those who suffered from terrorist violence. As that has simply meant hardship for those who suffered from terrorist violence in one form or another, may I ask him to consider the possibility of financing all such extra compensation sums from the contingency fund, which should, of course, be used for the defence of the realm? If compensating those who suffer from terrorist violence is not part of the defence of the realm, what on earth is?

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will have noted the hon. Gentleman's points. I am indeed aware of the controversy and argument, but the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not get drawn into that today.

The hon. Member talked about the PSBR and outturn and asked why it was not kept under control. He should realise that the main reason for the increase in the PSBR is falling tax revenues. It is not expenditure. It is largely in the ratio of 6:1 of falling tax revenues. The hon. Gentleman put his finger on it when he said that it is difficult to predict the outturn for the PSBR. For that reason, he will perhaps understand why I do not accept his invitation to predict it for next year, though I shall be doing that at the time of the Budget.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): If interest rates of 7 per cent. on 13 November are appropriate, how could interest rates of 10 per cent. have been appropriate on 13 September? Should we not all be profoundly grateful for black Wednesday, and would not the best thing that my right hon. Friend could say to increase confidence be that we shall never ever return to the ERM?

Mr. Lamont: I do not agree with my hon. Friend's analysis. He will be aware that we have options open to us as to how far and at what speed we wish to defeat inflation. I have made it clear—I have done so before and I repeat it—that I believe that in recent months, which does not mean in the whole of the last two years but recently, as a result of the direction in which German interest rates were going, our policy was not wholly appropriate for this country.

Mr. Budgen: The Chancellor did not say so at the time.

Mr. Lamont: But I made it clear very quickly indeed. My hon. Friend should recognise that the fact that we might have over-achieved on inflation in the short term was not something that would have brought other than advantage and gain for this country. We cannot, as some of my hon. Friends sometimes seem to think, opt out of the battle against inflation. It remains extremely important indeed.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Does the Chancellor agree that this modest boost to the economy is being paid for by an absolute cut in the standard of living and quality of life of many hundreds of thousands of public sector workers, many of whom receive the lowest pay in this country?

Mr. Lamont: Public sector wages in the last two years have done better on average than those in the private sector. Many public sector workers also have greater security of employment than is the case in the private sector—*[Interruption.]*—not in all cases, but in some. I believe that, given the choice, it is right for the Government, rather than to cut services, programmes, the provision of health and the provision of education, to economise just for one year on our current spending. Is that really so unreasonable?

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I add my congratulations to the Chancellor on his statement this afternoon. At a time when he has, rightly, been concerned first to help the economy, his statement is also good news for the health service. Does he agree that his announcement shows the Government's continuing priority for the health service, as has been demonstrated since 1979? Does he further agree that the large NHS programme will be good not only for patients but for the construction industry and for jobs?

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her comments. The capital programme in the NHS will be at record levels next year. My hon. Friend is also right to refer to the number of patients who will be treated and about the level of activity. There will be an increase next year in activity of about 2·5per cent. and an increase in expenditure overall in real terms of about 3 per cent., demonstrating clearly the Government's continuing commitment to the NHS. That is amply demonstrated by the fact that total expenditure since 1979 has gone up by the astonishing figure of 65 per cent. in real terms.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): How will a 2 per cent., cut in the wages of hundreds of thousands of public sector workers, including nurses, whom the Chancellor has betrayed by these cuts, help the economy to recover? I assure him that services are affected when morale is low. Is he not aware that, when nurses cannot pay their bills, that is reflected in how they do their work? Is he further aware that by hitting the public sector in this way he is particularly hitting women, who are in the low-paid sector, more than anybody else? He is making low-paid workers pay for the incompetence of the present miserable Tory Government.

Mr. Lamont: I tried to explain to the House why, in my view—I believe that the whole country recognises this—some economies must be made. Expenditure and borrowing must be cut back. We have a choice of acting on capital spending, on programmes or on the salaries and wages of those employed by Government. To say that they will have an increase of from nil to 1·5 per cent. for a 12-month period, given what is at stake, does not seem an unreasonable policy or an unreasonable request for the Government to make.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am happy to tell my right hon. Friend that I am pleasantly surprised by his autumn statement—*[Interruption.]*—and I shall have no difficulty in voting for it. He knows that my devotion to the manufacturing sector is total. For the first time for some years, he, as Chancellor, has injected confidence into both manufacturing and construction in Britain. His reduction in interest rates, his reintroduction of capital allowances, his relaxation on spending of capital receipts and his abolition of the special car tax will be very welcome indeed.

May I take it that this will be the first of many pronouncements by my right hon. Friend, whose credibility has been restored by his statement this afternoon, and that he and the Government finally recognise that manufacturing industry is the only real source of non-inflationary economic growth?

Mr. Lamont: I am tempted to say that I am pleasantly surprised by my hon. Friend's remarks—*[Interruption.]*—and particularly by his comments about voting. I have always believed that manufacturing was important, contrary to what my hon. Friend seems to think I thought. As I say, I have always regarded it as an important part of the economy, and it is obviously the key part in relation to international trade.

But we also have services and financial services. We have a diverse economy. I believe that the measures I have taken today will help construction, the engineering sector and manufacturing in general. I am pleased that my hon. Friend is pleased.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): When the Chancellor described Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as territories in his statement, was that an official Government description or a Treasury forecast of the fate that will befall our country if we allow Tory economic policy to continue to depopulate it?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the adjustment to the Barnett formula means that the Scottish Office will have £60 million less next year than it otherwise would have had? If that spending squeeze is combined with the investment project concentration in the south-east of England, is not the Chancellor's announcement more a dash for votes in the Tory heartlands than a strategy for growth? If the Chancellor had not lost £2,000 million in a single afternoon, what would he have spent it on today?

Mr. Lamont: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is, no, Scotland will gain more than it would have done. The change that has been made in the formula as it applies to Scotland merely brings the formula in line with the population, as determined at the time of the census. That means that, since we have been making reductions in the survey, the reductions that apply to Scotland have been less than they might otherwise have been, so perhaps the hon. Gentleman should not be quite so dismayed.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact, and make it widely known in Scotland, that there will be a £70 million package of construction-related work over the rest of the present financial year; that Scottish Homes will benefit from new investment resources amounting to some £70 million over the next three years; and Scottish business rates will be reduced next year by £68 million. Taken together, those three measures represent a £340 million boost for Scotland over the next three years. Go and tell everybody in Scotland about it.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I congratulate my right hon. Friend. Does he agree that the package that he has announced today will be extremely helpful to the small business sector? As he will be aware, in the south-west, and particularly in my constituency of Tiverton, we have only small businesses; we do not have large companies. They will welcome the reduction in interest rates, help with exports and, particularly, the increase in the first year's capital allowances, along with other measures that he has announced. Does he also agree that, in the 1980s, the small business sector created 1 million new jobs and we shall look to that sector again in the future for the creation of wealth and new employment opportunities? The statement will be greatly welcomed in Devon.

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Small businesses are the backbone of this country's economy. One of the great achievements of the 1980s was that so many small businesses were created. I note that, even today, despite the recession and insolvencies, VAT registrations for 1991 were slightly up on the previous year's. Anything that can be done to encourage small businesses is obviously welcome. Some of the measures, such as capital allowances, might be thought to apply only to large businesses, but my hon. Friend is right to remind us that capital allowances also benefit small businesses, which will also benefit from the reduction in interest rates.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): The Chancellor has announced that £1·9 billion will go to the health service. I note from the papers that he has distributed that £300 million that comes from so-called efficiency gains. What sum also comes from income generation by the NHS? Is any of the so-called new money for the health service a transfer from Department of Social Security funding?

Mr. Lamont: The money for care in the community will involve some new money as well. There will be £140 million for care in the community. The hon. Gentleman points out that we are assuming some efficiency gains in determining our budget. Why on earth not? Surely one should assume that, as we always have in the past and always do everywhere in the public sector. What we are assuming on income generation and efficiency gains is not out of line with what has been achieved in the past. That is why the settlement for the health service is realistic and will enable the health service to go on improving provision.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, at a time when many in the private sector have been suffering short-time working, cuts in pay, and even redundancy and unemployment, he got the balance absolutely right when he suggested that we

[Mr. John Butterfill]

should have restraint in public sector pay, accompanied and balanced by the fact that those who rely on the state for their income benefits are protected? That will give great pleasure to my constituents, so many of whom are pensioners. Will he share my hope that, when we vote on the question of restraint of the pay of Members of Parliament, we shall be supported by Opposition Members?

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right to say that we should restrict public sector pay to preserve services. The Government will be recommending a zero increase in the pay of Members of Parliament, and I hope that we shall get the support of Opposition Members.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): How will the £750 million to be used by housing associations for the purchase of properties be distributed throughout the country? Why has the Chancellor of the Exchequer specifically ruled out the spending of the £5·1 billion accumulated capital receipts?

Mr. Lamont: I explained the latter point in my statement, when I said that we had in the past encouraged local authorities to pay off debt. The hon. Gentleman should remember that the disagreement between myself and Opposition Members on that issue has always been based on the simple fact that letting local authorities spend their receipts adds to public spending. We must bear that in mind. I decided that a relaxation was in order, but it must be limited. I decided to do it in this way for the reasons that I gave. The distribution of the £750 million will be the subject of an announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is consulting the Housing Corporation about it.

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): I welcome my right hon. Friend's decision to abolish car tax. Does he agree that that will help not only British car manufacturers but all businesses which must spend money on cars?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right—it will help all purchasers of cars. They were very much helped in the Budget by the first step that I took when I halved car tax. My hon. Friend may remember that I also increased the capital allowances. Specific limited capital allowances apply to the purchase of motor cars by businesses, and I increased those by a considerable amount in the Budget. So three distinct and, I hope, important measures have helped the car industry, both in my Budget and in this autumn statement. The car industry was pressing for that, so I am sure that it will be widely welcomed. In tax terms, it also makes sense.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Will the Chancellor give us his balance of payments forecasts for this year and next year? In the calculation of next year's balance of payments forecast, has he made any allowance for the Government's proposed pit closure programme?

Mr. Lamont: When the hon. Lady looks at the published documents in the Table Office, she will see the provision in the programme of the Department of Trade and Industry. I hope that it does not sound too Irish—*[Interruption.]* I must be careful because I have a difficult paradox to tell the House. Provision has been made both on the basis of a certain number of pits being closed and of pits being kept open. We have allocated a substantial amount of money in the second year of the DTI's programme, as the hon. Lady will see. The projection is that the current account deficit next year will be some £15 billion, but I expect that the depreciation will gradually have a favourable effect on the current account. I know that the hon. Lady follows these matters closely and understands them. One would expect to get the adverse effects before the beneficial effects.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Has my right hon. Friend ever heard such a moaning, miserable, Jeremiah-like, negative performance as that which we heard from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown)?

I appreciate the warning of my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) against a housing boom and housing debt, but is my right hon. Friend the Chancellor aware that in his statement he recognised that the higher priority now is for economic growth to restore confidence in the construction industry and housing market? What he has said today will go a long way to help that hard-pressed sector. I welcome the reductions in interest rates that he has announced, but will he bear in mind the fact that the essential ingredient for a thriving economy in the long term is a low interest rate policy?

Mr. Lamont: Of course, what my hon. Friend says is right, but he must bear it in mind that interest rates are not just part of industry's costs, but a tool of economic management. They control the growth of money in the economy and are, above all, the key weapon in the fight against inflation. Without low inflation, businesses—big and small—will be destroyed.

I am grateful that my hon. Friend supports what I have managed to do today. I believe that the housing and construction industries have faced serious problems, and although I have been able to reduce interest rates—in some ways the single most important factor for housing and construction—I thought that it was right to take additional measures.

I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend said about the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown).

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): The right hon. Gentleman gave the go-ahead for the Jubilee line in London, which may well bring a boost in morale to those living in the south. Will he itemise the specific, named capital projects for which he will give the go-ahead in the north to give a similar lift in hope to my constituents and people living in surrounding constituencies?

Mr. Lamont: There will be twice as many road starts next year as this year. That will benefit construction and the road building industry all over the country. In my statement I listed a number of projects——

Mr. Mandelson: In the north?

Mr. Lamont: Several of those projects were not in the south—*[Interruption.]* I am afraid that I will not identify where the projects are constituency by constituency, let alone town by town or village by village. What I will say is that the whole country will benefit. I do not make decisions on the basis of log rolling, which the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) seems to think is the only appropriate way of making them.

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): Does my right hon. Friend understand that any small disappointment that may have been felt because he was unable to announce an unequivocal go-ahead for the Jubilee line extension today is more than offset by the widespread approval throughout our great capital city of his decision to reserve the money for it? Will he and his ministerial colleagues accept the thanks and congratulations of Londoners on the fact that they have remained faithful to that major infrastructure project? Will my right hon. Friend warn the bankers that if they balk at coming up with their contribution they will not be forgiven?

Mr. Lamont: I am more than usually grateful to my hon. Friend for his contribution. We shall keep faith and hope that the bankers will also—that is important. The Jubilee line is a major project that will provide thousands of jobs in the construction and engineering industries, and will be of great benefit, not just in London, but to firms up and down the country.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Chancellor aware that when he talks about a public sector borrowing requirement of £37 billion—probably rising to £50 billion the following year—one of its biggest component parts is the £30 billion that is paid to keep 3 million to 4 million people unemployed? If the right hon. Gentleman tackled that problem, he would be halfway to solving all his Budget problems.

In the twilight of his Chancellorship, the right hon. Gentleman has today introduced a spiteful mini-Budget that attacks the lowest-paid, taxes nurses and others in the public sector, and hammers women—who are mainly low-paid workers. He should have clawed back the £29 billion that went to the richest 1 per cent. of the population under previous Tory Budgets. If he had taken back that money from the richest 1 per cent., he could have ensured that the national health service, pensioners, the low-paid, and the education and housing sectors benefited. Instead, he has lined the pockets of his City friends, and wants the workers to pay the tab.

Mr. Lamont: Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I do not believe that one can simply spend one's way out of recession. The hon.Gentleman said that we did not need to have a PSBR problem but that all that was necessary was a series of employment-creating measures. He said that that would eliminate the PSBR problem and the recession. That is nonsense. If that were the solution and the right approach, there would be no public deficit problems and no recession in any country in the world. That is not the way to approach the problem.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I welcome my right hon. Friend's reference to the preservation of the national roads programme and the ultimate creation of money for the Jubilee line. I also welcome his commitment to involve private sector capital in transport projects across the country. Will he bear it in mind that there is a successful precedent for such a policy in the construction of the Dartford bridge, which was built by free enterprise using private money, has been completed and is now running on time?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend makes a good point, but I am afraid that our regime for private finance has been extraordinarily complex and arcane. I know that many people have felt that it was designed more to frustrate private financing of infrastructure than to encourage it. It was something of a minor miracle that the Dartford bridge got the go-ahead as a private sector project. We want to encourage more Dartford bridges which is why we have now finally made what I think will turn out to be decisive and clear changes in the rules to facilitate more construction in the longer term.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): I welcome the increases in line with prices in the invalidity benefit, but how does the Chancellor intend to raise the £240 million that he mentioned in his statement by tightening up on invalidity benefit? Does he intend to tax the benefit in future, or does he intend to interfere with doctors' judgments?

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is to make a statement immediately after this statement which will cover the hon. Lady's point.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, points of order are taken after statements and the business statement.

Social Security

5.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): With permission, I wish to make a statement on social security following directly from my right hon. Friend's autumn statement.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has announced, spending on social security in each of the next three years will be £79·8 billion, £82·9 billion and £87 billion.

That is a gauge of the Government's commitment to the needy, the sick, the elderly and to families. Despite the intense pressure on the social security budget we will maintain support for those hit by the recession, we will focus additional support on the most needy, and we will keep our pledges to families and to the elderly.

I can today announce that all major benefits will be increased fully in line with inflation. Subject to parliamentary approval, benefit rates will therefore go up by 3·6 per cent. next April.

The basic retirement pension for a single person will increase by £1·95 a week to £56·10, and for a couple it will rise by £3·10 to £89·90. Unemployment benefit will increase by £1·55 for a single person and by £2·50 for a couple, and I propose to make no other changes to that benefit.

Child benefit will be £10 for the first child and £8·10 for each subsequent child. In addition to uprating all benefits, we will keep our promises to focus increased support on those in greatest need. Last month, the Government boosted the income support rates for pensioners, by £2 for a single pensioner and by £3 for a couple. From next April there will be a increase in the real value of income support. Thereafter, no one on income support will be required to contribute a minimum of 20 per cent of the local government taxation charge, as people have up to now, but the increase in basic income support levels introduced to match that liability will be maintained. That is worth on average £1·40 a week for a single person under 25, £1·60 for a single person over 25 and £2·80 for a couple.

That means that the disposable income of an unemployed couple on income support will actually increase by an average of £5·20 a week next April, and the disposable income of an average 80-year-old couple on income support will be £9·35 more than it was last April, taking their income support over £100 a week for the first time. The uprating itself will cost £2·5 billion next year and the real increase in disposable income for those on the income-related benefits is worth a further £1 billion.

It has been possible to meet these commitments in full only as a result of a searching scrutiny for savings in all my Department's programmes. My first priority has been to find savings that do not involve curtailing entitlement to benefit. I have therefore subjected my Department's running costs to rigorous examination, while maintaining my Department's full commitment to the citizens charter and enhancing capital spending, which will rise by £159 million over the next three years, bringing total capital expenditure to more than £1 billion in that period.

A major component of running costs is the payment of benefits by order book or giro. That is markedly more costly than payment through the banking system. I therefore propose to encourage more customers to accept payment of benefits directly into their bank or building society accounts. In addition, my Department will be working closely with the Post Office to improve efficiency and reduce theft and fraud involving order books and giros. This, along with fraud elsewhere in the system, can involve very substantial sums of money. I have already announced my determination to tackle fraud and abuse of benefits. Those who defraud the system have nothing in common with the vast majority of honest and genuine claimants, and every pound lost through fraud means less for those in real need.

I therefore plan to step up the fight against fraud. I am increasing our investment in fraud work by £10 million a year. This, aided by better use of our existing resources and new techniques, will have an expected return of £100 million a year. I am today laying the regulations withdrawing income support from those—be they new age travellers or others—who are not even actively seeking work. I will consult the local authority associations on a new initiative to encourage local authorities to stop fraudulent claims for housing and council tax benefits. By taking those measures, I hope that the total of fraud identified and stopped will increase to nearly £1 billion each year.

It is also necessary to look carefully at how well benefit spending is focused on those whom Parliament intended to help. There has been a significant increase in the numbers on invalidity benefit and in spending on it. There are now more than twice as many people drawing this benefit as in 1979, at a cost nearly two and a half times as great. By 1996 invalidity benefit will cost well over £7 billion a year. Against that background, I intend to tighten up the administrative and medical procedures for controlling this benefit. That will ensure that medical examinations are better targeted and that more effective action will be taken when people fail to attend for their examination or are found to be capable of work. Those changes are expected to reduce spending by £240 million over the survey period. A major research study into invalidity benefit was launched last year. Some results have been received, and others will be received during 1993. I shall consider those results carefully as they become available.

I have also looked at two aspects of war disablement pensions. Officers receive more compensation for a given disability than other ranks. There is no reason why they should. I therefore intend to abolish rank differentials for disablement pensions, by moving everyone up to the rate for officers. That will benefit nearly 200,000 war disablement pensioners who will gain by up to £5 a week.

This will be made possible by the second change, which is to bring the rules for noise-induced hearing loss more into line with the industrial injuries scheme. As under that scheme, awards will no longer be made to those whose noise-induced hearing loss is assessed at less than 20 per cent. disablement. But I can assure the House that no existing war pensioner will suffer a reduction in the cash that he or she is currently receiving. These proposals will now be discussed with the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions.

I also intend to introduce two minor savings measures. I propose to increase the top rate non-dependant deduction in housing benefit and income support, but to freeze the three lower rates. I propose also to freeze the higher rate of statutory sick pay, as most employees who benefit from it are covered by occupational sick pay schemes. These enable me to make a number of modest, but worthwhile, improvements. I plan to increase by £10 per week all but one of the income support limits for those with preserved rights in residential care and nursing homes. I plan to extend the severe disability premium to those sharing a household with a blind person. I am increasing the amount that carers may earn without affecting their benefit. I am giving £1 million to help hospices and more money to help severely disabled drivers.

We are also introducing improvements in the benefit arrangements for orphans. I believe that those measures will be widely welcomed.

I now turn to the social fund. By using loans, we can help far more people with a given amount of money than if it were given as grants. Improved repayments of these loans enabled me last week to announce an extra £8 million for the social fund discretionary budget for the current year. Together with a further injection of cash, that means that I now expect next year's budget to be up 12 per cent., at £340 million. That is a 50 per cent. increase in two years.

In accordance with my statutory duty, I have carried out a review of national insurance contributions. The national insurance fund is obviously affected by the state of the economy. However, the Government do not propose to make changes to national insurance contributions for next year other than normal adjustments for inflation. That reflects our determination to minimise the burdens on employers and employees. Instead, we intend to seek powers to keep the national insurance fund in balance by drawing as necessary on a new, limited, Treasury grant. That grant will give us useful flexibility in managing the fund during a downturn in the economic cycle. I intend to introduce a Bill shortly to make provision for the grant. The Bill will also provide for the new age-related addition for personal pensions. Personal pensions have proved outstandingly popular. This addition will remove a potential distortion. It fulfils our manifesto commitment and it will ensure the continued success of personal pensions.

Fuller details of the uprating, national insurance and other measures have been given in two written replies to my hon. Friends the Members for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) and for Tiverton (Mr. Browning). Those replies are available with the autumn statement briefing in the Vote Office and will be published in the *Official Report*.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has set out a tough and realistic programme for public expenditure as a whole. Within that total I have sought to make savings, particularly by bearing down on operating costs and fraud. I have sought to curb programmes that might otherwise pre-empt the resources needed to sustain recovery in the longer term. As a result, we have been able to protect benefits for those hit by the chill wind of world recession, to channel increased support to the most needy and to keep the pledges that we made in April. I commend our plans to the House.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Let me begin by welcoming the general uprating of benefits by 3·6 per cent. It is not so much a cause for satisfaction as a cause for relief when measured against the rumours that were allowed to run.

Let me also register my personal relief that the Secretary of State has not acted in the spirit of his speech to the Tory party conference, in which there was so much talk of subsidised scroungers and the something-for-nothing society. To say that the preservation of the status quo is presented to look like progress is, I think, to make a fair comment on the Government's record.

Notwithstanding the Secretary of State's complacency, will he recognise that, for many, life on benefit is anything but easy? Last year, income support was uprated by 7 per cent.; this year, the uprating is 3·6 per cent. Does the Secretary of State accept that, whatever the technical reasons for the change in the Rossi index, many will feel a cold wind blowing in the new year? Retrospective indexing is, of course, a comforting method when inflation is falling, but now, with the emergence of a very different picture, does the Secretary of State recognise that he is leaving pensioners' living standards vulnerable to rising inflation in the coming year?

The underlying rate of inflation in the year to September was 4 per cent. Is that not a better estimate of pensioners' costs, given that most of them do not have mortgages? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that bonfires will not be lit following the news that a married person's pension is to rise from £86·70 to £89·90?

I hope that the Secretary of State has noted and studied the Rowntree report, by Professor Jonathan Bradshaw, which was published earlier this week. The report underlined the difficulty of making ends meet at current income support levels. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is little room for comfort when—according to the report's findings—a couple with two children under 11, living in a council house, need an extra £36 per week to fund an austere low-cost budget? There are no signs that this Minister and this Government have any visible or active commitment to tackling the problems of poverty.

I note that the Secretary of State intends to cut £240 million from invalidity benefit expenditure over the survey period. A few minutes ago, one of my hon. Friends asked the Chancellor a question that I shall now ask the Secretary of State. Is he, in effect, challenging the professional judgment of general practitioners, and does that imply that there will be new instructions on certification by doctors? If so, will the right hon. Gentleman give details? If not, exactly what kind of changes is he contemplating?

Will the Secretary of State now come clean about the hidden agenda in connection with invalidity benefit? Are there plans for legislation to reduce average payments of the benefit, and to bring it into tax? Would that not mean that an additional 70,000 people whose only income is invalidity benefit would have to pay tax?

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): That is a scare story.

Mr. Dewar: I shall be delighted if the Secretary of State tells us that it is a story without foundation, and rules it out. I shall wait with interest to see whether he does so.

I note that the Secretary of State is laying regulations to withdraw income support when it is held that a claimant is not actively seeking work. Those changes will not only affect new age travellers, as Ministers often imply; they will affect all applicants for unemployment benefit. Will the Secretary of State tell me what advice on the matter, and on that specific proposal, was given by the Social Security Advisory Committee?

I welcome the changes in war disablement pensions to put other ranks on a footing with officers, which

[Mr. Dewar]

constitutes a rare appearance of the classless society in the Government's work. Does the Secretary of State accept, however, that there will be some disquiet at the news that the changes are to be funded at the expense of those claiming for hearing loss as a result of service?

There will also be a welcome for the changes affecting income support levels for residential care and nursing homes. The Secretary of State should note, however, that we shall want to look closely at the increase in the top-rate non-dependant deduction in housing benefit. Is that not a disincentive for children to stay with their families, at a time when homelessness is growing—and is certainly one of the most common causes of benefit overpayment and, on occasion, of fraudulent claims?

I welcome the extension of the severe disability premium to those who share a household with a blind person; but will the Secretary of State give a categorical assurance that that is not the end of the story? It would be very sad if it were to be the final concession, and if all other carers living with the person cared for were to be permanently excluded from the premium. As one of my hon. Friends suggested earlier, should not the criterion be disability rather than loneliness?

May I ask the Secretary of State to look again at the social fund? I recognise his reluctance to retreat, but the social fund is arbitrary in operation and often unjust in outcome. Will the right hon. Gentleman recognise the need to review the cash-limited nature of the fund?

The significant figures in today's statement are the projected spending totals for the next three years, which are to rise to a formidable £87 billion in 1995-96. Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that, under current policies, expenditure on benefits will continue to rise for the worst of reasons—the rise in unemployment? Given that every 100,000 added to the unemployment total costs the right hon. Gentleman's Department £330 million this year, what room will there be for any real improvement in living standards for the people on benefit who are included in those totals?

The long-term outlook remains depressing. There is a price to be paid for the Government's mistakes. The Secretary of State pays out almost £1 in every £3 spent by Government. The tragedy is that it will not bring comfort and dignity to those at risk while this failed Administration use it to fund the cruel waste of the dole queues.

Mr. Lilley: Let me take an opportunity that I missed on a previous occasion, and welcome the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to his post, to which —as the whole House will agree—he will bring a high level of intelligence, integrity and diligence. I am particularly delighted to see my former pair sitting opposite me.

The hon. Gentleman gave my statement a rather grudging welcome, although it was a little more forthcoming than the response of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) to that of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is made happy only by bad news, and it seems that the hon. Member for Garscadden and his colleagues are made rather gloomy by good news.

The hon. Gentleman's principal criticism of the Government's actions seems to be our failure to fulfil the "rumours" that he himself fostered and encouraged on every possible occasion. He also suggested, rather surprisingly, that my statement was out of tune with a speech that I had made to the Conservative party conference. I assure him that it was in no way out of tune with that speech. Then, I emphasised the importance of an attack on fraud, and made it clear that there was every difference in the world between the vast majority of claimants—who are honest and genuine people—and those who commit fraud. It is the Labour party that does not distinguish between the two.

Let me remind the hon. Gentleman of a paper that was submitted to the Labour party's national executive committee by his hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). According to that paper, one of the disadvantages from which the Labour party suffered was the fact that it had linked itself with freeloaders. *[Interruption.]* I shall be happy to give chapter and verse later, if anyone cares to question that point.

The hon. Member for Garscadden said that income support had risen by only 3·6 per cent. I spelt out in some detail the implications of the extra £1 billion of resources that would be provided on top of that, allowing income support beneficiaries a rise in disposable income significantly larger than the original figure. That will mean a real improvement in standards of living, especially among the poorest pensioners.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that we move to a system of uprating based on prospective rather than retrospective inflation. I should have thought that, at a time of falling inflation, that would disadvantage most people, returning us to the days of a Labour Government who made precisely such a change and, in the process, cut the real value of pensions by 6 per cent.

The hon. Gentleman said that the Rowntree report spelt out an "austere low-cost budget"—a budget that allows the poorest only a video recorder, a camera and a television set; the report adds that they will not be able to afford a second television set for the children. According to the report, a modest budget requires an income of nearly £21,000 a year. As I recall, that is close to the income level at which the Labour party considered that a person was so rich that he should suffer a tax increase.

As for invalidity benefit, that is not a cut in entitlement. By tightening up our procedures and making better use of our medical resources, we hope to be able to save that amount over the period. For example, we shall cut out some of the procedures that require us to go twice to our own medical officers for the same piece of information. Medical officers will therefore be able to examine more cases and exercise tighter judgment. The opportunity has always been there to take the opinion both of general practitioners and of our medical officers. It is not unknown in the medical world to take a second opinion.

The taxation of invalidity benefit is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as are all taxation matters. The hon. Gentleman knows that the literature that recipients of this benefit receive contains a statement that it has been our long-standing intention to bring that benefit into tax, but only when the difficulties in doing so can be overcome.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the effect of the regulation laid today on those who are actively seeking work and said that it would apply to all people. It will apply only to those without children. A number of other categories are excluded, including—following the advice of the advisory committee—pregnant women. They, too, will be excluded from the operation of this rule.

The hon. Gentleman described the social fund as arbitrary and unjust. I believe that it is a far better system and less arbitrary and less unjust than the single payment system that preceded it. It will not be possible to operate it without a cash limit. Were we to operate solely on the basis of grants, the amount of cash that we have would mean that the operation of the cash limit would be far more stringent than that which we operate at present.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the very large total expenditure on social security. That is a gauge of our commitment to the neediest and to those who are most affected by severe economic circumstances. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the best help they can have is the recovery of the economy. I believe that the Chancellor's statement earlier today offers the best promise of achieving that recovery. I believe, too, that his statement will be welcomed as much by the beneficiaries of my Departments as by every hon. Member.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the action that he has announced against new age travellers will be particularly welcomed on this side of the House? Does he also agree that the vast majority of people who honestly draw benefits find it peculiarly insulting when they see the nation's resources being squandered on an indolent, anarchic rabble?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. In the estimates that I have made of savings through tackling fraud, I have made no allowance for any deterrent effect that the announcements will have. I believe, however, that an example effect was created when people could see that perhaps only a small number of people were getting away with living on benefit. That must have tempted others to do likewise. Now that they know that we are bearing down on that practice, they will not be so tempted. That must be beneficial to the country as a whole.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): May I, like the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), extend a grudging welcome to the statement? It is with some relief that we see that the Secretary of State has managed fully to index benefits. I acknowledge and welcome that fact. However, it drives a coach and horses through the contributory principle of the national insurance fund if the Secretary of State needs a Treasury grant to balance the books. It takes us all the way back to the old Treasury supplement days.

In his conference speech, the Secretary of State said that he intended to crack down on fraud. That is right and proper. However, can he give the House an assurance that the new techniques will not result in menace and intimidation? Many claimants are genuinely ignorant about the system and find it difficult to make claims.

As for the social fund, can the Secretary of State tell me how much of the announced money that he has adverted to this afternoon is real, new money and how much of it is due to the faster repayment of loans? The only effective way of measuring the size of the social fund budget is to measure it as an amount versus the number of income support claimants.

Can the Secretary of State also say a word about payments directed into bank accounts? He knows that many claimants do not have bank accounts. Very many post offices in rural areas and other areas will find it difficult to remain financially viable if the Secretary of State is too draconian about introducing that change too fast.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his self-confessedly grudging welcome. He believes that it is a small matter fully to uprate the benefits throughout the system. Many other countries throughout Europe are finding it difficult or impossible to do so. I know that the hon. Gentleman wants us to follow Europe in every respect. Does he wish us to follow in that respect also? The hon. Gentleman said that the ability to top up the national insurance fund from taxation was unwelcome. I presume, therefore, that he wants us to put up contributions. We think that that would not be right at present.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no question of menace and intimidation in the pursuit of fraud. I agree that it would be entirely wrong to go down that route. None the less, it is right to use all the techniques and information that we have available, through the computerisation of the benefits system, to achieve that end.

As for the social fund, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the increase in the budget in recent years and in next year's budget is in excess of the increase for people on income support. Therefore the amount of help available to people in that category is, effectively, increasing, even though the amount of new cash is quite small, but the recycling of cash through the repayment of loans earlier than was originally thought possible enables a 12 per cent. increase to be made in the coming year.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I wholeheartedly congratulate my right hon. Friend on having uprated all benefits in line with inflation and on not imposing an additional burden on industry through increasing national insurance contributions. It must have been a strong temptation, which my right hon. Friend was very wise to put on one side at this time. The very many people who are on low incomes find it grossly offensive that people who earn money through the black economy make no contribution, either through taxes or insurance. My right hon. Friend's attack on fraud will be particularly welcomed by those low-income families who pay their tax and national insurance honestly.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his congratulations. It has obviously been difficult for the Chancellor to achieve such a good settlement. I am delighted that he has been able to do so and that we have been able fully to uprate without increasing national insurance contributions. My hon. Friend is correct about fraud. No one resents fraud more than the genuine claimant of unemployment benefit when he sees someone else, who he knows has a job, fraudulently claiming unemployment benefit. That is intolerable and unsatisfactory. We shall do our best to root it out.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Benefits Agency office in my constituency deals with the largest number of disability benefit claimants in the country. The Secretary of State's reference to tightening up the procedures implies that it will become more difficult for people to claim disability benefit. Many of my constituents will be shocked by that remark. One of my constituents heard only a fortnight ago, two years after making her application for

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

disability benefit, that it had been approved. Thousands upon thousands of people throughout the country have been waiting for months and months—in this case for two years—to hear whether their application has been approved. Can the Secretary of State assure us that these measures will not lead to a reduction in the number of people who receive disability benefit?

Mr. Lilley: I can assure the hon. Gentleman, and I hope that he will reassure his constituents, that there is no question of harassing the vast majority of people who are entitled to this benefit and who will continue to receive it. We are proud of the fact that we helped twice as many people with this benefit as the Labour party and that we spend two and a half times as much upon it. However, we want to ensure that it goes where Parliament intended it to go. We have legal powers to check the medical basis upon which it is given. Anyone who fulfils those criteria has absolutely nothing to worry about, but it is right and proper that where referrals are made and there is a question about entitlement, we should investigate more of them than we do at present. I shall look into the two-year delay to which the hon. Member referred. He may have been referring to the disability living allowance, which is newer and with which there have been problems, but we have drafted in 800 extra people to get on top of them.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that his caring and balanced statement means that there will be no curtailment in the duration of unemployment benefits and no reduction in its real value? If so, will he use the opportunity to condemn the scaremongers on the Opposition Benches who have been having a heyday spreading rumours and, consequently, dismay? They must have had a disappointing afternoon, because they have a vested interest in bad news.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. I can confirm that there will be no reduction in the duration of entitlement to unemployment benefit. Rumours to that effect, fostered by Opposition Members, have proved ill-founded, as so many have in the past. Opposition Members' obvious delight in getting hold of any rumours or suggestions was matched only by the misery and disappointment on their faces when they realised that they were untrue.

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): Will the Secretary of State confirm that it is a condition of entitlement to benefit that an unemployed person must not only be available for work but actively seeking it? Will he therefore elucidate on the changes for which he said he is legislating today?

Mr. Lilley: Yes, I am happy to do so. Under existing rules, someone who is not actively seeking work is not entitled to the full rate of income support. It has been possible to secure the hardship rate, which is 40 per cent. lower, without actively seeking work. That entitlement has been removed from most categories where it clearly should not apply. A number of cases have been allowed to continue, where appropriate, partly on the advice of the advisory committee.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): I welcome the comments that my right hon. Friend made about trying to make savings in his departmental budget by encouraging more people to have their benefit paid directly into their bank account. Will he confirm that that is possible only because of his Department's multi-billion pound investment in new technology, which shows that the Government are committed not only to maintaining the level of benefit but to improving the way in which it is delivered?

Mr. Lilley: That is absolutely correct. On the issue of encouraging people to have their benefit paid directly into their bank accounts, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), I should point out that only those who have bank accounts and can be persuaded to use the facility will do so. There can be no question of claimants in rural areas who use the Post Office or whose bank is a long distance away switching from the Post Office. There is therefore no threat to rural sub-post offices.

Mr. Nigel Evans: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his announcement, and especially on inflation-proofing benefits, contrary to the scare stories, which did not help people who are on benefit. I particularly welcome the announcement about the savings that have been achieved by targeting fraud—£1 billion is not an inconsiderable sum of money—which have been reinvested to the benefit of people in need. May we have an assurance that the campaign against fraud will continue and that any future savings will be reinvested in the social security programme?

Mr. Lilley: Had I not been able to offer the Treasury the assurance that we would make efforts to stop and get back the £1 billion that otherwise would be lost through fraud, we would have £1 billion less to pay in benefit. It would not have been possible, therefore, fully to uprate benefits. That is why some Labour Members who deride the attack on fraud and identify it with an attack on poverty are 180 deg wrong. The hon. Member for Brightside, who cast doubt on my reference to his quotes, has conveniently left, but in his paper to the national executive of the Labour party, he said fear of Labour arises when

"it tolerates the intolerable—anti-social behaviour, free-loaders and the like from whatever level of society."

He is right; the rest of the party should listen to him.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Secretary of State has stated that he wants to introduce administrative ideas to control invalidity benefit. Does he see control as being more important than the award of invalidity benefit, and when he talks about difficulties in taxation with this aspect of social security benefit, is he advocating taxation or opposing it?

Mr. Lilley: There is no conflict between controlling a benefit and awarding it. We want to award benefit to those who are entitled to it and ensure that it is not indiscriminately available to those who are not. It would be wrong and contrary to the intentions of Parliament to award benefit to those who are not entitled to it, so we propose to check more cases that are referred to us for checking, to make better use of information and to have better relations and transfer of information with GPs, who often are not experts in social security law but who, in effect, have to comment on it. As a result, we shall better handle a very important benefit for many people and the money will go to the right people.

Mrs. Ewing: And taxation?

Mr. Lilley: I have made my position clear to the hon. Member for Garscadden: taxation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. We have a long-standing commitment to bring untaxed benefits, including this, into taxation, but that has not yet proved possible because of the difficulties surrounding it.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Has not the Secretary of State scored a first in persuading his Cabinet colleagues of the extent of social security abuse, which is so widely believed at Tory party conferences? I congratulate him on so exciting his colleagues that he managed successfully to steer through his total social security budget. Does he accept that, although he has been successful, Secretaries of State responsible for the public sector have allowed the lowest paid workers to suffer real cuts in living standards? Some of those workers earn about the same as or less than they could claim in benefit. Is there not something unsatisfactory about the public expenditure review when the living standards of the poor are dependent on the political skills of the masters around the Cabinet table?

Mr. Lilley: I am very grateful for the hon. Member's friendly remarks—perhaps "friendly" is the wrong word because he supports us only when we are right and a real friend would support us when we were wrong. We are right today and we have done the right thing. I am glad that he recognises that. He carries a lot of weight as Chairman of the Select Committee on Social Security and we always listen carefully to what he has to say. Inevitably, everyone who is dependent on public spending must keenly await the outcome of a public spending round. We always try to protect the poorest and most needy. I have made clear and explicit statements that that is our objective, including in my speech to the Conservative party conference. Others chose to listen to rumours rather than to my clear and open words.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his conspicuous success in securing a full uprating of social security benefits. I congratulate him particularly on securing what is in effect an increase in the real value of income support. Is not that evidence of our ability to target help effectively on the poorest members of society? Our low inflation ensures that the real value of benefits is maintained properly during the year and that old and unemployed people do not suffer a 20 per cent. or 25 per cent. reduction in the real value of their benefits, as they did under the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his thanks. It is true that we have increased the real value of benefits to the most needy. That is the best way of targeting. The Labour party is now committed to considering the means testing of all universal benefits. That is another way of targeting. We shall see how popular means testing proves to be.

My hon. Friend is right that inflation is the real thing that hits the poor. It destroys their savings. In the course of the year inflation can undermine purchasing power. If inflation is 20 per cent., on average purchasing power throughout the year is 10 per cent. less than it was at the start. That was the position under the Labour Government when we had an inflation rate of 20 per cent. That would be the position again if we were to give way to the Labour party's profligate and foolish policies.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I welcome the uprating and the other improvements that have been announced, especially as they relate to war pensions. Can the Minister reassure the House that, as a result of tightening up the invalidity benefit and other procedures, no one who is entitled to a benefit will be disadvantaged in any way? Will he take into account the many proposals that have been made to make the social fund more effective and fair, which it is not at present?

Mr. Lilley: I can give the hon. Gentleman an unequivocal assurance on invalidity benefits. Our intention is not to reduce the entitlements; it is simply to ensure that the benefit goes to those who are entitled.

I will consider carefully the several reports that have been made on the social fund. I am not persuaded by any of the reports that we should move away from the underlying principles on which the fund is based. The underlying principles are that the fund must have a discretionary element to deal with the aspects of benefits which are not covered by the present complex system of rules, that it must include a loan element and that it must be cash-limited.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend on the full uprating of all social security benefits. Does he agree that it is a bit rich for the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to spread fresh rumours about the erosion of the value of pensions in the future when the only Government ever to massage the real value of pensions downwards was a Labour Government? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Lilley: From the squealing on the Opposition Front Bench, it is clear that my hon. Friend's bullet hit its target.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): While no one would defend claims by anyone who is not entitled to a benefit, does the Secretary of State note that in the valleys of south Wales there are a larger number of claims than usual for invalidity benefit? That is not because people cheat or doctors lie but because the area has a high incidence of silicosis, pneumoconiosis and bronchitis among people working in quarrying and mining.

If the Secretary of State wants to tighten up on scroungers, as he told the Conservative party conference in Brighton, should not he look to the royal travellers—the minor members of the royal family—who take substantial sums of public money to which they are not entitled? Should we re-examine the possibility of taxing the Queen?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman spoilt a good point with a bad one at the end. He is right about the ill health and disability that is often experienced by miners. We have every intention of keeping invalidity benefit fully open to them.

The hon. Gentleman may have referred to remarks on the television. The views were those of the programme, not of any Minister. We did not participate in that programme, which made suggestions about miners in south Wales. I have not seen the programme but I know that there are problems in mining communities. We want the benefit to be available to miners.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the congratulations which are rightly

[Mr. David Nicholson]

due to him, as the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) pointed out, for piloting his budget through the Cabinet, should perhaps be shared with his predecessors, notably the Leader of the House, for the difficult decisions that they took in targeting the benefits programme? Does he agree that we should also congratulate the electorate on resisting the siren voices in the Labour party, which wanted to make extravagant promises that it could not possibly have afforded if it had come to government?

Is my right hon. Friend aware that his efforts to eliminate social security fraud will be welcome among Conservative Members, particularly those who represent parts of the country which were invaded this summer by new age travellers? I fear that, if the weather had been better this summer, we would have suffered rather more substantial and lengthy invasions by those travellers. As part of the programme of investigating fraud, will he examine the rents charged in constituencies such as mine for accommodation which is designed primarily for people on social security benefits? Certain local authorities feel that rents should be examined.

Mr. Lilley: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is impossible to overstate the amount that we owe to my predecessor both when he was Secretary of State for Social Security and now in his strategic location. I have only one thing against him: he weeded out many nonsenses which would otherwise have been available for me to weed out and for which I could claim credit.

My hon. Friend is right about new age travellers and others. We have nothing against the travelling mode of life as long as people obey the law, contribute to society and do not become leeches on it. Of course, I shall look into the matter of rents with local authorities.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): The Secretary of State referred to a major research project into invalidity benefits and said that he was examining the results of it. Will he publish those results? Does the research include examining the fate of the many people who are deemed capable of light work, which is unspecified and usually unobtainable?

Mr. Lilley: Some results of the research are already coming through and more results will come through in the next few months and in 1993. I will certainly consider publishing them. It is my predisposition to publish, and that is the normal practice.

Obviously, the existing rules on light work will not be changed by what we have announced today.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Does my right hon. Friend remember a motion that was passed at this year's Labour party conference which called for increases in——

Madam Speaker: Order. May I give a little guidance to the hon. Member? We are asking questions on a statement that has been made by the Secretary of State. The hon. Member must ask a question about the statement.

Mr. Elletson: In the light of the announcement today of increases in income support and support for pensioners and other categories of people, does my right hon. Friend remember a motion that was passed at this year's Labour party conference which called for increases in pensions? Can he confirm that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) admitted that such increases could cost the taxpayer up to 25 per cent.——

Madam Speaker: Order. I try to help hon. Members who have not been here very long, but I am afraid that I cannot accept that question. We must now move on.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to confirm that the breaking of the link between the state old-age pension and earnings in 1980 and the substitution of a link with the retail prices index has cost pensioners about £15 per week, if not more? Do the Government intend to recompense pensioners for the money that has been stolen from them in the past 13 years and restore fully the link that existed under the last Labour Government?

Mr. Lilley: The simple fact is that the living standards of pensioners have increased five times as rapidly under this Government as they did under the last Labour Government. I believe that most pensioners are glad that we have pursued our policies, not those of the Labour party. The Labour party often makes reckless pledges and commitments and then breaks them. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North referred to a pledge that was passed at the Labour party conference. The deputy leader of the Labour party says that the Labour conference makes Labour policy. At the Labour conference the hon. Member for Garscadden said that such a pledge would cost about £25 billion, and added that he saw it as a commitment by the conference, and supported it as an aspiration. It is an aspiration which it would be impossible for any Labour Government to fulfil —certainly not while doing all that was announced in my statement as well.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his statement will be warmly welcomed in the country? In the depths of a world economic recession it is a fine achievement. Does my right hon. Friend also accept that there is no monopoly of compassion among Opposition Members, and that in supporting his statement Conservative Members are every bit as committed to giving the elderly and sick and the disadvantaged the best help that we can. The difference between us and them is that we know that there is no crock of gold at the end of the rainbow out of which all demands on the public purse can be met.

Does my right hon. Friend recall that the Labour Government could not even muster the resources to pay pensioners their £10 Christmas bonus?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Any pretence that the Labour party ever made to be the friend of the needy was blown apart by the miserable looks on Labour Members' faces when the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced, and I repeated, that all benefits would be uprated in full. I hope that those miserable faces will be seen on the nation's television screens. Never have I seen gloomier faces on the Opposition Benches.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I would suggest that our faces were expressions of doubt, disbelief and mistrust rather than of gloom. When we talk about scaremongering, the Secretary of State must know that his colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food produced a study whose findings appalled the nation, with its ideas on how much it was reasonable to expect a person to live on per week, and the kind of diet that would result. Will he now tell us that he rejects those findings, and would expect people to have a better standard of living?

The Secretary of State mentioned that people's money should not be paid by giros or by order book. I hope that he realises that many people cannot have bank accounts —banks will not accept large one-off payments because the bank managers do not expect such people to be able to sustain bank accounts, so they are turned away. Will the Secretary of State tackle that problem?

Mr. Lilley: We believe that income support is sufficient, and in effect, as I explained, this year we have increased the real purchasing power of those who receive it by removing the requirement to pay 20 per cent. of the council tax. Thus we leave people free to spend that money as they choose, on different necessities of life.

I propose to encourage people to receive benefits by automated credit transfer into their bank accounts, but clearly people without bank accounts will not be able to do so. I should be happy to discuss the matter with the banks if, as the hon. Lady suggests, there is evidence that they refuse my customers bank accounts. I would tell them that they should not refuse, because social security payments are reliable, social security is good money, and if people wish to receive their benefits in that way that is better than benefits being paid by more expensive means.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will my right hon. Friend spell out for us—in simple language that even the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) can understand—the Government's continued commitment to basic state pensions and child benefits, which has been demonstrated by his statement?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only party which threatens universal benefits with means testing is the Labour party, which proposes a commission on social justice? Such a commission would produce not social justice but the opposite—*[Interruption.]*—and would threaten the basic pension and child benefit—[HON. MEMBERS: "Speech."]

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend has made his point in an admirably clear, concise fashion, which I think brought a measure of understanding to the hon. Member for Islington, North, who obviously wished to show his support. What my hon. Friend said is absolutely correct.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Secretary of State accept that we oppose fraud, whether in city boardrooms, in Lloyd's of London, in insurance companies or of welfare benefits? However, does he accept that his explanation of welfare fraud omitted the fact that in order to obtain the figures his Department multiplies by 32 all fraudulently claimed money recovered, which somewhat exaggerates the total?

Does the right hon. Gentleman also agree that the House would not be happy to entrust a tax on fraud to such a scaremongering Minister as himself? At the Tory party conference the right hon. Gentleman said that there were girls who got pregnant in order to cheat on housing queues, and councillors who cheated by obtaining benefits and attendance allowances at the same time. Neither his Department nor the Department of the Environment has any statistics for either of those categories. The Secretary of State has no figures whatever to prove his false, malicious, scaremongering smear. He should withdraw it now and apologise to the House.

Mr. Lilley: I unreservedly agree with the first part of what the hon. Gentleman said: we too oppose fraud in all aspects of life, whether in the benefits system, in commerce or in taxation—indeed, I believe that the whole House opposes it. On the hon. Gentleman's second point, to be accused of scaremongering by him is an accolade indeed.

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his excellent statement. I understand that behind that statement lies a recent success, on which my right hon. Friend may like to comment. He won a recent court case on national insurance contributions and saved £500 million, which has enabled him to uprate pensions. Will he also tell us whether that was the first time that we have won such a case?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right. We won a case in the European Court of Justice, which preserved revenues of £500 million a year which we would not otherwise have had, or which we would have had to obtain elsewhere, so we would have found it that much more difficult to meet the uprating bill. My hon. Friend is correct to say that that was the first such case that the Government have ever won in the European Court of Justice in our 20 years of membership. However, my Department has won two more cases since then, so clearly we are on a winning streak.

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): If we are to have a public sector pay freeze, which will include the wages of poor families with children, at a time when social security benefits are being uprated, what will the effect of the one be on the other? If there is to be more poverty in real terms, what are the implications for social security entitlement, and therefore for public expenditure projections? There must be a connection.

Similarly, what implications will abolishing the wages councils have for projections of social security expenditure?

Mr. Lilley: The interrelationship between my statement and the tight control of public sector pay is clear. It is because we have exercised tight control of public sector pay, and because of the other rigorous measures that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has adopted, that the Chancellor has been able to secure the position of the less well-off, the most needy, and to increase resources for those in greatest need—and also to generate more resources, which will increase the number of jobs in the future.

We believe that in the long run the abolition of wages councils will increase the number of jobs, and so diminish the burden of expenditure on my Department. It is possible that some of those jobs may be low-paid, so that those who do them will be helped by family credit. That is what family credit is there for.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): What adjustments does the Secretary of State intend to make to housing benefit to ensure that those on benefit who pay rent do not receive money from the Government with one hand and have to pay it straight back with the other in increased rent?

Mr. Lilley: To the extent that rents increase, people on low incomes are protected through the operation of housing benefit—that is what it is there for.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): May I press the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks)? The announcement that public sector pay will be kept down at 1·5 per cent. means that many low-paid workers will receive a very small increase in their wages. Has the Department estimated the number of people who will then be eligible to claim other means-tested benefits, particularly family credit, housing benefit and council tax benefit because those people will fall into that category and become eligible for means-tested benefit?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman should not dismiss the point that I made in response to the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks). If those in work take only moderate increases, we can help those who are out of work and help generate the jobs to bring them back into work. The net effect of the changes that we have announced will be beneficial in terms of my budget and in terms of the well-being of the population as a whole.

Business of the House

6.10 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Slightly later than usual, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week:

MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER—Opposition day (5th allotted day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate described as "Housing—Homelessness and the Mortgage Crisis" followed by a debate on Bosnia. Both debates arise on motions in the name of the Liberal Democrats.

TUESDAY 17 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

Ways and Means resolution relating to car tax (abolition).

WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER AND THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER—There will be a debate on a motion to approve the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement.

FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER—Opposition day (6th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, subject for debate to be announced.

It may also be helpful for the House to know that European Standing Committees will meet on Wednesday 18 November at 10.30 am.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Not again.

Mr. Newton: Evidently with the reluctant participation of at least one hon. Member. They will meet to consider European Community documents as follows:

[Wednesday 18 November
Standing Committee A
Relevant European Community Documents
(a) 10229/91 Common Fisheries Policy
(b) 5337/92 Fisheries: Discards
(c) 9135/92 Common Fisheries Policy: Mid-Term Review Proposals
(d) 9019/92 Common Fisheries Policy: Control System
Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 24-ix (1991-92) HC 79-i (1992-93)
(b) HC 79-i (1992-93)
(c) HC 79-vii (1992-93)
(d) HC 79-vii (1992-93)

Standing Committee B
Relevant European Community Document
6818/92 Aid for former East German Ship Yards.
Relevant Report of the European Legislation Committee
HC 79-iv (1992-93)]

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I thank the Leader of the House for the statement. There may be a certain amount of cynicism in some parts of the House about the fact that the Liberal Democrats' saving the Government's bacon is followed so closely by the award of an Opposition day.

I press the Leader of the House for a debate in Government time on the supply of plant and machinery to Iraq. Before the Leader of the House reminds us that there is to be an inquiry, may I say that the matter is not sub judice. Therefore, there is nothing to prevent the House from having a debate. We have a duty to scrutinise the role and behaviour of Ministers in relation to the House and statements made here.

As the timetable for completion of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill seems to be under continual review, when does the Leader of the House now expect to resume the Committee stage? I thank the right hon. Gentleman for next week's debate on the autumn statement, but will he bear in mind that, after the Select Committee report, the House will want an opportunity to take a more detailed look at the public expenditure programme?

Will the Leader of the House bear in mind the strong view on the Opposition Benches that it is quite unacceptable that the autumn statement and the social security uprating statement should be made on the same day in future, particularly on a Thursday, as that is bound to reduce the opportunity normally available to the House for questioning on those different subjects? Finally, may I utter the two words, "Members' interests"?

Mr. Newton: Taking the last point first, I assure the hon. Lady, as I have assured the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on whose behalf she no doubt raises the point in his absence, that I have that matter very much in mind. However, I cannot add to what I have said over the past week or two.

Returning to the main thrust of the hon. Lady's questions, although I note without surprise what she described at the outset of her remarks as cynicism, it will be well within the knowledge of those on the Liberal Democrats Bench that they have been pressing for a Supply day opportunity for some time—as, indeed, the hon. Lady probably has. My statement gives an Opposition day to the Liberal Democrats and to the official Opposition. It does nothing more than reflect my normal wish to be as helpful as I can in responding to the pressures on me.

With regard to the debate on the Matrix Churchill business for which the hon. Lady was pressing, I cannot promise that. The proper course is for the independent inquiry to do its work. However, I have already said that there is an Opposition day and no doubt the hon. Lady may wish to bear that in mind when considering what she wants to do.

I cannot give the hon. Lady a precise date at the moment for embarking on the Committee stage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. However, I assure her that she will not have to wait too much longer. In respect of the hon. Lady's desire for a further debate on the autumn statement, I have said that next week's debate is expected to take place on a motion to approve the autumn statement. That would take over from the debate that more normally takes place in January. However, if the hon. Lady wishes to press, through the usual channels, for further opportunities to debate economic or public expenditure matters, between now and the Budget, consideration can clearly be given to that in the normal way.

I was a little surprised by the hon. Lady's remarks about the autumn statement and the social security statement coming on the same day. In many ways, there has been an artificiality in previous years in having the social security statement picked out some weeks in advance of the overall outcome of public expenditure. Although I do not say that that sets an immutable precedent, it makes a certain amount of logical sense. It is now more than two and three quarter hours since the first of the statements was embarked upon and there has been a full opportunity to question my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend make a statement next week on the way in which the House will examine the issue of the ordination of women? My right hon. Friend will be aware that that matter will have to come before the House after the Ecclesiastical Committee of both Houses has considered it. Is he aware that there is deep feeling on both sides of the House about the issue and that we will expect a full day's debate at least when it comes before the House?

Mr. Newton: I take careful note of that point. I am well aware that, following yesterday's decision, the House will expect a substantial opportunity to debate the matter should it come before us. I shall bear what my hon. Friend said in mind.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Grateful though we are for the debate space on Monday, I wish to press the Leader of the House on the Committee timetable and remaining stages timetable on the Maastrich Bill. Will he dispel the various confusions in Government circles about the timetable from now on? Are we going to start the Committee stage, as we are told, the week after next? When will Third Reading be taken?

Mr. Newton: As I told the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), I cannot give a specific date, but I certainly anticipate embarking on the Committee stage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill very shortly after we have disposed of the business that I announced today, which takes us up to Monday week. However, I shall not attempt to give a specific date this afternoon. As for subsequent stages of the Bill, the position has been made entirely clear by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have nothing to add to that.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Would my right hon. Friend care to tell me when I shall be able to express my dismay at a rather feeble decision by the Rugby Union authorities to kow-tow to the African National Congress and decide not to play the national anthem at Twickenham on Saturday? Will my right hon. Friend join me in urging the fans at Twickenham to initiate the singing of the national anthem on Saturday to continue the long-held tradition which has been enjoyed there for such a long time?

Mr. Newton: Many will share my hon. Friend's concern. I understand that, following the press report earlier in the week, further discussions are taking place today and a decision is expected later. So far as I am aware, it has not been made yet. It is not, of course, a matter for the Government, being a matter for private bodies, but I hope that a solution will be found that will enable the tradition to be maintained.

Dr. Godman: May I say in passing that I am very interested to hear that European Standing Committee B is meeting next week.

My question concerns the need for a statement next week by the Secretary of State for Social Security about a decision by the chief adjudication officer to appeal against a commissioner's decision to restore invalidity benefit to a lady in Liverpool. The Government's refusal to restore payment of that benefit by way of the commissioner's decision, which is based upon an EC directive dating from as far back as 1979, has important implications for many thousands of women, some of whom are quite frail in health.

I appeal to the Leader of the House, who has knowledge of these matters, to arrange for a statement concerning the timing of the appeal to the English Court of Appeal. If that appeal is lost, I should like to know whether the Government would then appeal to the House of Lords. I have today written to Mrs. Papandreou urging her to take action at the European Court of Justice against the Government by way of article 169.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to suggest that I had a certain knowledge of social security matters, which I suppose inescapably is the case after three years as Secretary of State, but it does not extend——

Mrs. Beckett: That does not necessarily follow.

Mr. Newton: That is a really cynical remark.

Dr. Godman: What does the Leader of the House mean?

Mr. Newton: I was referring to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). The hon. Gentleman probably did not hear her sedentary and cynical intervention.

As for the hon. Gentleman, I must tell him that whatever knowledge I have did not extend to the details of the case that he raised. However, I know enough about such matters to know that I would be unwise to comment off the cuff. I shall draw his remarks to the attention of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is some time since we have had a debate in Government time on tourism? Will he give recognition to the fact that tourism is Britain's largest industry, both in terms of revenue gains for the country and because of the number of people employed in it? Will he therefore urgently see if he can find time for a debate on tourism?

Mr. Newton: That is the second time in a couple of weeks that the point has been raised. Although I cannot give any promises, I shall bear my hon. Friend's request in mind. Meanwhile, noting the town that he represents in Parliament, I hope that it did reasonably well out of the CBI conference.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): I wish to raise with the Leader of the House the desperate plight of between 20,000 and 25,000 unfortunate old-age pensioners who, as a result of deregulation of the money markets in the mid-1980s, were encouraged by investment companies under the umbrella of the FIMBRA logo—that of the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Association—to take up home investment schemes and who have seriously impoverished themselves. Some families are almost on the point of suicide. Will the Leader of the House arrange for a Treasury Minister to make a statement to the House next week, with a view to introducing strict regulations to protect those unfortunate people?

Mr. Newton: I do not have to undertake to bring Treasury Ministers to the House next week, because they will be here in profusion on Wednesday and Thursday. It will be for you, Madam Speaker, to judge whether reference to such a matter would be in order in that debate. As I said last week, it would seem that, with reasonable ingenuity, it might be possible to get the point in.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Will my right hon. Friend give time for a debate on nepotism in local government and recent accusations which have been made, in particular against Monklands district council in Scotland?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can promise an immediate or early debate on that matter, but my hon. Friend has made his point by raising it in the House.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I draw the Minister's attention to early-day motion 647, which calls for the introduction of a boarder premium for homeless families.

[That this House is deeply concerned at the growing number of homeless families living in temporary accommodation, without access to independent cooking facilities, who are suffering from severe dietary and health problems; notes that these families have no resources to meet the additional costs of buying take-away food and having to eat out in cafes, and that in the majority of cases children are not getting an adequate diet; congratulates the House of Lords for supporting Lord Henderson's motion to implement a boarder premium on 6th July; and urgently calls upon Her Majesty's Government to amend the 1987 income support regulations accordingly, thereby providing an extra £10 per week to each member of a homeless family living in these intolerable circumstances.]

That motion has now been signed by 176 hon. Members. Will the right hon. Gentleman, as a former Secretary of State for Social Security, agree that it was a serious disappointment that there was no mention in the statement by the present Secretary of State of the need for the introduction of that premium to cope with the acute problems of deprivation and malnutrition among such families? Will he urge the Secretary of State to reconsider the matter and to make a statement to the House at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Newton: Again, given that social security was very much part of the autumn statement, albeit the subject of a separate statement, I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman might find an opportunity to raise that matter in the two-day debate next week. However, I do not wish to raise his hopes for a sudden change in policy. I draw his attention to the fact that quite significant increases in social security benefits for families of all kinds were announced by my right hon. Friend only a few moments ago.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House convey to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the warm response of the people of Northern Ireland to his positive statements yesterday concerning the democratic deficit that they have suffered, particularly in local government? Will he encourage the Secretary of State to make provision for the restoration of accountable democracy in local government in Northern Ireland, if not next week, at least before the forthcoming local government elections?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful, and I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will also be grateful, for the hon. Gentleman's comments and, indeed, for the comments of many from the political scene in Northern Ireland during the exchanges yesterday. I shall draw my right hon. and learned Friend's attention to the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I, too, am concerned about yesterday's statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I asked a question about economic and social affairs in the Province. The right hon. and learned Gentleman claimed that those matters were taken seriously in the talks and were a serious concern of the Government. Yet when I look at the material supplied with the autumn statement, I find that from 1988-89 to the estimates for 1995-96 there is a decline year by year in the percentage that is to be spent by the Northern Ireland Office. That does not seem to tie in with the notion that there is concern for economic and social regeneration. We should therefore have a debate on the matter.

Mr. Newton: Following the autumn statement, we are having a two-day debate next Wednesday and Thursday. It is clear, as I think I can say even without consulting you, Madam Speaker, that the point made by the hon. Gentleman would be in order in that debate.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that there are 180 refugees stranded on the Austro-Slovenian border? They have been there since 9 am yesterday. My understanding is that they are going to different destinations in the United Kingdom and that the coach that is coming to Leeds carries people who have connections in Yorkshire. I further understand that those people are stranded because of the changes in arrangements for entry which were made recently in the House. When the original arrangements were made, their papers were in order, but they are now no longer so.

Is that entirely the responsibility of the Home Office or, given where those people are, is it the responsibility of the Foreign Secretary? Will the Leader of the House ensure that action is taken rapidly to get those people moving? Will he also ensure that a statement is made to the House next week?

Mr. Newton: I can certainly undertake to draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention both of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, although I understand that the organisation that has been involved in the matter was informed on several occasions before the people started their journey that visas would be required for the passengers.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 778 concerning the future of Britain's shipbuilding industry.

[That this House notes with deep concern the continuing loss of jobs in Britain's shipbuilding industry, with recent redundancies at Swan Hunters and VSEL; recognises that in shipbuilding communities there is a collection of unique and precious engineering skills vital to the success of British manufacturing industry; and therefore calls upon the Government to take immediate action to promote the industry and thus secure the jobs of many thousands of people by pursuing policies which will allow warship yards to bid competitively for merchant orders through the intervention fund scheme, by bringing forward the order of new vessels such as LPH, and by actively supporting diversification initiatives.]

I remind the right hon. Gentleman that in recent years there have been thousands of redundancies in our shipbuilding communities and more than 6,500 in my constituency. Government policies are ruining jobs in shipbuilding industries and we need an urgent debate in Government time to discuss the future of that once-mighty industry.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that when I was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry I had a considerable connection with shipbuilding matters, so I am obviously aware of the problems. I am also aware of the important amount that has been done, with considerable success, in many shipbuilding areas, not least in Sunderland, where the Nissan factory is virtually in sight of the former shipyards and has brought new and diversified employment.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Given my questions during past weeks, it will come as no surprise to the Leader of the House that I welcome the meeting of European Standing Committe A next Wednesday. Does he realise the exact extent of the legislation that he has remitted to that Committee? The documents that I have here are only 50 per cent. of the material that affects common fisheries policy. I could question Ministers for two and a half hours on those documents alone.

Is it possible for the Committee meeting to be extended to ensure that we can question Ministers in detail? Will the right hon. Gentleman guarantee the presence of a Scottish Office Minister at the meeting because of the closure of the haddock fisheries, which are important to the Scottish fishing industry? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept also that that meeting is not a substitute for a full-scale debate on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Newton: I take the hon. Lady's latter point. She has strenuously pressed that matter during the past few weeks. She will be well aware that normally there is a debate on fisheries towards the end of the year. Although I cannot give a time for that debate, I note her implicit request.

On the Standing Committee, I shall consider the matters that the hon. Lady raised. I cannot say more than that today. Given that there is to be a Fisheries Council discussion on 23 November, it is important to have a discussion in the Standing Committee beforehand, and that was the best way to do it.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Have Ministers studied early-day motion 775, entitled "Rights of Social Security Claimants", tabled by myself and my hon. Friends, which requests the Government to withdraw the measure restricting the rights of claimants to have errors corrected?

[That this House believes that if an error is made in determining a person's benefit the claimant should have a statutory right to have such an official error corrected; therefore regrets that the Government has laid the statutory

[Mr. Peter Mandelson]

instrument entitled, The Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2595) as it will diminish the rights of existing and future claimants to such retrospective entitlement; believes that this attempt to remove Regulation 49 of the 1987 Claims and Payments Regulations is a further attempt to erode the rights of the poorest in the community and reduce social security expenditure by undermining the rights of benefit claimants; and urges the Government to withdraw S.I., No. 2595.]

Will the right hon. Gentleman take note of the strength of opinion in the House on that matter and arrange for an early debate?

Mr. Newton: I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's comment to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security rather than promise a debate. I understand that the repeal of regulation 49 will not deny rights to people who have not received their entitlement to income support or family income supplement because of official error.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Leader of the House think that it is about time that we had another debate on the mining industry, because the first debate was allocated on an Opposition Supply day? The Government ought to allocate a day's debate to that subject because 10 pits are being allowed to go to rack and ruin and 7,000 miners are being turned away when they go to work. It is costing the Chancellor of the Exchequer or British Coal £1·4 billion to send miners home instead of letting them go down the pit. Those 10 pits are being gradually closed, even though the Government gave a commitment that all 31 would remain open. Surely we should have a debate on that issue in Government time.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the review that is being conducted. The appropriate time to consider further debate in Government time would be when we have the results of that review.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Leader of the House will no doubt have heard the Chancellor of the Exchequer say during his autumn statement that the Secretary of State for Wales would make a statement on expenditure in Wales. I noticed in one of the tables that central Government support for local government will increase by £140 million in England and by £20 million in Scotland, but that it will decrease by £80 million, or 3·3 per cent, in Wales. Can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House how soon the Secretary of State for Wales will come to the House to face questions on a serious issue for Welsh Members?

Mr. Newton: The straightforward answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that I cannot tell him anything beyond the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is due to answer questions next Monday.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The right hon. Gentleman has held his office for some time now—more than six months—so when does he propose to make a statement on access for disabled people and visitors to this building and to refreshment and toilet facilities and on allowing members of the public to see the building without being accompanied by a Member at all times? I am sure that he agrees that it is nonsense that the House has legislated for facilities for disabled people in cinemas and public buildings, but that there is no real access to this place, apart from the humiliation of people in wheelchairs being taken down the back stairs route via goods lifts. It is high time that the right hon. Gentleman did what none of his predecessors have done and achieved a real change in this building.

Mr. Skinner: I asked about that last week.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is right. He raised those matters with me last week and I undertook to assist and to do whatever I could. In the not-too-distant past, the House agreed revised arrangements for its governance, delegating substantial responsibilities to fully fledged Select Committees, including the Accommodation and Works Committee, chaired by a respected member of the Opposition Front Bench. In the first instance, I must draw to the attention of that Committee the issues being raised in the Chamber.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the Leader of the House reconsider the reply that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) about the need for a Commons debate on the Matrix Churchill affair? Some of the issues are separate from the Scott inquiry. There are matters with which the House needs to deal and we have received answers from Ministers and from the Prime Minister about which there are serious questions. We need to debate a serious issue—either the Prime Minister knew about the arms exports, in which case he is being dishonest, or he did not know about them, in which case he is being incompetent.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister dealt at some length with those matters at Question Time today. I am afraid that I am not in a position to add to what I told the hon. Member for Derby, South in response to her request from the Opposition Front Bench. The appropriate course is to ensure that the independent inquiry conducted by the judge is carried out as quickly and as fully as possible.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall call the hon. Gentleman, but he came into the Chamber when the Lord President of the Council was on his feet answering the first question. It is a matter of courtesy and procedure that if Members are going to question statements, they should be in the House to hear them, irrespective of what they are.

Mr. Mackinlay: I fully accept that ticking off, Madam Speaker, and your advice and guidance.

At the remembrance service on Sunday, it occurred to me that it would be timely for the House to debate the plight of many war veterans and their dependants—widows and orphans. Many of them are increasingly infirm and are in the late evening of life. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have strong connections with the Royal British Legion, the Royal Naval Association and the Royal Air Forces Association and they would welcome the opportunity to discuss the increasing plight of many elderly and infirm ex-service men and women and their dependants. It is time for the House to put aside a half-day to debate those issues and especially early-day motion 735, which draws our attention to the inadequate compensation awarded to Japanese prisoners of war after the second world war.

[That this House joins with the nation in remembering on Sunday 8th November all those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom; calls upon Her Majesty's Government to remember those Japanese prisoners-of-war alive today, still imprisoned physically and mentally by the callous and inhumane actions of Japanese Imperial Forces during the Second World War; records that this continuing sacrifice was deemed in 1951 and still remains worth only £76·50 in final and complete settlement; reminds Her Majesty's Government that this issue is not closed until survivors receive full and adequate compensation commensurate with the sacrifice, claims which hitherto remain challenged only by the absence of natural justice.]

Many hon. Members would like to press the Government to consider whether that matter should again be raised with the Japanese Government.

Mr. Newton: I am glad to find that I have something else in common with the hon. Gentleman, other than the fact that we both represent parts of the same county, through our connection with the Royal British Legion and the Royal Naval Association. I repaired to the Royal Naval Association branch in Braintree after the remembrance service on Sunday afternoon, where I met many of my friends. No doubt the hon. Gentleman did the same.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security made an announcement that will help more than 200,000 war disablement pensioners, who will gain up to £5 a week. Not more than two years ago, when I was Secretary of State for Social Security, I made an announcement that was hugely beneficial to a large number of war widows.

Points of Order

6.40 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During questions on the autumn statement, the Chancellor was asked by one of my hon. Friends whether invalidity benefit would be taxed in future. In answer, the right hon. Gentleman referred to the statement to be made later by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. When the Secretary of State was asked that same question, however, by one of my hon. Friends, he said that that was a matter for the Chancellor.

I wonder whether you would check the record, Madam Speaker, to see whether the Chancellor said, as I believe, that it was a matter for his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. If so, would you call the Chancellor back to the House tomorrow to answer that question?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member knows that I have no authority to require Ministers to come to the Dispatch Box. Perhaps this matter can be made clear in the debate next week.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. When my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) raised the extremely important and delicate matter of the memory of those who were rightfully or wrongly killed, the Government Whip and the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), seemed to find it all very amusing and kept on trying to interrupt my hon. Friend as he asked that serious question. May I ask them, through you, Madam Speaker, to disport themselves in a better manner when my hon. Friend speaks?

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. I think that I made my position clear to start with when I said that I expect hon. Members, however serious their contribution, to be in the Chamber at the beginning of a statement.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

INCOME TAX

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Guyana) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Falkland Islands) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Adoption Law Review

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

6.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): The debate this evening provides the House with an opportunity to consider the recent report to Ministers by the interdepartmental working group, set up in 1989 to carry out a review of adoption law. The report was published in full on 19 October and was made available to hon. Members in the usual way. I welcome the opportunity to bring to the attention of the House some of the more important and innovative proposals contained in the report.

The House should be aware that there is no commitment by the Government at this stage to proceed with any of the recommendations contained in the report. We wish to encourage further debate on the proposals. That is why we are anxious for the report to reach as wide an audience as possible—not only from within the public and voluntary sectors but from individuals affected by adoption or who have had experience of the adoption process. But today's debate, is not just an opportunity for consideration of the report's proposals. I hope, within the limits of order, that it will also give the House an opportunity to discuss all aspects of adoption which may be affected by the proposals.

It is 20 years since the Houghton committee produced the last report on adoption law and practice. The recommendations of that committee were the main principles underlying the Adoption Act 1976 and included the restriction of power to arrange adoptions to local authorities and approved adoption societies; placing local authorities under a duty to provide a comprehensive adoption service, and giving adult adopted people the right to obtain a copy of their original entry in the register of births.

The intervening years have seen many developments in the social structure of our society, particularly in relation to the family and the care and protection of children. Since 1976, adoption practice has developed in response to the new obligations placed upon agencies and courts in recognition of those social trends. Changes in professional and public concepts of the needs of children, birth families and adoptive families have brought about developments in social work theory and practice. There has been growing recognition of the desirability of involving birth parents in the adoption process; and of the need felt by some adopted people to learn about their origins and make contact with members of birth families.

There has continued to be a steady fall in the number of babies needing adoptive families, and therefore an increasing emphasis on placing older children, children in care and children with special needs. In 1974, the total number of children placed for adoption in England and Wales was 22,502, of which more than 5,000 were under the age of one year. In 1990, the total fell to under a third of that figure—6,533—of which only 969 were under one year of age. Many voluntary adoption societies are developing specialised family-finding services, especially for children with special needs. Inter-agency working arrangements and partnerships between agencies have been developed. There has also been a growth in the number and range of other voluntary organisations and self-help groups to meet the needs of people involved in adoption, especially in connection with post-adoption services.

Since 1979, several legislative measures have been introduced to improve child care and the reform of family law. The Children Act 1989—"the charter for children"—is the most recent and notable example. The review of adoption law is a logical consequence of the Children Act and is also part of the Lord Chancellor's review of family law.

In July 1989, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, with the Lord Chancellor, Home Secretary and other Ministers established the interdepartmental working group comprising officials from the health Department's, the Home Office, the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and a law commissioner. The group was supported by a joint team from the Department of Health and the Law Commission. I should like to pay a warm tribute to the work of that group.

The group's work followed on the Royal Assent to the Children Act in November 1989, and the review has been conducted in a similar way to the review which led to that legislation. Four consultation papers were issued—"The Nature and Effect of Adoption" in September 1990; "Agreement and Freeing" in September 1991; "The Adoption Process" in November 1991; and "Intercountry Adoption" in January 1992. In addition, three background papers on international perspectives, research relating to adoption and inter-country adoption were also issued as part of the consultation material. More than 200 organisations and individuals responded to those papers. Members of the group also met representatives of organisations involved in the various aspects of adoption. The results of those wide-ranging discussions are contained in the review.

The review looks at all aspects of adoption law and practice including, most importantly, an examination of the nature and effect of adoption; agreement to adoption; a review of court procedures; alternatives to adoption orders available under the Children Act 1989; improving the adoption service; and inter-country adoption.

Adoption continues to provide an important service for children. In the provision of this service, the needs of the child come first and the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration. This principle has been rigorously maintained by the working group throughout its work on the review—and quite rightly. The purpose of adoption is to provide children with families, not families with children. There is no room for dogma when dealing with an issue as complex and important as this. What is needed is common sense, compassion and a sound legal framework.

The report contains a total of 45 main recommendations, some confirming present practice, some amending and extending it, and I draw the attention of hon. Members to a few of them. The first is the need for local authorities to have a duty to establish and give due weight to the wishes and feelings of the child, his or her parents and any other person whom the agency considers relevant.

Secondly, children of 12 years and over should have automatic party status in court hearings. Children under 12 years may be given party status by the court if appropriate, and a guardian ad litem should be appointed in every case.

Thirdly, freeing for adoption should be abolished so that the court can consider the advantage to the child of a particular adoption. A placement order would be granted by the court before placement commenced and parental agreement to a particular placement would normally be obtained. The grounds for dispensing with parental agreement will be limited where the parent cannot be found or is incapable of giving agreement; or to a single test that will require that the court be satisfied that the advantage to the child of a new family significantly outweighs any other options that may be available, so justifying the overriding of the parents' wishes.

Fourthly, the report recognises that, in the case of step-parent adoptions, it should not be necessary for the birth parent involved to become an adoptive parent, and that there should be provision for such an order to be undone if the marriage ends.

There are also recommendations to extend the remit of the adoption contact register, allowing birth parents and other relatives to indicate a preference not be contacted. There should also be the facility to allow bona fide tracing agencies to locate interested parties seeking a link.

Openness in adoption is another feature of the report, although not, of course, a new concept. It can take many forms and should be seen generally as a move away from the closed and secretive process which has characterised adoption until recently. Openness may take the form of exchanges of information between adoptive families and birth families or contact between adopted children and members of their birth family—brothers and sisters or grandparents—not necessarily involving birth parents. Whether openness is appropriate in any individual case or what form it should take will, of course, depend on the needs of the child.

One point that I wish to stress to allay any unfounded fears is that it is certainly not envisaged that contact should be imposed on adoptive families. The arrangements must be handled in every case with sensitivity and skill. They require agreement by all parties well before an adoption order is made. Nobody involved in adoption, whether as part of the birth family or of the adoptive family, should feel threatened by the risk of unwelcome or unauthorised contact.

The report makes a number of important recommendations about inter-country adoption.

The origins of inter-country adoption date back to the post-war years, but its nature has changed. Originally, it was mainly a humanitarian initiative in response to catastrophe, designed to meet the needs of children displaced and suffering through war. More recently, inter-country adoption has developed more as a service for childless couples, although, of course, humanitarian instincts are still prevalent.

Its growing popularity stems in part from the decline in domestic adoption in many western countries in the past two decades as the number of babies available for adoption has decreased. In the United Kingdom this has been due in large measure to the greater availability of birth control, changed attitudes towards single mothers, and the more sympathetic social conditions which enable unmarried mothers to take responsibility themselves for the care of their children.

Communications have also played a part. Not many years ago the plight of children in countries overseas would have been largely unknown. Today, heart-rending pictures of deprived children are beamed straight into our living rooms from all around the world. As the world shrinks, we identify more with the difficulties of people in other countries and, with fewer babies available for adoption at home, prospective adopters naturally look further afield for children. This trend is likely to continue.

There are different and often strongly held views of inter-country adoption. For many childless people and for those who wish to add to their family, inter-country adoption seems to achieve two objectives: fulfilling their wish for a child, and meeting the need of deprived children elsewhere for a home. For others, inter-country adoption appears to be a form of humanitarian aid, rescuing children from abandonment and poverty.

There are people, however, who have serious reservations about inter-country adoption on grounds of principle, or practice, or both. There are practical concerns over the supervision of adoption arrangements in some countries and about children's ability to adapt to life in a very different culture. Underlying these reservations is a basic question: is it right that many arrangements for inter-country adoption should operate primarily as services to provide couples with children rather than to provide children with families—which, as I said earlier, is the purpose of adoption?

In some countries, despite great efforts to introduce safeguards and regulation, an unofficial traffic continues alongside the official services. Even where legislation in sending countries specifically requires that foreigners should not be allowed to adopt except where they have been found suitable by the authorities in their own country, the requirements are not always observed.

We should not underestimate the risks that official arrangements can mean for children. For a child to be taken to a foreign country only then to be rejected is very undesirable indeed. Similarly, it is unacceptable for parents who have been turned down by the authorities in their home country to try to beat the system by adopting from overseas. These risks are not a reason for preventing inter-country adoption altogether, but they underline the need for great care in its regulation and management at both the national and the international level.

When the report was published last month, there was some interest in the recommendation that bringing children into the United Kingdom without proper authority should be made a criminal offence. I can assure the House that this action would not be considered until any new legislation was in place and running smoothly.

National initiatives must fit into a wider international effort if we are to guarantee the well-being of children involved in inter-country adoption. Two important international instruments contain provisions about inter-country adoption. These are the 1986 United Nations declaration on social and legal principles relating to the protection and welfare of children, with special reference to foster placement and adoption nationally and internationally, and the 1989 United Nations convention on the rights of the child.

The declaration and the convention together spell out a number of key principles in relation to inter-country adoption. They are proving increasingly influential in shaping the development of Government policies and legislative reform in sending and receiving countries.

Perhaps the most encouraging development in inter-country adoption in recent years is the proposed international convention on inter-country adoption. It is being developed by a special commission set up in 1990 by

[Mr. Tim Yeo]

the Hague conference on private international law and will meet again in May next year to discuss the draft convention. It aims to establish safeguards so that inter-country adoptions take place only when they are in the best interests of the child. It also aims to establish a system of co-operation among contracting states to ensure that these safeguards are respected.

In the United Kingdom we strongly endorse these aims. It is only through international co-operation, on the level of both policy and planning and on the case-by-case level, that inter-country adoption can truly meet the needs of individual children. I am glad to say that in the United Kingdom we already have in place the infrastructure of central authorities and authorised agencies which the proposed convention envisages for the proper regulation and strong central supervision of inter-country adoption.

Additionally, in recognition of the increasing interest in overseas adoption, the Department of Health awarded a grant to the Bridge child care consultancy earlier this year allowing it to host the overseas adoption helpline project. The helpline is intended to be an independent source of advice and information for families seeking to adopt from abroad as well as for professionals in the field. The helpline began operations on 11 May and its progress will be reviewed in the new year. The recommendations in the report reflect those international initiatives, and I commend them.

I will mention some aspects of adoption practice which are not covered directly by individual recommendations in the review but which are fundamental to any consideration of the whole subject. I recognise that one of the main reasons why some would-be adoptive parents attempt inter-country adoption outside the existing legal framework is their anger and frustration at what they see as the obstructive attitude of some local authorities.

I do not condone such attempts by prospective parents to short-circuit the system, but local authorities must understand that public confidence in the fairness of their policies is destroyed if adherence to fashionable or politically correct notions appears to influence their decisions more than consideration of the interests of the individual child.

Three aspects of adoption practice give rise to particular controversies. They are age, race and the position of single people. On the subject of age, the report does not include recommendations on an upper age limit for prospective adopters. Nor does present adoption law specify such a limit. In looking at an individual child with individual needs, the aim must always be the best possible environment for that child. In particular cases, that could mean older parents. Rigid and inflexible age limits have no place in modern adoption practice and should not be imposed by any local authorities.

Agencies generally follow the practice of placing babies with couples who are not much older than the age at which most people start a family. Because there are more people wishing to adopt healthy babies than there are babies needing families, there is an abundant choice of prospective parents, but we must not discount the real value which more mature parents can bring to parenting in terms of security, experience and general understanding.

I come to what has become known as the "same race placement" policy. The Government have no such policy, nor is one suggested in the review, because the starting point in arranging for family placement of a child from a minority ethnic group is that all issues concerning the child's needs and welfare must be considered.

Issues of race and culture are important but form only part of a wide range of considerations in determining the most suitable placement for a child. A guiding principle is that, all other things being equal, in many cases a placement with a family of similar ethnic origin is likely to meet a child's needs. There will be exceptions to that general approach, and guiding principles are valuable only insofar as they are applied with proper consideration for the circumstances of the individual child. The Department's guidance specifically points out that there may be circumstances in which placement with a family of different ethnic origin is the right and best choice for a particular child.

The third area of practice on which I wish to comment is adoption by single people. It is beyond question, in my view, that the interests of the vast majority of children will best be served by having a mother and a father. I therefore expect that in every case of a child seeking adoptive parents the authorities should make the most strenuous possible efforts to place that child with a married couple. However, there may be occasions where no suitable couple is available to adopt a child. When that occurs, I would not wish to use either the law or guidance to prohibit adoption by a single person. Indeed, adoption by a single person may for some children be their only route out of an institutional environment into a family home.

In choosing adoptive parents, adoption agencies must always remember that their duty is to serve and safeguard the best interests of the individual child. "Equal rights" and "gay rights" policies have no place whatsoever in adoption work. No one has a right to adopt a child. It is the duty of adoption agencies and the courts to provide the best adoptive parents for each child.

The Government have not yet decided whether to follow the review's line that the law should be silent on those issues. It may be that the principles of good practice should be enshrined either in primary or secondary legislation, and I shall be interested in the views of hon. Members on that point.

The review comprises a comprehensive and far-reaching view of the way forward for adoption in a fast-changing society. I hope that it will stimulate extensive debate, and I am pleased to commend it to the House.

7.4 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): It is a privilege to make my maiden speech at the Dispatch Box on an issue of such fundamental importance as adoption. As the Minister will be aware, I had the honour to be closely involved with the Children Act 1989.

The review of adoption law is very much the unfinished business of the 1989 Act. It is a pleasure to see in her place my predecessor on the Opposition Front Bench who was responsible for matters concerning children, my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), who served, as I did, in Standing Committee when that important measure was being discussed.

The Opposition welcome the publication of the report, and my hon. Friends and I look forward positively to contributing to the wide-ranging debate that is bound to take place on some of the often difficult and at times contentious issues to which the Minister referred. While we have reservations and concerns about a number of points—I shall refer to some of them—we believe that the overall direction of the report is to be generally welcomed.

I have always regretted that on most occasions social work practice comes under scrutiny in the House because of apparent failures. Indeed, the most recent deliberations in the Chamber concerning social work arose following the publication of reports on matters relating to the Orkneys and Fife. The usual tirade of abuse of social workers followed, and even *The Observer* carried an article suggesting that it might be no bad thing if social workers were "disbanded as a profession."

As some hon. Members may be aware, I must declare a degree of subjectivity on such matters because, in common with the Secretary of State—although we have precious little else in common—I spent many years in social work before entering Parliament.

There are few areas where the skills and successes of social work practice are more evident than in this country's adoption provisions. Sadly, but rightly, successful adoptions—they are the vast majority—do not make newspaper headlines or feature in our constituency postbags, but they are a quiet and conclusive demonstration of the fact that social workers have considerably more successes than their much publicised failures.

Having undertaken guardian ad litem work and the challenging task of vetting applicants for adoption, I can express a personal appreciation of the efforts of the inderdepartmental working group. Having many years later served as a local councillor on an adoption panel, I pay tribute to the fact that the group has clearly tried to get to grips with the way in which what might be termed the adoption environment has markedly changed in recent times.

Our adoption law must be reviewed to take account of a whole range of developments, some arising directly from the Children Act 1989. The fact that the welfare principle underpinning the Act is proposed for application to adoption legislation is to be welcomed. It is also entirely consistent to place positive emphasis on the child's needs in proceedings rather than concentrating on underlining parental failings, as has often been the case in the past.

The application of the welfare principle beyond just childhood into adult life reinforces the importance and possible implications of decisions that are taken during a child's or young person's early years. The 1989 Act introduced a whole range of important new options available to the child, the family and other interested parties, the social services and the courts. It is right that consideration should be given to the possible relevance of those when a court is considering an application for a placement or adoption order. The availability of the widest possible range of alternatives enables the court to have the opportunity to consider the most appropriate response to the needs of a child or young person.

I stress "young person" because, as the review makes clear, we are now more than ever concerned with the consideration of possible adoption arrangements for an older child or young person. It is in a situation such as that that those concerned with making the best possible arrangements for the child often face the most difficult decisions in determining whether links with the natural family should be totally severed.

I was recently involved with a constituency case in which a child's grandmother, probably the most stable influence in the birth family, faced total loss of contact with the child, having given love and care for the first eight years of the child's life. Such situations are not infrequent and are particularly traumatic for all concerned, the child in particular. The wider range of possible options arising as a result of the 1989 Act, picked up by the interdepartmental working group, offers some hope for the better resolution of similar situations, and we welcome that fact. The proposals for a new order to be available to step-parents is, similarly, an important recognition of the realities of our times.

On the review's proposals for agreement to an adoption order, although it rightly presumes that the child's wishes and feelings should be taken into account at all times, the proposal that a child of 12 years of age or more should be able to prevent the granting of an adoption order by withholding his or her agreement raises important questions.

The Opposition have no objection to what is proposed but are concerned about whether a specific age can realistically be prescribed in that way. It might be suggested that, with some children, 12 is too young an age for such a decision or indeed for party status. I personally feel that 10 may have been more appropriate, giving some consistency with the age at which criminal law suggests a minor has achieved some maturity. But I concede that different children have different levels of maturity and we need to question whether it is necessary to put forward a specific age when it will inevitably be somewhat arbitrary.

We do, however, welcome the proposals for clarifying provisions for parental agreements and simplifying grounds for dispensing with parental consent. Frankly, our past practices in that respect, both in adoption and the assumption of parental rights, have left a good deal to be desired and the simplifications suggested are a positive step. Just as the Children Act 1989 reinforced not just the rights of the child but also those of the natural family, it is right that in any changes to adoption law the voice of the birth family is strengthened, especially in contested cases.

I am aware of the fact that it has been suggested that if the report's recommendations on consultation with birth parents and pre-placement hearings are introduced, the number of contested cases is likely to fall significantly. Bearing in mind the fact that, especially with the abolition of freeing, agencies would have to find placements that are, in most instances, consistent with the wishes of the child and birth family, the reduction in contested cases should be a logical outcome.

We wish to support in particular the proposal that any new legal provisions should underline a child's right to know that he or she is adopted. Since the 1975 Act, significant numbers of those who have in the past been adopted have taken advantage of their right to learn about their origins once they reach the age of 18. But it must be said that many of them have struggled to get what is theirs by right and perhaps the review group could have given more thought to how we may in future reduce some of the difficulties they so often face.

Some time ago, I was contacted by a 51-year-old man, whom I have known personally and well for some 25 years. He came to me as his Member of Parliament over the difficulties that he was having in tracing his natural family. Although he was always reticent about discussing his past, I had no idea that he had been abandoned by his mother as a baby and subsequently adopted by a family who subjected him to both physical and sexual abuse.

[Mr. David Hinchliffe]

My role became one that should not have been necessary—of lobbying various local authorities and Government Departments to get them to take seriously that man's desire and right to know of his background. Clearly, many of those bodies felt that they had more important priorities than assisting him with his inquiries. He tells his own story in a letter which he sent me recently setting out how he first tried to trace his natural mother 25 years ago but was refused assistance by various charities, which felt that it was ridiculous for someone of his age to be worrying about the facts of his birth or natural mother. He goes on to say:

> "I got on with my life until more recently. A number of television programmes 3 or 4 years ago showed that it was possible for adoptees and mothers to find each other. I started again.
>
> I advertised extensively for my mother in newspapers and ITV Oracle, etc, without response. A very kind lady helped me considerably by researching through natural birth registers of which there were microfilm copies at her local library in Lancashire. I discovered North Yorkshire Social Services had lost my adoption file. Harrogate Magistrates Court where I was adopted had also, but found it accidentally when they moved. I got access to their file after permission was granted by the OPECS and saw the childcare report and mother's notes already referred to.
>
> With your help and also pressure from Wakefield adoption office, it was finally possible to discover from the DHSS that my mother was dead but nothing more. I visited London, got her death certificate from St. Catherine's House and a copy of her probate to trace a relative.
>
> It was only when I visited Harrogate Magistrates Court that I made the first discovery that I had a brother. On the way home, I nearly broke down, and even now, I try not to think too hard about him. He died a few years before mother, aged 46 and unmarried. I never knew about him, that I had a peer, an older brother with whom I could have shared some life and happiness, and it is now too late".

If that man had received the proper help to which he was entitled, it might not have been too late. He concludes his letter by saying:

> "We get virtually no official help, just as we did not when taken as children into whatever situation. Official records are largely denied to us, particularly the DHSS. It is a struggle of some magnitude in trying to get birth information and follow up contact with natural parents and relatives.
>
> And it does seem strange to me that adoption and illegitimacy does still bear some stigma. Discussion with friends is extremely difficult, no matter how well they like me. And they cannot understand the desire for knowledge of my natural family. And I am now expected to remain silent as the 'facts' are known at last".

Having traced my family history back to the 1700s, I fully understand the desire to find one's roots and I am sure other hon. Members also appreciate that point. Our task is to ensure that the various official agencies also appreciate that point and have some understanding of the need to give proper priority to dealing sensitively and carefully with the kind of inquiries that my constituent has understandably had cause to make.

It is perhaps appropriate at this stage to refer to the review group's proposals on inter-country adoptions. I know that their deliberations were at least partly prompted by the situation in Romania. Through my wife's involvement in a charity providing children's homes in Romania, I visited that country just over a year ago. I saw some very moving scenes that will remain with me all my life. I met a number of people who spoke to me in detail of the concern, at that stage within Romania, about the removal of children from institutional care, supposedly for foreign adoption, where the children were known in certain instances to have ended up in western European countries and America involved in organised prostitution.

I am certain that the vast majority of individuals from this country who have attempted to adopt Romanian children have done so for the best of reasons. I have met people with an understandable humanitarian concern, to which the Minister referred, to offer such children the opportunity of better material circumstances, love and care.

I have talked to people who feel that the Secretary of State's initial response to that issue was insensitive and wrong. Despite her treatment of me during Department of Health questions earlier this week, I must make it clear that I think that her response to the initial attempts to adopt Romanian children was broadly correct. Similarly, the working party proposals on inter-country adoption are also broadly in the right direction.

When I went to Romania I learned some important lessons on that issue. Perhaps the main one was that, far from many of those children being orphaned and unwanted, vast numbers of them had families who wanted them but were prevented from caring for them by a basic lack of resources to feed, clothe and house them. Although I do not doubt that adoption arrangements can be made within or outside that country to the benefit of some of those children, I sincerely believe that, if we are to offer humanitarian assistance, the most effective means is not by moving the children to other countries and other cultures but by enabling their own families to have the wherewithal to raise them properly in their own homes, in their own communities, in their own country and culture.

Certain lessons might also be applied in Britain. Having had the experience of receiving into care a total number of children that must have reached three figures, and having seen a significant proportion of that group subsequently adopted, similar issues of poverty and bad housing are not infrequently linked here with the eventual use of adoption procedures.

It is a simple fact that the majority of children entering care in Britain come from the very poorest sections of the community and are more likely to have had parents who were unemployed and to have endured homelessness or bad housing. Some of those children are ultimately adopted. I know from personal experience that the birth parents in such circumstances often become resigned to the fact that their children would be better fed, clothed and housed if adopted.

Just as it is wrong for Romanian children to lose their families in such circumstances, it is also wrong that we witness the same process, albeit to a much lesser extent, in Britain today. It is highly appropriate that discussion of such issues should follow on directly from the Chancellor's autumn statement, which is another significant reminder of the processes whereby the Conservative Government have consistently, year by year, plunged more and more children and families into homelessness, poverty and desperation.

There was a political consensus on the Children Act 1989, and there may be a political consensus on many of the provisions contained in the adoption review. However, there is no consensus on many of the related issues. For example, there is no consensus on the gross inequality in treatment of people who suffer from infertility. It is wrong that, in some districts of Britain, people are denied treatments that are available to others elsewhere. Many of the people who are denied treatment regard the adoption process as their only option. There is no consensus on the reasons for family breakdown and receptions into care. The Opposition answer is not simply one of adjusting child care legislation. We know that there is much more to do—we must tackle poverty and low pay, mass unemployment, homelessness and bad housing. The review deals with the consequences, not the causes.

We concede, in a way that the Government never do, that the implementation of such proposals will place significant new demands on local authorities and adoption agencies. We recognise that such changes and improvements require proper resources. We also appreciate that the development of new skills requires the provision of appropriate training. Let us be in no doubt that any move towards many of the proposed changes contained in the report will add significantly to the workload of all the agencies involved.

We are grateful for the opportunity to debate the overall direction of the report. It is also helpful to learn something of the Government's thinking on the matter and, particularly, to gain some clarification of the Minister's personal position. On 29 October, *Social Work Today* magazine stated:

"the Minister's obvious lack of interest in adoption law reform—apart of course from his conviction that you need to be heterosexual and married (a view not apparently shared by the Review's authors)—is all the more unfortunate because of the care and courage that has gone into the Review".

The Opposition welcome the report's publication. We feel that there should be the widest possible consultation and debate on its proposals, with an extension of the limited consultation period beyond the end of the December. We commend those involved in the review group for their efforts and hope that the Government will, in due course, grasp the nettle and bring forward legislative proposals for the important reforms that are so clearly needed.

7.24 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate held on a busy day, after a welcome autumn statement which contained many provisions for social security and carers.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, many of the children adopted today are children with special needs. It is most important that there should be ample provision to help parents whose adopted handicapped children may make considerable demands on them. I was pleased to note that the autumn statement contained additional provision for those in receipt of invalid care allowance so that there will be a larger earnings disregard. That means that the parents will be able to take on other jobs as well as their caring duties in the home.

I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and congratulate him on his excellent maiden speech from the Dispatch Box. He is well known in the House for his interest in personal social services. I was glad to hear him welcome this important Government report. I have only just had an opportunity to read most of the report and would still like to study it in more detail. It is a comprehensive report on the subject, and a welcome study of many aspects of inter-country adoption.

My own interest in adoption arose in 1983 when my wife and I initially fostered, and then adopted, a handicapped child. I know that the arrangements need streamlining. My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the need to streamline them, but much more needs to be done. Local authorities are not the most efficient organisations and it can take some time for would-be adoptive couples to receive the necessary home studies and approvals.

My wife and I had to attend a considerable number of interviews and answer questions. When it was realised that my job as a Conservative Member of Parliament was in a marginal seat, I was termed as someone with an insecure occupation—a factor that can create potential difficulties. When it was discovered that our children got into bed with us on a Sunday morning, that almost finished our hopes. I know that social workers do not have an easy job, but I press on my hon. Friend the need to streamline the arrangements—a matter that forms the basis of my speech.

I agree with what my hon. Friend said about the need for children to be adopted, generally, by a normal family. I also agree with him that in some cases a single parent can make an outstanding adoptive parent. If my hon. Friend has the opportunity to visit my constituency, I hope that he can meet an excellent lady called Annie Gibson. She is a widow, but that did not prevent her from adopting an extremely handicapped child, Trevor, from the Elizabeth Ashmore home for handicapped children in Bolton. She lost her husband, a haemophiliac, when he became infected with AIDS through a blood transfusion and died. Annie wanted to have a caring role in life and decided to adopt Trevor. As a single parent, she had to go through all the hoops and await a number of committee meetings before she was accepted.

The local authority committee structure is not one of the best ways to make decisions. When my wife and I were finally approved as adoptive parents, our phone did not stop ringing. We were being asked to adopt almost every handicapped child in the district—for up to about 100 miles away—who was looking for a home. Committees tend to wait for someone to make a decision, and when that finally happens, want to climb on the bandwagon.

Annie Gibson is an outstanding example of how a single parent can provide the most loving care for a child who is seriously multiply and physically handicapped. If we study that case we reach certain conclusions. If a single parent can be an ideal adoptive parent—as Annie is—who she or he is living with is secondary. We need not pursue further the rare examples of gay or lesbian couples, but should consider each case in the light of its circumstances to see whether the requirements of the individual child are fully met by the proposed adoption arrangements. We should not be too dogmatic about the circumstances of the entire household into which the child is to be placed. The child's circumstances must come first—that is also true when a single parent is involved.

One of my first contacts with inter-country adoption was in Hong Kong. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Minister has visited Hong Kong recently or is to go there, but if he does I strongly recommend that he visits the Home of Loving Faithfulness. It is a remarkable institution that exists to care for severely handicapped Chinese children and find homes for them. The Chinese culture does not tend to favour the adoption of children, let alone handicapped children. The Home of Loving Faithfulness in Hong Kong has found parents all over the world for severely handicapped Chinese children. It is a classic example of how inter-country adoption can be used to find a loving home for children with no prospect of finding a home in their immediate environment.

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

The United Nations declaration is absolutely right to state that we should first try to keep children with their own families and, if that is not possible, to find adoptive homes in their own countries. If that cannot be done, one should look further abroad. I am concerned that the tone of part of the report is too parochial, mainly because it is written by officials who have a duty to look after British children. Those who wrote the document had no duty to look after Romanian children or those from anywhere else in the world and were bound to consider their own requirements. That is one of the problems encountered with local authorities. Although my hon. Friend thinks that local authorities should be able to carry out the job, they can be extremely parochial and consider that the only children who should be adopted are those on their own register, and parents who want to adopt other children have something wrong with them.

I ask my hon. Friend to adopt a broader perspective. Perhaps politicians have a better understanding of the motives of people who want to adopt, and perhaps the public can help officials to understand their wider duty. I am sure that my hon. Friend will do that well; I know that his predecessor did it extremely well.

This issue is all about love, a word that does not appear in the document, which is full of rules and regulations. For instance, paragraph 47.1 states:

> "People who wish to offer a child a home and who are assessed as suitable to adopt a child from overseas should be enabled to do so."

That offers no encouragement to anyone to do so. The document continues:

> "We consider that the way forward lies in the development of a system which allows intercountry adoption to take place".

The spirit of the report seems to be one of tolerance, not one of recognition of a worldwide problem which could be solved by finding homes for children who would not otherwise have a satisfactory future.

I was interested to hear that the hon. Member for Wakefield visited Romania last year. I was there earlier this year and I visited a home for irrecuperable children. I also visited an institution to which those children were sent when they reached the age of 16. The orphanage that I visited was called Ionaseni. I also went to see an adult psychiatric institution to which children are sent. It is called Podriga, and it is a frightful place. One would not keep animals in the conditions imposed on those people. It was supposed to be a hospital, but there was no doctor. My daughter Sophie, who worked in Romania, saw patients dead in their beds at Podriga, where there was no running water, where the toilets were all blocked and absolute chaos reigned. It is terrible to think of children being abandoned to that sort of future.

We are talking about relatively small numbers of children being adopted. If children from other countries can be adopted by people in this country, subject to proper safeguards, that will offer an example to Romanian people and to people in other countries of what they too could be doing. We should see inter-country adoption as just part of the solution—a way of offering an example to others of what should be done, and how it should be done. It should certainly not be regarded as an overall solution—that would never be right. Equally, it would be a great mistake to close down this option.

I do not know what is going on in Romania. I am not aware of any children having been adopted since the Romanian adoption committee was set up. The last letter that I received from the Department of Health suggested that five cases were under consideration. Perhaps some of them have come through now, but it is tragic that the committee has effectively stopped all further adoptions from Romania.

I am not sure whether the Minister has seen the letter that I wrote to the Home Secretary asking him to reconsider the case of the Luffs. This tragic case concerns two Romanian children, Marcel and Florina, who have been waiting to be adopted for two years. I cannot imagine how we can claim that this country's arrangements serve the interests of those children. The whole episode is a terrible blunder. The doctor at the Department of Health who signed the certificate was under the impression that someone else would adopt the children if he signed a certificate saying that it would not be suitable if the Luffs adopted them. If my hon. Friend can rescue these two children from being strangled by British red tape, he will have done mankind a great service. I hope that it is not too late for him to reconsider that difficult case.

An overseas adoption helpline has been set up to advise people interested in inter-country adoption. I had asked for such a facility for some time, and I am pleased at the progress that has been made, but I am not sure what is happening at the helpline now. I do not think that it has had any public launch—I have seen nothing about it, nor have I had an opportunity to visit it. I do not know whether any other hon. Member has had a chance to see the helpline in action, but it certainly seems to be hiding its light under a bushel.

We need a specialist inter-country adoption agency. Not all local authorities have the skills or time to be able to attend to the needs of those who are adopting from abroad. We need more than a helpline; we need a full-blown inter-country adoption agency. I do not know whether it could be developed from one of our voluntary agencies, but I ask my hon. Friend to help bring it about. We do not have such an agency so far. Perhaps voluntary agencies are too tied up with the local authorities with which they have to work closely to be able to do the job.

One aspect of the report that I do not fully understand concerns whether there will be appeals. A complaints procedure is mentioned in part of the report. If local authorities are to have a virtual monopoly, and if they then create problems, there must be good arrangements for appeals by would-be adopters if they find that they are not receiving the help from their local authorities that they should.

Couples have contacted me to say that they might have to move home so as to live in the area of an authority that will give them more help. The campaign for inter-country adoption, of which I am a founding member, wrote to the Minister's predecessor in March, following the consultation paper. The letter, sent on 12 March, gives examples of the sorts of difficulties that occur with some local authorities. Authorities such as Mid Glamorgan, Islington, Hampshire and Ealing did not approve of inter-country adoption and were generally obstructive to people living in their areas who wanted to adopt. This is just not good enough. If the Government's policy is to leave the matter to local authorities, they must be obliged to deal with it properly.

A more positive solution would be to allow would-be adopters to use an alternative channel. If they are blocked by their local authority then they should be able to go through such a channel, and that in turn would stimulate the local authority to give them better service in the first place and, instead of being obstructive, to advise them to use the alternative channel——

Mr. Hinchliffe: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that some of the local authorities to which he has referred are not dogmatically opposed to inter-country adoption but are so overstretched, in terms of resources and staff, that they find it impossible to meet their statutory duties to the children even of this country? I suspect that many of the responses of local authorities stem from the fact that they feel that it is beyond them to undertake the work expected of them—to evaluate applications for inter-country adoption.

Mr. Thurnham: To some extent, that is true. Local authorities are all under pressure. They have to implement the Children Act 1989. They have a shortage of skills in the first place, and all their time, money and skills are involved in their own responsibilities. They have no responsibility for children in Romania, Bulgaria, Thailand or Sri Lanka, so they are bound to have difficulties giving priority to would-be adoptive couples. Yet such couples are entitled to such priority, given that the public at large believe that such adoption is commendable and humanitarian.

So there is a conflict, and that is why we need an alternative channel to enable would-be adoptive couples who do not get the service to which they are entitled to go about the problem in a different way. Unless such people get help from their Member of Parliament, they can be left in queues and then be faced with these ridiculous restrictions—they are too old if they are over 35, or they may smoke, or have a dog, and hence not be allowed to adopt. Without the alternative channel that I propose, people will not be able to adopt children whose futures will otherwise be at best precarious and in the long term utterly bleak.

I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would tell us a little more about how the helpline is supposed to work. Will it have a public launch? Will it advertise its services? It is not clear how active it is at present. I know that some money has been provided, and that is welcome, but it is important that the overseas adoption helpline work closely with others who are active in the field and build a constructive relationship with them.

The campaign group feels that the report does not give nearly enough help and encouragement to would-be adopters. I agree: would-be adopters should be regarded not as a nuisance, but as people who can help to bring about more adoptions generally. One of the tragedies of an excessively parochial attitude is the way in which it chokes off the idea of adoption as a whole. Some 5,000 severely handicapped children are currently in institutional care in the United Kingdom and I believe that they would be looked after much better if they enjoyed the loving care of a family.

People need to be encouraged to provide that loving care. Perhaps they can be encouraged by the example of an acquaintance who has been to Romania and adopted a handicapped child from that country: that may provide the stimulus for them to adopt a British handicapped child. Similarly, people living abroad may have connections with this country, and, on a visit, may find out about handicapped British children who would benefit from adoption. Perhaps they will take those children back to Canada, Australia or wherever they live. Inter-country adoption can be a two-way thing; it should not be seen simply as a service for childless couples in Britain.

I recommend a book called "The Story of Michael", by Deborah Fowler. It describes how a couple—not a childless couple—adopted a child from Romania. Inter-country adoption should be seen first and foremost as an act of love between the child and his adopted family. I believe that the public would support my hon. Friend the Minister if he ensured that that was made possible, and that, where local authorities could not provide the necessary service, others could.

I was disturbed to hear talk of criminal sanctions. Obviously, a couple who arrive at an airport with a child will present the authorities with a dilemma; but surely, rather than talking of criminal sanctions, we should recommend an improvement in the current arrangements. We need at least one specialist inter-country adoption agency, and I hope that my hon. Friend will encourage the establishment of such an agency.

I thank my hon. Friend for providing an opportunity for us to debate the report, and I hope that we shall have further opportunities to discuss the whole subject further.

7.42 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on the balanced way in which he presented his arguments. I also congratulate the Minister on his presentation of the report, and the working committee on its work: it has touched on almost every aspect of adoption and fostering that is currently being discussed.

When the Minister said that he thought it far better for children to be adopted by married couples, I thought that I was going to fall out with him; however, he enabled me not to have a guilty conscience by adding that, in certain circumstances, single people could make successful parents. Despite all that has happened over the past 20 years, I feel that I was a reasonably successful single parent—certainly no less successful than many married parents, regardless of whether their children are adopted.

I warmly support what the Minister has said throughout our discussion of the issue. On one occasion I wrote to him, pointing out that we were talking about trying to give children suitable families rather than the other way around. I believe that much of the discussion of, in particular, inter-country adoption has assumed the reverse.

When—many years ago—I first became interested in adoption, the subject was shrouded in secrecy. In many families an adopted child became a secret that was not discussed very much, because those who could not produce their own children were stigmatised to a certain extent. People went to enormous lengths to hide the fact that they had adopted a child, and—as we have heard—it was a long time before adopted children's right to know their background and origins was made public.

I remember being involved in discussions which, even then, I thought rather strange, about the matching of babies to their adoptive parents. A fair-haired child would be sought for a fair-haired parent, so that no one would know that the child was adopted. I also remember arguing

[Miss Joan Lestor]

about class background. Nowadays we all talk about the classless society, but things were different then. In those days, it was always the father who was the college professor and the mother who was the parlourmaid. The person with whom I was arguing suggested that a fairly intelligent family should be sought for a child with such a father—which, of course, assumes that the child would take on the characteristics of its father. Personally, I am sceptical about the whole question of heredity. I asked, "What about social mobility? After all, the builder of today can be the college professor of tomorrow; things are changing." That was not thought very relevant.

Given the history of adoption in this country, it is small wonder that many adopted children grew up unaware of their background, which later came as a terrible shock to them. Perhaps even worse, others grew up with a private shame about their origins, feeling that they had been put up for adoption only because they had not been wanted or were unworthy in some way. We have moved a long way since then; we are now embarked on a fresh review of adoption law, which—as the Minister and others have pointed out—is very timely.

The last 20 years have seen substantial—indeed, dramatic—social change, in this country and throughout the world. That change has shown itself in a variety of ways. There has been a rise in the number of one-parent families; increasing economic and social pressures, leading to family breakdowns; an increasing emphasis on the placement of older children, children with special needs and children who have been in long-term care; and growing involvement with children from other countries. The report also takes on board the question of divorce, remarriage and step-children, and I welcome that too. I consider it important for the House, in changing adoption and fostering law, to keep up to date with the rapid changes that have taken place, even in my time in the House.

The report has a go at almost every aspect of the subject that we have discussed; and those aspects will continue to be discussed. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield, I wish that there were a longer consultation period, because getting together people and organisations takes time.

We would all agree that any review of adoption law must be firmly anchored in a commitment to making children's rights a reality, not just an empty slogan. If their rights and interests are paramount, we must provide legislative structures to observe that. Children's rights have been enshrined in a United Nations convention—the right to a decent standard of living, the right to a family, the right to an identity, the right to education, the right to protection from violence and exploitation, and other rights. Today, we are really asking how well current adoption practice matches that modest checklist, and how we can make the system more responsive, more accessible and in children's best interests.

As the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) well knows, I have never been a strong supporter of inter-country adoption. I have always felt that it should be a last resort, except in the case of children whose families are already here. When I represented Slough, I dealt with families who were trying to adopt children from their countries of origin and finding it extremely difficult to do so. By and large, however, I believe that it is wrong to encourage a country to export its children.

As others have said, we should be helping countries to tackle the problems of poverty and ignorance about contraception which force parents to part with their children. Had I ever become an Aid Minister, I should have wanted many more aid projects to be directed to the welfare of children, and the rescue of children who are abandoned and have little hope of a future of any kind —not just in Romania but in Ethiopia, in Mozambique, throughout the African continent and throughout Latin America.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East said that he felt that the Minister had grudgingly accepted inter-country adoption. I agree with the Minister about that. It is a complex process that is open to tremendous abuse. I have been appalled by how easily many people have acquired children from other parts of the world. It is not, in my view, a question of culture. I do not believe that children who are two or three months old, or even a little older, have a particular culture. One acquires the culture of wherever it is that one lives. The committee's report states that this is a child protection argument. I am glad that the Government have said that adoption procedures that involve children from other countries must be as rigorous as those that are applied here.

To those children from abroad who have come to this country, I say that I wish them well. Many of them will triumph and blossom in an atmosphere that it would be impossible to find in their country of origin. If the international community ensured that resources, aid and help were given to the families of those children, this would not happen. The fact is that 98 per cent. of Romanian "orphans" have parents. Disgraceful pressures were put on many people to hand over their children. They were given no alternative.

Many hon. Members know of the work of the Migrant Children's Trust. From the 1930s until the 1960s, children were shipped out from this country to Canada and Australia. Many of them have now asked the Migrant Children's Trust to trace their families. In many cases it has been found that those children had parents or relatives and that they were not eligible for adoption. However, they were sent abroad because it was felt that that would be better for them. A book entitled "Children of the Empire" deals with that issue.

When the question of inter-country adoption was raised I was reminded of that book. I think in particular of a woman who put her child in care in the 1940s or 1950s because she had to go into hospital for an operation. She was very poor. There was no family support. When she left hospital she found that her child had been shipped out of this country. She knew nothing of its whereabouts until many years later. The reunion of some of these people, who are now in late middle age, makes me think that at that time we did not do enough to find out what alternatives were available.

That applies equally to children from other countries that families here seek to adopt. We cannot allow children to be adopted on the basis that those people, having been rejected as possible adopters of children in this country, are good enough for children from abroad because they are second-hand children, or words to that effect. A report was published this week on what is taking place in the Philippines, where there is sexual exploitation of children and the buying and selling of children. Unless there are strict laws regarding international adoption, we shall be left wide open to international trafficking in children. Therefore, I welcome what has been said about the application of rigorous procedures for the adoption of children from abroad.

Reference has been made to the age of adoptive parents. As a result of fertility tests, people can be approaching the age of 40 before they are finally told that they cannot have children, or that it is too late for a woman to have a child because of the fear of complications. In many of those instances, they do not qualify to adopt children because they are over the age limit. That is wrong. Older parents have a great deal to offer children. If a survey were made of the successful upbringing of children—though the older I grow and the more I know about children, the fewer the theories I have about their upbringing—I think that we should find that the age of those bringing up children makes no great difference to the success rate.

When families break up nowadays, the grandparents are often fairly young. It is important, therefore, not to rule out by statute the opportunity for grandparents to adopt their grandchildren when family life breaks down. Every case has to be considered on its merits, but age is just one factor in the application of the adoption rules. There ought not to be a cut-off point, resulting in people over a certain age not even being considered suitable to adopt children. They can successfully bring up older children, in particular. One reads that in future women of 60 will be able to have children, so we have to look at the question in a different way.

As for the racial question, which is dealt with in the report, when children from different ethnic backgrounds are placed with families it is important to consider matching, but matching is only one factor. When children are successfully fostered by people of a different ethnic background, it can do great damage if they are then moved from those families, on that one argument alone. When I have taken up this issue I have been told by local authorities that that was not the only reason for the move; there were all sorts of other reasons.

I agree about matching, for all sorts of fairly obvious reasons. However, a loving home is even more important, so long as we do not lose sight of the question of ethnic identity and so long as contacts are made with people of the same ethnic origin as the child. It is far better for a child to be in such a home than to have to linger in a children's home waiting for the right placement, or to be moved from foster home to foster home.

Short-term placements are sometimes made. We understand why, but they become long-term placements. Two or three years later, application is made to adopt a child but it is turned down on the ground that it is a short-term placement. Children are resilient, but they need stability and to be able to identify with the people with whom they live. What the report says about that is very important.

Reference has been made to single parents. Relatives of a single parent may want to adopt a child after a family tragedy. Apart from those people, there are others who are unmarried who would make ideal parents. We cannot just rule out one category of people and say that in no circumstances can they adopt children.

Open adoption is a controversial question and will continue to be controversial. There is a great deal to be said for an adopted child keeping in contact with its birth family. Many children have remained in care or have been moved from foster home to foster home because the birth parent found it too difficult to let go. The local authority may believe that eventually it will be possible to reunite the child with the family, but in many cases family circumstances do not improve and reunion is impossible. If a child is not provided with stability, many of the social inadequacies—I emphasise social inadequacies because I do not believe in inherited inadequacies—will be passed on to the child. Insecurity breeds insecurity.

If we can meet the needs of older children in particular for identity and stability and yet allow a relationship with the birth parent to continue, we shall be able to free certain children for adoption and give them an environment in which they can flourish without them feeling that they have deserted their own parents. That is often what older children feel, or they feel that they are being forced to make a choice.

Reference is made in the report to the age of 12. I think that it could be lowered. If a child were told, "Yes, you can be adopted by these people who love you and with whom you live, but you can see your own mother or your own father," I think that the child would consent, but not if told that it must be a clean break and that there could be no contact with the parents. We must consider different types of adoption and guardianship.

I welcome the report. As I said at the beginning of my speech, it deals with most of the aspects of fostering and adoption that are under discussion. Children should be consulted as early as possible on how they see their future. That is impossible with very young children, but it is possible with older children.

Every hon. Member has said that we are talking about giving a child an identity and a future. That identity, future and security must always rest on what is in the child's best interests and not on what a family or person might want because they have been deprived of a child. Nobody has the right to a child. It is important that the Government rightly said where they stand on inter-country adoption. We must not allow the feeling to grow that children from other countries, who may be suffering enormously, are second-class and can therefore have adoptive parents whom our society may have said are not suitable. We cannot allow that to happen. I should like us to allocate more resources to ensuring that children stay in their own country rather than having their future exported.

8 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I could say that I have a lifetime's experience of the issue because I was born into a family that had experienced adoption and therefore have an adoptive sibling. I followed that by becoming an adoptive parent, and more recently I have been a member of an adoption panel. In a sense, I have some practical experience and, through my experience, an ability to compare what the law permitted in the 1930s with what it required in the 1960s and how it operated in the 1990s.

I welcome the document because, like other hon. Members, I believe that it tackles all the issues. It will strengthen and tighten legislation and therefore will improve practice. I hope that the consultation period will not be too rigid because, like my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), I believe that it is

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important to get a response from all the agencies involved in the issue. After the consultation period, I hope that it will not be long before the Government legislate.

The basic principle of the document—the centrality of the welfare of the child—is important and correct. The document must attempt to apply the same principle across the board. It is important to follow the same principles for inter-country adoptions as we follow here. It is right to view with scepticism what have often seemed a little like DIY adoptions, because we must ensure that the welfare of the child is paramount and that those who adopt are people who, in any circumstances, would be accepted as adoptive parents.

The document rightly considers the law as it applies to all the parties concerned. It is an improvement to make provision for a social worker to act with the natural parents. I am sure that that will be welcomed in contested adoptions, but it must be said that it will be quite a costly proposal. It is estimated that between 50 and 80 families a year in Leeds would seek that additional social work input, which will be costly to the authority.

It is important to consider the views of relatives, primarily grandparents and siblings, and children. It is difficult to define an age rigidly, but I should prefer the principle that the views of children are taken into account to the extent that they are able to participate because it recognises the different development of children at a given physical age and that we should seek the views of children. It should be part of children's rights, where they can understand, that they should take part in a decision affecting their parentage.

One of my sadder duties as chair of social services in Leeds was to take part in what might be described as the opposite of that process, because until the implementation of the Children Act 1989 the termination of access between parents and children was decided by a panel of elected members. Over a two-year period, I saw many parents because it was my job to talk to them and convey the views of the panel. The only time that children were consulted was when I specifically asked to meet them, and that was not possible often. The evidence of children's views will have to be made very clear.

The document deals with the child's right to know and sets guidelines for the life story that social workers will have prepared. At all stages in their development, children should have as much knowledge of their background as it is possible for them to understand. It is a good recommendation that local authorities should have a duty to contact the child when he or she reaches 16 and ensure that the information has been passed on. That important duty will have to be handled sensitively. Again, sometimes it will be quite a costly operation, and we must consider how far back authorities can go, because the further back they go the higher the cost to local authorities.

I note that paragraph 23 talks of more flexibility in the membership of adoption panels and the difficulties that panels sometimes encounter in making a quorum. I certainly experienced that. As chair of social services with other duties, I often created a bit of a problem. We should be more flexible, but we should seek not additional members but that every panel member has an alternate member. An adoption panel must offer some continuity and, if possible, training. It is important that the documents that are placed before it are treated with the utmost confidentiality. Therefore, in changing the rigidity of the present arrangements, alternate members must be available to maintain continuity and confidentiality.

I appreciated the comments of the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) about the need to achieve flexibility in adoption by single parents. In practice, the adoption panel that I was part of mainly placed or matched children with couples who were married. However, it sometimes placed children with single parents after it had examined all the evidence and was sure that it was the best placement for the child. We witnessed some placements to gay or lesbian couples. One would not have a policy of seeking such adoptions. However, in some circumstances, with particular children and in view of the relationships that they have developed with others, it is logical to say that such a placement is best for them. Therefore, although we set down what may be perhaps the normal pattern of adoption, we must always be prepared to be flexible.

The matter of race applies to inter-country adoptions. As other hon. Members have said, we must be careful about breaking a child from its cultural background and inheritance. If we cross such boundaries, we must take into account the age and circumstances of the child. Clearly, in many adoption cases the child was originally a foster placement. Frequently, a foster placement develops into the sort of bonding that leads to it being the logical permanent placement for a child. That may occur across the difference in ethnic backgrounds. In some cases the relationships and the bonding that exist become more important than the cultural difference.

Some anxiety has been expressed about the new court arrangements and court time. The adoption panel of which I was a member was worried about the length of time that it sometimes took between a placement being made and an adoption taking place. We must beware of increasing the number of court appearances which each adoption involves. We do not want to make the process longer than is necessary. Also, the length of the process adds to the costs. Obviously, additional court appearances increase the amount of social work time required, and extend the work and role of the guardian ad litem. The changes must be properly funded so we must examine the costs.

Adoption law is an important matter. I hope that the changes recommended in the report will be introduced in legislation. However, if social services departments are to undertake the additional work involved, we must make an accurate assessment of the costs which will be incurred. We must ensure that the authorities have sufficient funds to do the job.

I welcome the report. It offers the promise of security and happiness for more children. That is something to which we are all committed.

8.12 pm

Ms. Ann Coffey (Stockport): It gives me much pleasure to be involved in this debate tonight because, before I was elected in April, I worked in the adoption service. I am glad to be part of the initial consultation process rather than in the position that I was in last year. The consultation process was so short that the document came to us for consultation two days before it was due back at the Department of Health. As other hon. Members have done, I urge the Government to extend the consultation process; otherwise the consultation document may end up on the director's desk without percolating down to those who are involved in practice and nothing meaningful will come back from the consultation material which is sent out.

Adoption has certainly changed over the years. From experience, I should say that most local authorities now place children between the ages of two and eight, sometimes singly and sometimes with brothers and sisters. Sometimes the children have additional special handicaps, and sometimes the children are of a different race from the adoptive parents. The majority of children who are placed for adoption are between two and eight.

Children placed by local authorities are a difficult group because, unfortunately, they may be damaged at an early age and that damage is sometimes irrevocable. Perhaps the Minister will reflect on the fact that, sadly, despite our enormous technological and scientific advances, we still do not have in Britain the skills to help small, damaged children overcome initial emotional distress. It would be helpful to put resources into finding a way to help them. Adoptive families who have taken on the care of those children find that they face difficult years ahead, often without help. We do not have the knowledge or skills to help the child and the family. As everyone who has been involved in adoption work knows, love is not enough. Love gives a base, but sometimes something additional and specialised is needed.

The extension of the welfare principle enshrined in the Children Act 1989 is welcome. I also welcome the notion of parental responsibility. It is clear that the use of the phrase "parental rights" has not helped. Parents do not have rights; they simply have responsibility. I have difficulty in understanding why the welfare principle should apply to almost all cases except the determination of an adoption order. If the welfare principle is paramount, it should be paramount in all cases. I cannot see any reason why there should be an exception.

The change in step-parent adoptions is welcome. Obviously, it was nonsense that the process of adoption made an adoptive parent of a natural parent because both had to lodge applications to enable the step-parent to adopt.

I also welcome the notion of a child's agreement. I agree with other hon. Members that an arbitrary age is not helpful, but the recommendation will give the message that, even if the age limit is complied with, we should listen to children. Sadly, children in care have simply not been listened to. They have been subjected to what other people think is good for them. People often take a dogmatic view. To encourage people to talk to children is a progressive step.

The abolition of the freeing for adoption order is welcome. I agree with the Minister that that provision was perhaps used in a way that was not helpful and was not intended. The idea of settling an adoption by means of a placement order is helpful in contested cases, but I have a problem with the notion of a placement order being made before every placement. I ask the Minister to consider how that will work with the role of adoption panels.

The adoption service looks for special parents when it seeks to place children between the ages of two and eight. Having identified those parents, it is often difficult to proceed without a meeting or some introductory period which serves as a time for judging whether that placement should proceed. I am concerned that having an adoption order made in all circumstances would not help in making a proper assessment or using an introductory period as an assessment time. I suspect that most social workers would never introduce a child to adoptive parents before a placement order had been made, so a chance to assess what the child is like with the adoptive parents, and how the adoptive parents feel about the child, may be lost.

Often this is a matter of chemistry. Things may look excellent on paper, but when people meet and spend time with each other, for some reason the relationship may not work on that level. I ask the Minister to consider more carefully what current practice is, before insisting on a placement order before the placement of every child. In some circumstances that would not be helpful.

I also ask the Minister to take the fostering legislation into consideration. Most children—indeed, all children, especially those of the ages I have mentioned—are first placed with foster parents, under fostering legislation. There is a danger that, if we make one route too hard, children will remain in foster care—and that will not reduce the delays or achieve the original intention of the Act. Will the Minister consider that aspect carefully?

As the Minister knows, I have corresponded with him before about being careful to ensure that there are no loopholes or easy ways out in what we put on to the statute book. Unfortunately, human nature being what it is, people will use those if they can. I especially remember writing to the hon. Gentleman about unregistered children's homes. Clearly, the intention of the Children Act 1989 was that homes with more than four children would register—indeed, that was a legal obligation.

However, it was assumed that homes with fewer than four children would be covered by fostering legislation. That turned out to be an incredible assumption. In fact, there was no legal obligation for homes to fall into either category, so there are now several small private children's homes covered by neither the fostering legislation nor the private homes legislation. In other words, local authorities placed children in totally unregulated homes, because the possibility to do so existed.

I urge the Minister, when he examines placement orders and the whole process of placement, to consider other legislation, too. It is important that children whose best interests would be served by adoption should end up being adopted rather than continuing to be fostered by default because the adoption process has become too difficult.

I am a little concerned about non-agency placements. Foster parents and other carers and non-relatives can apply for an adoption order, but so far as I can see, such people cannot apply to adopt a child without the local authority's consent. Without that consent, there is no way in which their application to adopt can surface—and there have sometimes been disagreements between foster parents and agency social workers about what is in a child's welfare interests. If a social worker decides not to recommend the application, there is nowhere for foster parents to appeal against the decision, because the whole process is contained within the agency.

Will the Minister consider setting up a process whereby foster parents can appeal—possibly to an independent body—against agency decisions not to support an adoption application? I have known of foster parents who had a good case and placements that would have met a

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child's welfare needs, yet because of a certain social worker's attitude, the application could not proceed. It is unfortunate, to say the least, when that happens.

One part of the report deals with marital status. I was taken aback by the illogicality of paragraph 26.10, on applications from unmarried couples. It is permissible for one half of such a partnership to apply and for the social worker making the assessment to take into account how the other partner, who cannot apply, is likely to look after a child and that person's possible parenting ability. But the report gives a reason for not permitting joint applications from unmarried couples and I must quote it, because I find it difficult to understand. It states:

"unmarried parents do not have the same legal obligations to one another as a married couple have."

That is true, but married couples have those legal obligations only so long as they wish to have them. When a couple who were once married wish to dissolve those obligations, they no longer have them. The report says that, for that reason:

"the caring parent may therefore be less financially secure than if they were married."

When a relationship breaks down, whether unmarried people are separating or married people are divorcing, the financial security and the arrangements made afterwards depend on their individual financial circumstances. The fact that a couple have been married does not give them any advantage over an unmarried couple, so the generalisation in the report is wrong. It cannot possibly be a reason for not accepting applications from unmarried people.

The report continues:

"one of the special features of adoption is that it transfers a child from one family to another and gives the child a legal relationship with all members of the new family, including grandparents, aunts and uncles. However great the commitment of unmarried adoptive parents to a child might be, it is open to question how far their wider families would be willing to accept that child as part of their family."

That is absolute nonsense, because in any assessment the social worker will examine the wider support networks —that is part of the assessment. One does not presume that the networks are non-existent and that the wider family will not accept the child, simply because the couple are not married. One considers that possibility during the assessment process. If the recommendation is to be pursued, someone somewhere will have to come up with a better reason than the one in paragraph 26.10, because it is terrible nonsense.

We talk of providing a "service" for adoption and discuss services for birth parents, adoptive parents, prospective adopters and childless people. In this context, the word "service" means social workers taking time to talk to people—the service which is provided is time. If you want that service to be provided, you will have to back it up with payment for the service and for the time, otherwise those services will not be provided, either by local authorities themselves or by their giving grants to voluntary agencies to provide services on their behalf. When resources are limited, people prioritise, and services for which there is less statutory responsibility fall off the end. Local authorities have been doing that for years.

When you provide, as I am sure you will, a brochure saying that local authorities will provide those services, all that will happen is that you will raise expectations——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Lady continues, I remind her of the rules governing the use of the word "you". I had hoped that she was using that word in an impersonal sense, but it is now clear that she is directing some of her remarks to the Minister instead of to me.

Ms. Coffey: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I got slightly carried away.

The Minister is considering allowing local authorities to charge for adoption services. I caution him to examine that proposal very carefully. I am concerned that if there is a charging policy, only those who could pay for that service would use it and that might become discriminatory.

It is difficult to be a good parent even if one has a supportive family, adequate income, friends, leisure activities and help. Some children—although not all—enter local authority care because little support is provided for mothers who are struggling with young children. Such situations lead to breakdown. In some circumstances, such families could have been kept together if there had been support in the community. Although that is the intention of the Children Act 1989, such provision is beyond the responsibility of the social services. We must consider all aspects of the services provided by local authorities.

8.31 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on his maiden speech at the Dispatch Box.

We all agree that the interests and welfare of children should always be at the centre of adoption proposals and legislation. The review document recognises that an openness in adoption which allows for an exchange of information between doctors and birth families, and in some cases face-to-face contact, helps children to develop a more real and complete sense of who they are. It also enables older children to make the move into new families without the pain of losing links with relatives.

Open adoption will also help many adopted adults who spend years trying to trace information about their pasts. The amount and type of contact must be matched to the age and circumstances of each child and will inevitably change over the years as the child and the circumstances change and develop.

Any new legislation introduced as a result of the review must allow for a range of options in contact arrangements so that individual plans can be made for each child. Contact is a continuum, and any arrangements for contact must allow for the maximum flexibility.

The document recommends that no placement should be made without a formal hearing, during which a placement order will be made. Most of the children who are placed for adoption these days are older children and many of them have spent years in the care system. Many of them have come from very troubled and difficult backgrounds. Although introductions may have taken place, it is difficult for children or adults to make an informed choice in such a situation.

The document recommends that a guardian is appointed once the request for a placement order is lodged. It also recommends that during a very short period —for example, six days—the guardian will have to approach all interested parties to discover whether anyone objects to the child being placed for adoption. If an objection is lodged, a full court hearing will have to be held, and that would take several months.

Given that current experience shows that attachments between children and adults begin at the point of introduction, one wonders how a three-year-old child will understand what is happening or how a troubled seven or nine-year-old will cope with the uncertainty while waiting for a court hearing.

In those circumstances, is it envisaged that contact between the children and prospective adoption family will continue? Or is everything going to be put on ice? In such circumstances, it is likely that agencies, aware of possible repercussions, and insecurities for children, will prefer to use the fostering family placements legislation and put children in a foster placement. That could lead to a drift and avoid permanence—something that the review sets out to avoid.

The review suggests that a guardian ad litem be appointed for every adoption case and that the strict timetables introduced in the Children Act 1989 are used throughout the adoption process. That would create an enormous amount of extra work for guardians ad litem, and one wonders how existing guardians would be able to undertake extra work.

Moreover, the review also states that agencies should have a duty to give birth parents the opportunity to have their own social worker so that they can participate in the decisions about a child's future. In effect, that means that, where adoption is being considered for a child, three different social workers could be involved—the child's social worker, the birth parents' social worker and the guardian ad litem.

Such a recommendation obviously ensures the highest possible practice, but one wonders how a local authority could possibly manage to resource that recommendation in the current economic climate. The document clearly identifies current delays in adoption practice and recommends strict timetabling in future to avoid that. However, it is conceivable that the extra work involved will mean that adoption will be delayed because agencies simply will not have the resources to meet any new requirements. As a result, children may well still be drifting around in care.

The document also recommends that the responsibility for inspection and approval of voluntary adoption societies should revert to local authorities. That responsibility is currently held by the social services inspectorate and inspections are carried out every three years. The recommendation will lead to difficulties for many local authorities.

We must recognise that a large proportion of adoption work is carried out by voluntary societies such as Barnardo's, the Children's Society, the Church of England and many others. Much of the expertise in adoption lies with those voluntary societies. I wonder how local authorities will be able to inspect those organisations effectively.

The arms-length inspection units were set up to inspect residential homes for the elderly. They also have some responsibilities under the Children Act 1989. We must recognise that adoption work is highly complex and specialised. I believe that such expertise is currently not available in most of the inspection units, and it may well have to be brought in from elsewhere. The document suggests that the voluntary agencies should pay for that service. I wonder how on earth they could possibly afford that, given the current economic climate.

Concern about children who come into Britain has been growing for some time. For some children, their only chance of a happy family life is through inter-country adoption. However, those children need and deserve the same kind of protection that we take for granted in domestic adoptions. The proposals represent a real step forward in introducing safeguards. They will not prevent inter-country adoptions when that is best for the child, but they will go a long way towards preventing abuses such as trafficking in children.

We look forward to the proposals being translated into legislation, but only after full consultation with all concerned.

8.39 pm

Mr. Hinchliffe: I wish to take up some points from the debate and reinforce comments made on both sides of the House. We have had a useful debate. There is broad consensus on what is proposed in the review, albeit some reservations have been expressed.

Although there was only one contribution from the Government Back Benches, it was by the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), who has a particular interest in the issue. I read with interest the comments that he was reported in *The Sunday Telegraph* on 25 October as having made:

> "Mr. Thurnham does not support calls from the far right that children should be placed only in two-parent families and that homosexuals should be rejected. 'Every case should be considered on its individual merits. I know of many cases where single people do a wonderful job,' he said."

I reinforce that comment. Although I disagree with the emphasis in parts of his speech tonight, it was thoughtful, useful and helpful. I think that we would all concur with his central point that the main issue is what is best for the individual child.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) has had to leave the Chamber, but I am glad that she was able to make a contribution. I affirm her success as a single parent, having met her children and her grandchildren. She described from her personal knowledge the marked changes in society which have led to the need for the review and for changes in adoption legislation. My hon. Friend reinforced the point that children's rights and interests must underpin the adoption proposals.

One crucial point made by my hon. Friend on inter-country adoptions was that British children have been exported for adoption. When the Australian rugby league team were here for the world cup final recently, I met a woman who had come with the team. She had found out that her father had been exported to Australia, without the knowledge of his family, and had been adopted in questionable circumstances. That happened within the lifetime of hon. Members present for the debate.

My hon. Friend also stressed the need for balance in same-race adoptions. Again, no doubt most hon. Members would agree with what she said.

I was pleased to hear the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), who has a unique background, both in personal terms and because of his political involvement as a past chair of Leeds social services department. He made the important point that the same principles should apply to

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inter-country adoptions as apply to adoptions within this country. I support that; no doubt Conservative Members would subscribe to that, too.

My hon. Friend also raised the issue, covered by several other hon. Members, of proper resources being necessary for local authorities to operate provisions affecting children. Many hon. Members with experience of working in local government or as councillors can vouch for how hard pressed many local authorities have been over many years and certainly recently.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) gave us the benefit of her recent professional knowledge. It is gratifying for me to welcome her as a former social worker to the House. I felt somewhat lonely having only the Secretary of State to talk to as a former social worker, and I did not often get great comfort from her. I am glad that my hon. Friend is here to support me and to contribute to these debates from her practical experience.

My hon. Friend referred to the need to encourage people to listen to children. In the past we have often disregarded the voice of children. When I worked for Leeds social services department, I can recall the first time that the actual child in care was involved. That was as recently as the mid-1970s. That is a disgrace.

I look forward to the Minister's response to a specific issue raised by my hon. Friend—the gap in the Children Act 1989 in regard to unregistered private children's homes. The Minister has corresponded with my hon. Friend on that. I am concerned about the issue which she has uncovered. No doubt the Minister will be willing to respond to it.

My hon. Friend also made a telling point about the need for appeal mechanisms. Sometimes social workers make wrong decisions. A social worker may be prejudiced about an adoptive applicant, so it is right that appeal mechanisms should be introduced in future adoption legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes), another former chair of social services who speaks with experience of balancing demands and statutory obligations against the matching resources, made an important point which has underpinned several contributions. He wanted to know how the Government would square the recommendations with resourcing the extra social work time that will be needed to carry out many of the provisions.

We have had an interesting debate with several important points being made. I hope that the Government will realise how much interest there is in this subject and that the Minister will take note of the pleas of several hon. Members to extend the consultation period so that there can be proper debate and public discussion of the many important recommendations in the report.

8.46 pm

Mr. Yeo: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply to the debate. As the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) has said, it has been a useful debate, characterised by the fact that all hon. Members who spoke did so either with a long-standing interest in the subject or with direct experience of it.

May I begin by welcoming the hon. Gentleman to his Front-Bench duties? He brings considerable knowledge and experience of the issues. I do not suppose that we shall always enjoy the same harmony as this evening. He was somewhat ungracious in his reference to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I was paying her a compliment.

Mr. Yeo: The compliment was heavily disguised. The attitude of the Government Benches towards social workers has undoubtedly been influenced in a most favourable manner by my right hon. Friend's demeanour, bearing, and, if I am allowed to say so on the day after the Church of England decided to approve the ordination of women, even her appearance; she has influenced many of my hon. Friends to take a more sympathetic attitude towards social workers.

The hon. Gentleman referred earlier to the high success rate of adoptions in this country. Above all, that is a tribute to the care with which the whole process is undertaken. We must be careful not to do anything which diminishes that success rate in future.

I noted the hon. Gentleman's point about the suitability of the age of 12, which was also mentioned by the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell). Inevitably it is an arbitrary figure which we may want to reconsider in the light of the response to the review. The court has the power to make any child, however young, a party to the proceedings.

The hon. Member for Wakefield referred in his opening speech to the sad case of an adopted person who experienced difficulty in tracing his birth family. Such experience must influence our consideration of issues about openness and contact.

The only time when the hon. Gentleman dragged in politics was when he tried to imply that poverty and deprivation were factors which might lead parents to decide that they wanted their child to be adopted.

Mr. Hinchliffe: That is true.

Mr. Yeo: If it is true, as the hon. Gentleman says from a sedentary position, the dramatic fall in the numbers of children needing adoption since 1979—a fall of more than 40 per cent. over the last 13 years—is yet another indicator of the massive rise in living standards enjoyed by every section of the community.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To balance the figures that the hon. Gentleman just quoted, he ought to consider alternative means to deal with children requiring substitute care other than adoption. The figures are not as bland and simple as he quoted.

Mr. Yeo: As the hon. Member knows, the number of children in residential care has fallen dramatically during the same period.

The hon. Member for Wakefield commented on the consultation period and was supported by his hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey). I do not have a passionate view on that subject. If the timetable were extended, it would obviously have an effect on the timing of future legislation. The more protracted the period of consultation, the later will be the chance for legislation, but we shall take account of the views expressed. The consultation process is helped by the fact that much of the work of the review was published as the process unfolded.

The hon. Member for Wakefield quoted an article in *Social Work Today*. I make no apology for reiterating my conviction that in the majority of cases a married couple is the best answer for the child. I cannot stress how strongly I feel that every local authority should make the most strenuous efforts to seek married couples. No one has any right to adopt.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) cited a useful example of the sort of single parent who can make a valid contribution as an adoptive parent. That was a helpful example. He also said that he had been assessed as having an insecure job. I am so glad that in 1987 and 1992 his job was demonstrated to have a high degree of security. If he continues to contribute to the House so thoughtfully and constructively, he has one of the most secure jobs of anyone who took part in the debate. I have noted his concern about the tone of the report's references to inter-country adoptions.

My hon. Friend mentioned Romania, and I have been disappointed that, since we signed the agreement with the Romanian committee for adoption in March—it became operative on 5 May—not one child has been adopted by a United Kingdom parent under the agreement. When the agreement comes up for review in January next year, we must consider carefully whether it is in our interests to continue with it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East may like to know that I have decided to ask our ambassador in Bucharest to take up with the Romanian Government our concerns about the lack of results from the agreement, and to press them to take whatever measures may be needed to make that agreement work more effectively. I shall also write to some of the other countries involved—more than 20 have signed similar agreements with Romania—to find out their experiences and whether they have encountered similar difficulties.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): May I give an example of a successful adoption from Romania? Bev and Ruth Smith, in my constituency, adopted Emese Gabor and at the time of her adoption she was the only child that I had heard of being adopted from a Romanian mental institution. The couple adopt many mentally disabled children and have all the facilities and abilities to deal with them. When they saw the terrible conditions which existed in Romania, they insisted on the adoption. It turned out that Emese is not mentally disabled, although she was in one of those terrible institutions. On carefully monitored occasions, such adoptions are very much worth while.

Mr. Yeo: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that contribution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East mentioned one case and he will understand that I do not want to comment on it in public, although I shall consider what has happened and what the Home Office is doing about it. I suggest that he pays a visit to the helpline that he referred to. We should be glad if he did so. As he knows, the committee on inter-country adoptions has nominated a representative to serve on the project board which will review the operation of the helpline in the new year.

Several hon. Members mentioned resourcing of local authorities. Personal social services have been resourced generously—resources are up by two thirds in real terms since 1979. Charging is permitted, so no local authority should be deterred by a lack of resources from undertaking work in connection with possible inter-country adoptions.

An inter-country adoption agency could well have a place, but it would be better if it emerged from the domestic adoption service. The specialised knowledge of economic and social circumstances on an international scale may well be outside the scope of a local authority and an independent agency could fill that need. Of course, the basic principles and the standard of domestic adoptions, including the home study process, would need to be maintained.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) made an outstanding contribution to the debate. She has been in touch with me about her interest in the subject and she has great experience of it. I welcome her endorsement of much that I said in my opening speech. She described powerfully the experiences of children taken from this country many years ago, and that underlines the fact that we should be careful to avoid allowing apparently up-to-date and fashionable ideas or modern thinking to outweigh basic common-sense principles when we consider adoption. Her remarks about age were important. I share her view that most of us enter parenthood with limited knowledge of what we are in for and that we have to learn as we go along. She was particularly right in her view of the race issue. There are appalling instances of children being removed from foster parents merely on the ground that they are of a different race from the child.

The hon. Member for Eccles made an interesting remark about the possibility that great openness and contact might lead to more adoptions. Under the Children Act 1989, grandparents may apply for a residence order which gives some stability and parental responsibility without the drawback of confusing the relationships of being a grandparent and a parent.

The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South made an important point about the need to avoid an unnecessary extension of the court time required.

The hon. Member for Stockport has been in correspondence with me about the position of small, unregistered children's homes and I shall respond to her about that as it falls slightly outside the terms of the debate. She referred to the fact that three out of five children adopted are between the ages of one and nine. That percentage has changed surprisingly little during the past 15 years. I note her concern about the procedure for the court to grant a placement order before placement commences, and we shall reflect on that. I do not share her view that unmarried couples should be considered equally suitable adoptive parents as married couples. Couples who have decided to get married have demonstrated a commitment to a relationship which is of a different order from that of two people who happen to live together.

The debate has been most helpful, and we shall take note of all the views expressed inside and outside the House. I hope that other people will follow the discussions and will support them by sending in their views.

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave withdrawn.

PETITION

Pit Closures

8.57 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): It gives me great pleasure to present a petition on behalf of more than 136,000 people from Mansfield, Nottinghamshire and elsewhere. The petition calls upon the Prime Minister to intervene personally to stop the recent pit closure programme announced by the Government.

I should like to pay tribute to the *Chad News Group*, the *Mansfield Observer*, the *Sutton Coldfield Observer* and *Worksop Guardian* whose editors and staff have organised, launched and managed this petition. The petition from people of the area expresses their fears about the consequences of pit closures on their community, which could lead, if unchecked, to the loss of up to 100,000 jobs in the coalfield communities of Britain and up to 32,000 jobs in the areas served by those newspapers.

This fine and honourable petition of honest opinion from my area I give unto the House's keeping and it reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. This humble petition of people of Mansfield, north Nottinghamshire and elsewhere, sheweth that 136,000 people of the said area are deeply concerned about the recently announced pit closure programme and have called upon the Prime Minister to intervene personally to stop these closures.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House listens to this call upon the Prime Minister to intervene personally to stop such measures which would lead to the annihilation of the coal industry.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

That petition is signed by Mr. Jeremy Plews of 21 Newgate lane, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Allan Nicklin

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

8.59 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am extremely grateful to Madam Speaker for choosing this subject for the Adjournment debate.

I rise to raise the case of my constituent, Mr. Allan Nicklin, with a mixture of regret, frustration and anger: regret because what I say might conceivably strain relations between two friendly nations—this country and Saudi Arabia; frustration because, after 18 months of almost ceaseless work on behalf of my constituent, I have had to take the step of having an Adjournment debate on the subject; but most of all anger that Allan Nicklin has been treated so abominably merely because he had the misfortune to work for a company that turned out to be of dubious repute.

Allan Nicklin, who is a Wolverhampton boy, educated at the grammar school, went into insurance after he left school. He qualified in the profession and has spent 30 years in various managerial positions. About half that time has been spent in the middle east, an area of the world to which he is passionately attached. Prior to the last job that he held in Saudi Arabia, he had done two tours in that country, to which he is also very attached.

In 1988, Allan Nicklin was appointed general manager of Western Agencies, an insurance company based in the United States, with responsibility for three offices in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To him this was a job of challenge and promise, and he and his family relished the opportunity. They were in a part of the world that they all liked, in a country to which they had become attached. He felt that he would be able to do a good job in his chosen profession.

Unfortunately, it did not work out quite that way. It soon became clear to Allan Nicklin that the company was not quite what he thought. There was slow payment of repair accounts for Saudi companies and towards the end of 1989 claims were being pressed. Throughout that time Mr. Nicklin made strenuous efforts to ensure that everything was done properly. By March 1990, however, he was advised that he had better not apply for an exit visa because he would not have a chance to leave the kingdom if he did. By July of that year, he was in prison, held responsible for the alleged debts of the company of which he was an employee. His wife made constant intercessions on his behalf. She took his food to gaol and she presented herself at office after office and worked tirelessly to ensure that her husband was released. She sought to ensure that it was recognised that he was not in any way responsible, so that he would be allowed to try to sort things out.

At the end of November 1990, he was released from prison, but the case dragged on. At that stage, Mr. Nicklin looked upon this as a commercial and personal matter. Although the British authorities were aware in general terms of what was going on, Mr. Nicklin did not seek their active involvement or their help. He felt that it was a matter which he must sort out with the company for which he worked, and that was what he tried to do.

By July 1991 he was told by the Saudi civil rights department that if he did not personally pay up he would go to gaol. It was at that stage, the middle of last year, that he asked for as much help as possible from the British consul and sought, through his wife, my help and intervention as his local Member of Parliament. He did not wish his predicament to become public knowledge or property. He was conscious of the fact that Britain and Saudi Arabia enjoyed close and cordial relations. He had spent much of his working life seeking to strengthen in his own way those close and cordial relations. If we look back to midsummer last year, we had just gone through the Gulf war, in which those close and cordial relations had been demonstrated in a particular way.

Alas, all Mr. Nicklin's hopes and aspirations seemed to count for very little. On 6 November last year, the threat that had been uttered in July was carried out and he found himself in gaol. This was no mere arrest and detention. He was imprisoned in a cell 10 m by 5 m. There were 24 other people in that cell at all times, and 28 for some days. He was in the company of murderers and other criminals of evil repute. He was not allowed to wash. He was not allowed exercise. His wife, when she visited him, was subjected to body searches and had to sit in a dusty courtyard with crowds of other women, waiting to see her husband.

Allan Nicklin was detained in those conditions until 21 January this year, in spite of the best efforts of the ambassador and the consul, my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) and myself. And still Mr. Nicklin did not wish his predicament, his troubles, to be made public. Obviously, I was in constant touch with his wife, and the House can imagine her distress and anguish when she returned to this country before Christmas last year.

Soon after his release, the Saudi authorities admitted that Mr. Nicklin was indeed not personally liable for any debts; that there was no suggestion that at any time had he been guilty of any impropriety at all. This is not a British subject suspected of a criminal act. This case is not to be equated with the cases of drugs traffickers and those other cases about which one reads from time to time in which British subjects, sadly, contravene local laws, behave in a criminal manner and then, of course, must take the consequences. Here was a man who had sought to do nothing but follow his profession properly, and honourably discharge his business responsibilities, but all this to no avail.

Although it is not done to name officials, I will name one official here—the private secretary of my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale, Mr. Charles Moore, who has been exemplary in the way he has sought to help and has handled this case and kept in constant touch with me. But in spite of all our efforts, in July of this year, what happened? I got a call from Mr. Moore one Friday to say that I could expect Mr. Nicklin to be flying in within two or three days. That was just as we were about to rise for the summer recess. My last conversation in July with the Minister gave hope that I would be able to greet Mr. Nicklin at Heathrow or at his home in the constituency conveying the good wishes of everyone concerned.

In the event, nothing happened. Papers had been passed from one office to another and from one Department to another. Since those days in July, much effort has continued to be put in. My hon. Friend who will answer this debate has been constantly helpful in the matter. The Foreign Secretary has raised the issue with his opposite number, the Secretary of State for Defence has raised it at high level and with his opposite number and the Prime Minister, with whom I have been in correspondence, has expressed concern and frustration.

Indeed, as a result of a letter from the Prime Minister in which he said he saw no reason why I should not make the matter public, I talked to Mr. Nicklin and we decided that, at long last, the issue had to come into the open. It is a tribute to Mr. Nicklin and his wife that for all those long, dark, difficult months, they put the interests of this country and its relations with another country before their personal comfort and convenience.

As I say, despite the totally genuine expressions of concern by the Minister who has had day-to-day charge of the case, by the Foreign Secretary, by the Secretary of State for Defence and by the Prime Minister, Mr. Nicklin remains without a passport and without permission to leave.

This has been a cat-and-mouse game. Mr. Nicklin is being treated virtually as a hostage, and the situation is unacceptable. It is utterly unacceptable to Mr. Nicklin and his family and to their Member of Parliament. I hope that the Minister will demonstrate when he replies that it is equally unacceptable to Her Majesty's Government.

This is a country with which, we all agree, we wish to have close relations, yet a British subject is being treated by that country in the way that I have described. It was out of sheer desperation that we decided—I spoke to Mr. Nicklin on the telephone from Saudi Arabia and I had numerous conversations with his wife, who comes regularly to see me and visits my office in the constituency virtually every day—that we could not allow the matter to go on without people knowing about it.

Mr. Nicklin has not left Saudi Arabia for three and a half years. He has not been allowed to leave for two and a half years. He has not seen his daughter for two years, and during that time she celebrated her 21st birthday and graduated. He has missed all of the sort of family occasions that he should have had the right to attend.

His son had to leave his independent school because the fees could no longer be paid. I managed to persuade the headmaster and governors to let him take his GCSEs, but then he had to leave. Mr. Nicklin has not seen his son for almost two years. The last time he saw his wife was when she visited him about a year ago in the intolerable conditions in prison to which I referred.

Friends have helped to sustain Mr. Nicklin, and his wife has been marvellous in her support. But the strain on the family has been intolerable. Mr. Nicklin has no job and is without money. He has not been paid for over two years. It is clear from recent telegrams that the company for which he was working has almost certainly been guilty of criminal acts, but that is not his fault. In the United States, certain people are having to answer questions, but I will not digress and go into that now. Mr. Nicklin's reputation is such that other companies have been wanting to offer him employment. He has been unable to attend interviews, still less to contemplate taking up a job, because he has no passport and does not have permission to leave. He is entirely dependent on friends to feed and look after him.

Although I do not want to over-emphasise my role as his Member of Parliament, had it not been for my intervention with all the statutory authorities who supply electricity, gas and so on, his family would have been in dire straits. I pay tribute to those to whom mortgage payments are owed, to British Telecom, British Gas and

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

the local council for being extremely understanding and anxious to help. The position is desperate and that man remains in detention.

We have moved a long way since 1850 and the days of Don Pacifico when Palmerston sent in the gunboats and later spent four hours addressing this honourable House to justify his conduct, making the greatest speech of his life. I do not necessarily invite my hon. Friend the Minister to emulate that but I stress that the position is unacceptable. I know that he and his colleagues in the Foreign Office have done all that they possibly could but it is terrible when, in spite of the constant entreaties of a friendly power, a nation refuses to allow a man against whom no charges are preferred or contemplated to return to his home and family.

I tabled a question a few weeks ago asking my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to summon the ambassador. My right hon. Friend replied that the ambassador was trying to be helpful and that he did not feel that that was the right moment to summon him. I do not criticise the Saudi ambassador in this country and am sure that he has tried to be helpful. However, all those good intentions and genuine efforts have not produced Mr. Nicklin at Heathrow airport and have not allowed him to rejoin his family.

The last thing that I wish to do is jeopardise relations between Britain and any friendly country. Nevertheless, will my hon. Friend tell my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in stark, unequivocal terms that such treatment of a British subject is utterly unacceptable and that the Saudi ambassador must be told that in no uncertain terms? Mr. Nicklin must be allowed to have his passport, return to his country and be reunited with his wife, son and daughter well before Christmas so that they can have a family time together. The family can then begin to unravel the manifold problems, financial and otherwise, that have encompassed and enmeshed them in the past two and a half years, particularly the past difficult year since he was imprisoned in those atrocious conditions in November 1991.

I hope that my hon. Friend, to whom I am grateful for the time that he has given to this case, will be able to give me a reassuringly robust answer tonight. I appeal through the House and beyond the House to the Government to say to his Majesty the King of Saudi Arabia that, if he cherishes his relationship with Great Britain and truly believes what he said on his state visit to this country and during the Gulf war—I have no reason to doubt it—he should show that he repudiates the prevarication of his officials and that he will allow Mr. Nicklin to come back quickly.

9.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I fully understand why my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) has brought this important matter to the attention of the House. I shall be speaking to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary about the subject following tonight's debate. A copy of the text of the debate will be sent to our mission in Riyadh for transmission to the appropriate authorities, and a copy will be made available to the Saudi Arabian ambassador in London.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South said, the story starts on 12 August 1990, when our consulate in Jedda was informed of Mr. Nicklin's arrest for debts incurred by Western Agencies Ltd., often known as WAL (Jedda)—the company for which he was general manager. As a result of representations made by our embassy in Riyadh, Mr. Nicklin was released for the first time from prison on 26 November 1990, two years ago to this month. But he was not free to leave Saudi Arabia then or now.

Mr. Nicklin was initially given three months to settle the debts, and that period was extended to one year. He was unable to raise the money to pay the debts and, on 6 November 1991 he was rearrested. He was released into the custody of his sponsor, Prince Mishaal, on 21 January this year.

Some 22 representations have been made to the Saudi Arabian authorities about the case by Ministers, consulate officials, myself and others during the past 12 months. Although, after Mr. Nicklin's arrest in January of this year, he was subsequently cleared of liability for all debts, he has not been allowed to leave Saudi Arabia. His case is now before the Council of Ministers, and we hope for an early and favourable decision that will enable him to return to his family in Britain.

Under Saudi Arabian law, the senior representative of a company is liable for its debts and, until the debts are paid, he may be imprisoned. We have taken the view that Mr. Nicklin was an employee, not an executive, of WAL (Jedda), which was a subsidiary of the parent company based in Cyprus. WAL, a Cyprus-based company owned by two British nationals, Mr. Clive Lewis and Mr. Vincent Deacon, began operating in Jedda under the sponsorship of Prince Mishaal bin Saud bin Abdul Aziz on 27 March 1984. Mr. Nicklin arrived in Jedda in May 1988 to take up an appointment as general manager of WAL (Jedda). On 11 August 1990, he was arrested and imprisoned for the local company's failure to pay claims to SASCO and Abbar company, both Saudi Arabian companies.

During 1988 and 1989, numerous claims were made on WAL (Jedda) by both Saudi nationals and companies in respect of material damage, by fire and other events, which the company was unable to make good because the United States underwriters defaulted. The claims, amounting to about £600,000, were underwritten by the United States companies Wilmington Marine and General Insurance company and American Marine and General Insurance company. Mr. Nicklin holds that all correspondence and dealings with the American insurers were conducted by WAL (Cyprus). One of the two major shareholders of WAL (Cyprus) admitted in a letter, dated 26 September 1990, that he and the other shareholder, as directors of the Saudi firm, were responsible for the debts of WAL (Jedda) and that Mr. Nicklin should not be held liable.

In December 1991, during an official visit to Washington, I asked an official at the United States State Department to look into the status of the two United States insurance companies. After the State Department confirmed that neither company was under federal investigation, our missions in Houston and Atlanta tried to contact them direct.

We learned that American Marine and General, which may now be in liquidation, maintained that, since it had never received any premium on policies written by WAL (Jedda) and had never indeed written or authorised these policies, it did not consider itself liable for policies issued in its name. Mr. Nicklin disputes this, maintaining that premiums on policies issued up until the end of 1988, the period in question, were fully paid. Furthermore, he claims that virtually all policies issued by WAL in Saudi Arabia were signed by persons other than himself. Wilmington Marine and General, which was owned by a company now in liquidation, claimed that it was in the process of repaying its debt to WAL (Cyprus) by instalments, and that most of the money had already been repaid. The directors of WAL (Cyprus) claim that they have not received any payments.

I want to put all the facts on record, as I am sure that they will be considered by others at a later date.

In January 1992, the then Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), raised Mr. Nicklin's case with Prince Ahmed, the Saudi Vice-Minister of Interior. As a result, Mr. Nicklin was released into his sponsor's custody and the documentation was transferred from Jedda to Riyadh. Our embassy in Riyadh submitted a dossier on the case to the Interior Minister on 23 March.

In the meantime, our high commission in Nicosia had had a number of contacts with the two directors of WAL (Cyprus), the parent company, to try to bring home to them the seriousness of the position of their employee, Mr. Nicklin. Mr. Nicklin says that he has not received any financial assistance from them since mid-1991, although it has been made clear to them that both he and his wife, in the United Kingdom, are now destitute.

We have repeatedly raised Mr. Nicklin's case at a high level with the Saudis, and our embassy in Riyadh has been active in trying to secure his release. Since my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater raised the case in January 1992 with the Saudi Vice-Minister of Interior, a senior FCO official saw the chargé d'affaires of the Saudi embassy in London on 26 March. On 13 May, our ambassador in Saudi Arabia called on the Interior Ministry to express concern that the case had been transferred to the Ministry of Commerce. I raised the matter with the Saudi ambassador on 15 May, and the Foreign Secretary subsequently raised the case with the Saudi Minister of State, Mr. Masoud.

On 19 May, our ambassador in Riyadh called on the Saudi Minister of Commerce, who said that the case was complex and would require careful scrutiny. He added that Mr. Lewis's 1984 contract with Prince Mishaal to sell insurance had not received Ministry of Commerce endorsement. Our ambassador reiterated our view that, as an employee of the company, Mr. Nicklin could not be held liable for its debts.

Subsequently, we learned that the Ministry of Commerce had informed the Ministry of Interior that it considered that Mr. Nicklin should not be responsible for any debts; the United States underwriters should be responsible for the larger debt of about £500,000; the smaller debts, made up, for example, of repairs to vehicles insured, should be the responsibility of Prince Mishaal. The embassy was informed that the Minister of Interior would write to Prince Mishaal asking him to take on these liabilities. Our ambassador wrote to Prince Saud on 7 July to brief him on developments in the case.

On 15 July, our consul in Riyadh accompanied Mr. Nicklin to a meeting with his sponsor, Prince Mishaal. The prince said that he had not yet received any communication from the Ministry of the Interior. However, as he had no claim against Mr. Nicklin personally, he said that he would not stand in the way of his leaving Saudi Arabia. On 22 July, the prince's manager in Jedda told our embassy that the prince had been informed of Prince Naif's wish to have the debt issue resolved. Although he intended to dispute his own liability for the debts, Prince Mishaal instructed his office manager to request an exit re-entry visa in Mr. Nicklin's passport to enable him to travel as soon as possible.

However, the immigration authorities in Jedda remained unprepared to remove Mr. Nicklin's name from their list of people forbidden to leave the kingdom. They said that they needed specific instructions from the Ministry of the Interior to remove his name from the list. On 28 July, a senior FCO official raised the problem with the Saudi ambassador, who said that he would see what he could do.

Repeated representations by our embassy in Riyadh and consulate-general in Jedda have not yet overcome this new obstacle. Our consul-general in Riyadh and Mr. Nicklin called on the deputy Minister of Commerce on 8 September, and were again told that the Ministry considered that Mr. Nicklin should not be held liable for any debts, which should be the responsibility of the underwriters and his sponsor.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence raised the case when he met His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz, the Minister of the Interior, during his recent visit to Saudi Arabia, on 20 September. The Minister told my right hon. and learned Friend that he agreed that Mr. Nicklin should not be held liable for the debts, and hoped that he would be allowed to leave Saudi Arabia very soon; however, he wished to have a final look at the papers.

Since then, the Interior Ministry has asked the Ministry of Commerce for further confirmation and clarification of its decision that Mr. Nicklin was not to be held liable for any debts. The Ministry of Commerce has, I understand, replied in the affirmative. As my hon. Friend knows, I spoke to the Saudi ambassador on 22 October, and followed that up with a letter enclosing a chronology showing how and when the Nicklin case had been discussed by British and Saudi Ministers and officials over the past six months.

On 1 November, our ambassador in Riyadh was told by senior officials in the Interior Ministry that, as Mr. Nicklin's debts were not personal, the way should very soon be clear to authorising his release. We have now been informed that Mr. Nicklin's case has been referred to the Council of Ministers for final approval. Our ambassador spoke about the issue to the Foreign Minister on 8 November. We cannot, of course, tell exactly when that final approval will be given; but we have been given to understand that we are really at the last hurdle, and that Mr. Nicklin could well be free to return home very shortly.

I know that this further delay will increase the distress to Mr. and Mrs. Nicklin, but I assure them, my hon. Friend and the House that we shall continue to do everything possible to secure Mr. Nicklin's unhindered departure from Saudi Arabia as soon as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes to Ten o' clock.

House of Commons

Friday 13 November 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Greenwich (Education Budget)

9.35 am

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I present a petition signed by 7,000 residents of the London borough of Greenwich and parents of children in Greenwich schools. The petition expresses concern and anxiety about the damaging effect of cuts in the education budget on the education of their children. The petition has been prepared by the Campaign Against Cuts in Education in Greenwich. I pay tribute to the campaign's unstinting efforts to ensure that their children can enjoy the high-quality education they deserve.

The petition

sheweth That Government cuts in Local Authority Funding and decisions on Standard Spending Assessment are damaging the way in which Education is provided in the London Borough of Greenwich. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House does everthing in its power to obtain a fair Standard Spending Assessment for the London Borough of Greenwich in order that our children's education as well as other vital services do not suffer further cuts. And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Small and Medium-Sized Businesses

9.36 am

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I beg to move,

That this House recognises the vital importance of small and medium-sized businesses in the wealth-creating process in this country: welcomes the Government's initiatives in lifting the burdens of excessive taxation and regulation which stifle enterprise; and strongly endorses the Government's clear commitment to the creation of the right climate for sustainable growth, in which initiative and enterprise can flourish.

As a new Member with a first and somewhat unanticipated opportunity to choose a motion for a whole day's debate on the Floor of the House, it does not fall naturally to me to lead a charge on the big interests or to attack the big issues. Nor do I seek to speak for powerful lobbies or for big corporations, although I declare that I am an adviser to one of them—Legal and General Group plc.

It is my role to reflect the concerns found in the high street in North Colchester and in every other constituency. If I am able to reflect the realities facing my constituents, the House should put it down to sheer beginner's luck.

I tabled the motion because, of all the effects that the recession is having, the effect on the lives and well-being of those who own, run or work for small and medium-sized enterprises is greater than the effect on any other group of people, yet it is on those people that eventual economic recovery will depend.

Small and medium-sized enterprises should not be treated as the exception for which a short day's debate and a small division of the Department of Trade and Industry will suffice. Small and medium-sized enterprises are not the exception but the rule. There are thousands more small firms than large ones. They employ 60 per cent. of the private sector work force, if we take small and medium-sized enterprises to mean those with fewer than 200 employees. They account for 60 per cent. of total turnover. Yet it is small firms that feel most under pressure in the recession, most put upon by the banks, most burdened by regulation, and most neglected by Government policy.

Whatever the short-term problems may be, we need to look constantly to the long-term objective, which is that long-term economic growth can be achieved only by nurturing that sector. My small part in all this is that before I came to the House I was a venture capital manager for six years. Before that, I worked in industry, for the Ford motor company, so I do not apologise for my lineage or background.

I want to set out today the problems that many small and medium-sized enterprises in North Colchester appear to be facing; some suggestions and solutions; and an explanation of how the role of the Department of Trade and Industry and the small firms unit could be strengthened to take a more active role in the formulation of all Government policy as conducted by all Government Departments as it affects all businesses in the United Kingdom. Government cannot be reminded too often: policies that purport to be good for business must be good for small business; otherwise they miss most of their market.

In the department for the citizens charter—the Office of Public Service and Science—the citizen now has an undisputed champion in Whitehall to generate creative

[Mr. Bernard Jenkin]

friction among the great Departments of state. Friction creates heat which, in turn, can create light, and better policies. Cannot small and medium-sized businesses have a similar champion?

It is a cliche to say that small businesses are the backbone of the United Kingdom economy; it also understates their importance. They are the economy's flesh and bood. Firms consisting of fewer than 20 employees employ a third of the total private sector work force and, as I have said, small and medium-sized firms employing fewer than 200 people represent 99·5 per cent. of the companies in this country and some 60 per cent. of turnover.

Such firms are the seedings and saplings of British industry: some of them will become the large companies of tomorrow. They have an unrivalled ability to create jobs. Between 1985 and 1989, small companies created 1 million new jobs in the United Kingdom. That was the reward for measures that we adopted throughout the 1980s, which led to the rebirth of the enterprise culture.

Between 1963 and 1979, the number of manufacturing firms in the United Kingdom increased by only 30 per week on average, but between 1979 and 1990 the rate of increase was 100 per week. There are now 420,000 more firms than there were in 1979.

Even today, in the teeth of a vicious recession, business starts continue to keep pace with business failures. In 1991, NatWest and Barclays both reported estimates that there had been a total of about 480,000 business starts—the same figure as in 1990. That was made possible by measures introduced by the Government. Taxation has been simplified and personal taxation reduced to improve incentives. Corporation tax has been reduced—particularly for small businesses. Inheritance tax has been reformed, capital transfer tax on lifetime gifts abolished and a comprehensive bad-debt relief scheme introduced. Other welcome measures were mentioned in yesterday's autumn statement—not least a further reduction in interest rates.

Other initiatives and programmes include the enterprise allowance scheme: 560,000 people have benefited from the enterprise allowance scheme and two thirds of them are still in business today. The DTI's enterprise initiative brought practical help and strategic management advice to thousands of companies, with financial support for consultancy projects to encourage the use of outside expertise as a regular part of management strategy. We have had business training programmes, the loan guarantee scheme and the business expansion scheme—pump-priming the small firms' equity market, which, in the early 1980s, transformed the expectations of the entire venture capital industry.

The training and enterprise councils probably represent the most significant development so far in the provision of support services for small firms. With the involvement of local business men, the TECs will deliver the Government's training programme locally, tailoring it to local needs. Finally, we are test-marketing the concept of one-stop shops for all DTI services. They will also act as a gateway for more specialised advice and services from the DTI, the TECs, other Government Departments and venture capital companies.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Gentleman mentioned TECs. I read a report in the Derbyshire and north Nottinghamshire coalfield paper to the effect that, in that area, nine out of 10 of the young men and women who had been on courses finished up without a job. It was as bad as that, and that was before the projected pit closure programme.

Will the hon. Gentleman bear in mind the fact that there are about 20 small businesses employing fewer than 20 employees in each pit village? If 31 pits close, and 31,000 miners are thrown out of work, the effects will be multiplied in the pit villages. In addition to the miners, about 100 people in each village will be thrown out of work. Most of them will be engaged in small businesses. We have all received letters from small businesses in those areas, many of which were represented at the recent demonstrations. Will the hon. Gentleman agree to support the Opposition in voting against the Government if they prepare to close any of those 31 pits when the review returns?

Mr. Jenkin: The important point to remember about the tragic closure of pits throughout the country, and the scars that their closure leaves, is that British Coal Enterprise plays an important role in placing people in new jobs. If I recall correctly, BCE has an 86 per cent. success rate in placing British Coal employees.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Eighty-six per cent?

Mr Jenkin: I may be wrong, but that is the figure I recall.

Moreover, I remind the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that we were given doom-laden forecasts about steel towns such as Consett and Corby and told that their economies would be devastated, but in those places the culture of enterprise has transformed, and new businesses—which have a future, create wealth, bring revenue and contribute to our economic welfare—have been created.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman is partly right, but he fails to realise that, when Corby and Consett were in difficulty, their local economies were almost isolated from the national economy and unemployment was much lower. That meant that the state and enterprise —industry, the banks and the private sector—could concentrate resources on developing those areas. Now the whole country is in difficulty and we can no longer isolate areas as effectively. That is the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) sought to make.

Mr Jenkin: I pay due regard to the hon. Gentleman's point that, in future, it will be more difficult to deal with black spots in the British economy because we are in the depths of recession. But it ill befits Labour Members to give the Government lectures on how to rejuvenate the economy as a whole and unemployment black spots. After all, faced with the same problem in the 1970s, the Labour Government did precisely nothing.

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): Does my hon. Friend agree that this matter should be considered against the background of the early 1980s, when the same doom-and-gloom merchants were saying that the creation of small businesses was quite impossible and that only the big businesses could do anything? In fact, the opposite proved to be the case: we created 1 million new jobs in areas in which everyone had said that that was impossible.

Mr. Jenkin: I agree with my hon. Friend 100 per cent. I remember hearing the forecasts of the Cambridge Economic Policy Group during the 1970s. We were told that we would have 6 million unemployed by the mid-1980s. That did not happen because small businesses created jobs and filled the gaps left by the old and dying industries. I should find it more encouraging if Labour Members were interested in Britain's future rather than in the preservation of Britain's past.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred to pit closures. In 1991—in the depths of the recession—9,482 jobs were created in the pit closure areas, so it can be done, although I wholeheartedly agree that we need to increase the programme and try harder. The hon. Member for Bolsover should know better than to make silly remarks. He is supposed to know the coal areas. He had better go and learn something from British Coal Enterprise, which has a remarkable record. He should praise what BCE has done and encourage it to do more.

Mr. Jenkin: I agree with my hon. Friend that we might have more respect for the Labour party and the unions if there were an organisation called NUM Enterprises, but there is not.

During my preparations for the debate, I sought input from local businesses in my constituency and from local business organisations. From the submission of the North and Mid-Essex chamber of commerce, it seems that Colchester would benefit from one of the one-stop shops to which I referred earlier. The submission states:

> "In Colchester we need more help for exporters. The Chamber has positive indications from its documentation service that exports from this area are on the increase. We should be nurturing and encouraging that. But the nearest dti adviser who is able to visit firms for face to face consultations is based in Norwich. To overcome this weakness, we provided an export clinic, jointly with the dti, last week and it was attended by 40 prospective exporters—but to mount it we had to obtain sponsorship from the private sector".

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to set up one of his pilot schemes in Colchester with a DTI export executive because that would be good for Britain's balance of payments.

By far the biggest complaint from businesses in my constituency relates to late payment of debt. The Forum of Private Business estimates that nationally £50 billion worth of debt is overdue on the balance sheets of small firms. Of that, £20 billion is owed by big corporations and Government organisations. I have also been told that the national health service and local authorities of whatever party are among the worst offenders. Surely the public sector can be properly regulated to pay up on time.

Public authorities very often pay higher prices, or are able only to tender to fewer suppliers, because of their bad payment record. For private sector defaulters, I would support the three recommendations of the Institute of Directors: there should be easier access to the small claims court; there should be voluntary codes of good payment drawn up by professional bodies; and, perhaps most interestingly, the DTI should establish an office to deal with late payment complaints against public bodies, including European institutions and international bodies.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Will my hon. Friend consider the converse of that problem? Often there is no cash coming into small firms, but there is a continual demand for cash from them, particularly from the VAT man. There is no cash there, but the computer automatically slaps a large fine on those companies and that only compounds the problem.

Mr. Jenkin: I accept my hon. Friend's point; and I will comment on VAT later.

The second most common complaint is related to the problem of late payment of debt, which involves rogue directors. My local chamber of commerce complains that

> "fraudulent operators are able to circumvent the law, walking away from debts and continuing to trade in the same premises, with the same people in the same line of business but with a slightly different business name."

That particular item is the highest priority concern of the members of the Forum of Private Business, with 75 per cent. of respondents highlighting it as a concern—perhaps the other 25 per cent. were the problem. Is the Insolvency Act 1986 working as effectively as it should to ban directors who have been trading fraudulently?

The third complaint is that business men find pay-as-you-earn and the national insurance administration more complicated than appears necessary. How much does it cost a small business to employ someone at, say, £150 a week and how much does that man take home? The Library has kindly provided me with the figures. After employer's national insurance charges of £12·90 and notional additions to costs to allow for statutory sick pay, holiday pay and additional administration, the total cost of the employee is between £170 and £200 a week. Furthermore, the employee will pay his own tax and NIC, so he takes home only £121·30. Therefore, the take-home pay amounts to little more than 60 per cent. of the costs to the employer. If tax and NIC could be rationalised, we could ameliorate the problem.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): May I point out to my hon. Friend that the happy way in which we introduced the 20p in the pound tax rate added hugely to the burdens of those of us who still prepare a manual payroll?

Mr. Jenkin: My hon. Friend has made an interesting and illuminating point which I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister has taken on board.

I want now to consider the VAT regime. The year-on-year increases in the VAT threshold have been very welcome and have enabled 50,000 businesses to stay out of paying VAT. I also welcome the fact that Customs and Excise is presently conducting a wide-ranging review of the VAT civil penalty regime, and I am pleased that the serious misdeclaration penalty was changed in the last Budget to remove 75 per cent. of cases from payment of the penalty. However, would not my hon. Friend the Minister welcome a discretionary penalty regime which reflected the scale of the sin, intention and ability to pay the penalty?

Moreover, will my hon. Friend the Minister ask his colleagues at the Treasury to look again at the changes to be implemented on 1 January in advance of the single market? The changes will represent a considerable additional administrative burden and they are causing widespread concern.

[Mr. Jenkin]

My constituents are also calling for less regulation. The Forum for Private Business's third priority of concern is for regulations to be simplified.

May I be forgiven for pointing out that it was Lord Young who, way back in the mid-1980s, first talked of a "bonfire of controls". However, it seems that we have not seen much smoke yet.

The Institute of Directors has pointed out to me that someone wishing to start a new limited company employing two people would have to read 26 documents totalling 269,200 words taking 24 hours and 27 minutes to read. In August, the IOD published a list of 50 licences which could be scrapped. There is also the vexed issue of EC directives.

In an Adjournment debate a week or two ago my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) ably exposed the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as the source of excessive regulation on abattoirs rather than the EC directive upon which pretext the regulation was based. Similarly, the IOD has attacked the Department of the Environment for an excessive interpretation of an EC directive on the energy efficiency of boilers. Surely those are all causes where the DTI small firms division should step in to sanitise some of the enthusiasm of other Departments.

The final area of complaint that I must report to the House concerns the role of the high street banks. First, I must say how grateful I am that they have taken such trouble to ensure that I am fully informed on the subject —no less gentle or persuasive than my Whip last week. I stress that the House must understand that they are facing difficulties every bit as severe as those faced by many small businesses.

On a personal level, it cannot be much fun being a bank manager in the current climate and being faced with the choice half a dozen times a day of extending the risk on a particular loan or of calling it a day. The banks are facing huge challenges—deregulation; increased competition; technological change; overcapacity; erosion of profits; capital adequacy; scandals like BCCI and Blue Arrow; and the effects of the recession whose fallout ends up on the banks' balance sheets at the end of the day.

The banks recognise that the survival of small businesses is as much in their interests as in the interests of the economy as a whole. Their actions are louder than my words and it is something of a relief that they appear to be responding to public concern.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Is my hon. Friend aware that many small banks in rural areas charge excessive interest to small enterprises? They have absolutely no right to charge 5 or even 8 per cent. over base rate and they tend to cripple those who are most likely to go under.

Mr. Jenkin: My hon. Friend has made an interesting and valid point.

It is something of a relief that the banks appear to be responding to public pressure to alter their minimum lending rate policies. The National Westminster bank and Barclays have announced revisions to their policies so that they can continue to pass on the full benefit of base rate cuts to their small business borrowers. No doubt others will be following.

But there seems to be a cultural problem about institutional lending to smaller enterprises, and it is probably exacerbated by the recession. Perhaps we could learn from the German experience. There is also the perceived equity funding gap. We could certainly look at further reform of capital gains tax to try to stimulate that sector. Forty per cent. is a punitive rate for an entrepreneur to pay after he has taken all the risk and put in all the work to build up a small business.

I have had discussions with one of my former employers, the venture capital provider, 3i, on this subject. I do not know what else the Government can do to plug the equity gap. I note my noble Friend Baroness Denton's comment in her speech in the other place on Wednesday that perhaps we should seek an institution

"rather like 3i in its early days"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 11 November 1992; Vol. 540, c. 216.]

to lead and finance at the very small end. 3i sets a good example in Birmingham in that respect, as my noble Friend pointed out, where it is working with the community. We need to look to community-based institutions at local level to achieve what we want.

Earlier this year I was working on a study with the Business in the Community organisation on just such proposals. The final document, called "Investing in Community Enterprise", is well worth reading and I commend it to my noble Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister.

The importance of small and medium-sized enterprises cannot be overestimated. Much of great value has been achieved, but there is much more to be done; or, in the case of the Government, much that they should stop doing.

I return to the central point. The small firms unit of the DTI is responsible for 99·5 per cent. of businesses in this country. That is my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade's biggest responsibility. Let his Department take the lead over others in the protection and promotion of the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises. It is his responsibility to intervene before breakfast, lunch and tea in the affairs of other Departments as they affect small and medium-sized enterprises. We should adopt a new way of thinking. The DTI should be the small firms department. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is no less than the small firms Minister sitting at the Cabinet table.

10.1 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsolver): During the past several weeks, I have been inundated with complaints from firms, mainly small businesses, in my constituency and elsewhere about the effect of the threatened pit closure programme on their ability to survive. I have been a Member of this House for 22 years. Generally speaking, I have not had too many contacts with business people, but in the past few weeks I have received more than 500 letters, many of them from small business men and women from all parts of Britain, saying that they will never vote Tory again. Their names and addresses are available for anybody to inspect. In their cry from the heart, they say that they are in the depths of a recession. They went through a recession in 1981 and managed to survive when others did not, and now they are going through a second tranche.

In my constituency, a business—Hirst—was set up recently in a little village called Creswell, where a pit had been closed some time before. That firm wrote to me and said, "We have just heard the bad news. In view of the difficulties that we faced before and the closure of Creswell colliery, we have had to lay off five people. We have to tell you, Mr. Skinner, that if the 31 pits close, and many of them are within a radius of about 20 miles of the village —approximately 14 pits—we will have to close the whole operation." That is typical of the letters I have received.

I have heard today in the interventions and cross-talk that, somehow or other, British Coal Enterprise Ltd. has been doing a sterling job in areas where pit closures took place. British Coal Enterprise Ltd. claimed credit for jobs that other people have managed to get. In Scotland, Wales and other parts of regional development areas, development agencies managed to get a few jobs in the areas, and British Coal Enterprise Ltd. claimed credit for the lot. That is one of the biggest confidence tricks ever carried out by any agency. We must bear it in mind that the agencies were set up in 1984-85 in the middle of the last pit strike. My hon. Friends who hear talk about British Coal Enterprise Ltd. jobs must remember that it double-counted jobs that were due to somebody else's efforts—local authorities, development agencies and so on.

In my constituency there are villages in which pit closures have taken place. Because of voluntary redundancies, some miners had a chance to go to another pit village. The same is true in the constituency of Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse). Male unemployment in some villages is between 30 and 40 per cent. That is hard to believe, but it is true, because, generally speaking, pit villages are very self-contained. They rely on their pit and on the ancillary industries that are directly or indirectly related to the colliery. When a pit closes, one can guarantee that about another dozen or 20 firms will go down the pan.

We have been led to believe that, after the pits have been closed, a magic wand will be waved by British Coal Enterprise Ltd and various other agencies. We have been given the impression that jobs have been created by small businesses, big businesses and so on. That ain't true. In Langwith, in my constituency, where a pit closed in the late 1970s, early 1980s, male unemployment is more than 40 per cent.

I have referred to the prospects of young men and women seeking jobs. About four or five weeks ago, before the announcement of the 31 pits to be closed, I read in the *Worksop Guardian* that local training and enterprise councils had conducted a survey and found that nine out of 10 young men and women on TEC courses have not been found a job. That was before the announcement. Can hon. Members imagine what life in coalfield areas will be like if those pits close?

It is high time that we examined what is really happening in Britain. Not only have we had a recession followed by a deep slump, but some measures announced yesterday showed that the Government will not do a great deal to solve the problem. *[Interruption.]* Somebody is moaning on the Conservative Back Benches. I can understand why. I must tell Conservative Members who waved their Order Papers yesterday that some of the prospects for job creation that were put forward by the Chancellor will not reach fruition in many areas of Britain.

There was mention of local authorities being allowed to use a very small proportion of their capital receipts based on the number of council houses that are sold next financial year. That will not make much difference. It would be very helpful for small businesses if some building firms in pit villages and elsewhere were able to start employing young men and women, some of whom have been employed in the mining industry. They would love to be able to do it.

When I left school, I had the opportunity to work for a firm building houses. That was in the late 1940s and early 1950s, under the Labour Government who started the massive house building programme. I had the choice of working for about 20 different building companies and I could have worked for other small businesses making pipes, and all the other things associated with building the welfare state. I had a choice in life. It was not the greatest choice of all time—I did not go straight into Standard Chartered bank, like some Conservative Members, after being turned down as a bus driver; I went down the pit. But I had a choice. We are living in a society where young men and women do not have a choice. My choice was meagre, and for some people it was better in those years.

Conservatives talk about unemployment as if the Labour Government left 3 million out of work. Even though I often opposed that Government vociferously, the number of people out of work then was never more than about 1·25 million, which was the total when we left office in 1979. For the greater part of Labour's time in office it was much lower. I did not agree with the public expenditure cuts and I helped to defeat the Government on one of those ill-fated nights in 1976, and on other occasions.

However, let us put things in perspective. Many small businesses were thriving then. Now, for every week that passes they are falling by the wayside. The latest figure is 76 failures every working day—three every hour. Between us, the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) and I have been on our feet for about 40 minutes, so two firms have gone bankrupt while we have been speaking; and the chances are that many more will do so before the day is out.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the main sources of opportunity for the young people that he has described to set up businesses and contribute to their community and their future would arise if the county council, which he so wantonly supports, contracted out far more of its work? He should forget about the sort of Stalinist economic structure that he likes.

Mr. Skinner: I do not take lectures from Tories who are not content with one job but moonlight and take others. Many people on the Conservative Benches—I could name them if I wanted—not only pick up £30,000 as Members of Parliament, but pick up money on the side, working in the banks and law courts.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Like the hon. Gentleman who moved the motion.

Mr. Skinner: Yes. The hon. Member for Colchester, North said that he was working for someone else. He is not content with the income he gets here, although 4 million people are out of work.

As for Derbyshire county council, let us put it on the record that when the Labour party was elected in 1981 it said in its manifesto that it would not go in for compulsory redundancies. The council has a proud record of ensuring that it does not add to the dole queue and, as a result, when

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it went back to the Derbyshire electorate in 1985—not to Conservative Members—it was returned with a bigger majority. In 1989, the electorate spoke again. People liked the idea of having the cheapest school meals in Britain, free home helps and all the rest. By and large, small business men and women in Derbyshire joined typical Labour voters to ensure that, despite all the attacks from the Tory-based media, the Labour county council got another majority, so it is still in power. The Labour party still has a fair majority and the people of Derbyshire like what it is doing. The voters have spoken three times in succession, so they do not need any lectures from moonlighting Tory Members of Parliament.

Mr. Jenkin: Is there not a slight irony in what the hon. Gentleman is saying about compulsory redundancies? No one likes the idea, but even the Labour party has to implement compulsory redundancies. Is there not an element of hypocrisy when councils posture in front of their electroates and buy off the consequences of compulsory redundancies, at the expense of the taxpayer, of wealth creation, and ultimately of the jobs and opportunities that he is lamenting?

Mr. Skinner: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman was not listening earlier. I told him that when Labour was in power I did not support the increase in unemployment. I did not support it when I was a member of the national executive either. He can complain to someone, but he must not complain to me, because my record on such affairs is apparent. He has no need to look into a crystal ball—just read the book.

I was talking about the fact that young men and women want jobs. If we assume that all those pits close, it will be even worse for young people wanting work. In the Bolsover, Chesterfield and Mansfield areas, in South Yorkshire and in the remaining scattered coalfields in south Wales, the north-east and Lancashire—where the last pit is to close—unemployment totals in some travel-to-work areas will be well over 20 per cent., and well over 50 per cent. in some pit villages.

Nothing that happened yesterday offered any hope to young people wanting a job. The mini-Budget launched a spiteful attack on low-paid workers and will mean less purchasing power in the economy to create much-needed growth. Generally speaking, low-paid workers spend all their money, and they spend most of it in small businesses. If we take money away from them, the economy will go down further and further and the growth that the Chancellor talked about will not materialise.

If small businesses are to be given a chance, one measure could be taken that would increase the purchasing power in the economy and take money from people who can best afford it. The result might be a reduction in the unemployment total. In the Thatcher years—in the first 10 years of Tory government—£26.2 billion was given in tax cuts to the richest 1 per cent. of the population. That is a lot of money. Yesterday, the Chancellor should have said, "We're going to take that money back. The country's in a mess. We're not going to call on working class people to carry the burden. We're going to get back the £26.2 billion that was given to the richest 1 per cent. in tax cuts." That would have helped to balance the books.

The Government could have used some it to narrow the public sector borrowing requirement from £37 billion to £30 billion. The Chancellor could have used some of it to bolster the national health service, which would have created more growth among the small businesses which supply it with goods and services. We could have doubled the amount of money that we give to pensioners, because about 80 per cent. of that would be used to increase spending power and small businesses would reap some of the benefit.

We could have used some of that £26.2 billion to repair schools. There is an estimated £4 billion backlog of school repairs, and most repairs are carried out by small business enterprises. If we launched a campaign to repair those schools, some of which are derelict, and to provide inside toilets for little toddlers who will be skating across the playground in winter, we could start making the economy, and small businesses in particular, boom.

Dr. Hampson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the abolition of the Ryrie rules in the Treasury will benefit large projects—many imagine that they relate especially to those projects—and small ones, such as insulation work in hospitals? The abolition of the rules will enable small projects to be undertaken with private money.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman is right about the principle. The trouble is that yesterday not much money was shoved across, so there will not be much of an improvement. If the principle is sound—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is Labour party policy.

Mr. Skinner: I appreciate that it was in the Labour party manifesto. It is one of the policies that have been stolen by the Conservatives. Yesterday, the Government grabbed a couple of our policies, but instead of doing something positive, they merely accepted principles.

I return to the issue of local authority housing. There is £5 billion-worth of capital receipts, and, by and large, every local authority in Britain uses small businesses to provide services. If the Government had used the £5 billion-worth of capital receipts in a positive way, a house building programme would have been created that would give many people the chance to have a roof over their heads.

Such a programme would bring many small businesses back into operation and thousands of construction workers would come off the dole. When people come off the dole they start to pay tax and insurance, so the Government have less to pay out in dole money. It is costing £30 billion a year to finance the dole queue. The more that we cut into that pile of money and the pile of human misery that is known as the dole queue, the more revenue the Government receive in tax and insurance payments. That creates an upward spiral. For so many years now we have been suffering the consequences of a downward spiral. Although the Government pinched an idea from the Labour party, they did not do a great deal with it.

If we used the £26·2 billion that has been given to the richest 1 per cent. of the population in the way that I have described, we would help small businesses and cut the massive dole queue. We would give young people the chance of work. I do not know how teachers manage to motivate the young men and women who are in our schools. What can they say to them? When I was at school, they said, "Pass your exams and better yourself." That is what was said in my area. That was the philosophy that prevailed.

The other week I went to Shirebrook school on its speech day. I spoke to many young lads. Present also were people from various enterprises that are still in the area, including small businesses. I asked how the teachers motivated young men and women to take their exams and to pass this, that and the other when they have brothers and sisters who have never had a job for four or five years. At the same time the Government complain about crime on the streets, for example.

We are creating a society in which new generation after generation is witnessing mass unemployment and no prospect of work. Against that background, the Government talk about helping small businesses.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Before the hon. Gentleman moves on to talk about crime, I wish to take up one of his spending plans. Perhaps he will tell us whether he supported the motion that was passed at this year's Labour party conference that called for a massive increase in pensions, and whether he agrees with the Opposition spokesman on social security, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), that the proposed increases would cost taxpayers about £25 billion. How would the hon. Gentleman go about paying for such an increase in pensions? In making that provision for pensioners, how does he imagine that he would be able to produce the sort of help that he is talking about for small businesses?

Mr. Skinner: I talked earlier about clawing back the £26·2 billion that went to the richest 1 per cent. of the population. I would use some of that money to increase pensions. There are other areas in which there is a great deal of public expenditure. For example, I would cancel the Trident project. That would save £10 billion. I would use some of that money to bolster the welfare state, to build more houses, and to give pensioners more money. I would stop the business whereby the top four clearing banks have received £5 billion over the past 10 years in written-off debts. The country is strapped for cash, but I have read in the Library that National Westminster, Barclays, Midland and Lloyds have received £5 billion from the taxpayer to write off debts. It really is fanciful. Yet the Government call upon nurses and other low-paid workers—those on just over £100 a week—to carry the can for the mess that they have created. It is incredible.

If the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) is worried about where the money would come from, he should understand that there is plenty of money in the country. There must be if some Tory Members have six or seven jobs apiece. I am an anti-marketeer, which means that I am not convinced about Maastricht or anything else. Every family is paying £18 a week to prop up the common agricultural policy and the fraud that is run by the mafia in Italy and elsewhere within the Common Market. I would make a big hole in the money that we give to the Common Market.

I am sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you wish me to ensure that I confine myself to talking about the Economic Community in terms of small business. I have done so because, as was said earlier, most business in Britain is small business. I heard somebody say on the wireless the other day that small business represent about 60 per cent. of all businesses. I think that the hon. Member for Colchester, North quoted a figure that was somewhat similar. If we talk about business in Britain, we are, to a great extent, talking about businesses with fewer than 200 employees. There are many more with fewer than 20 employees.

I could find the money quite easily. Apart from what I have already said, it is time that we did several other things. The measures that were announced yesterday will not add up to a row of beans. It is interesting to read some of the small print in the so-called quality press this morning. The headlines look good, but underneath them there is the suggestion that there could be much more trouble ahead and that there will be a harsh Budget next March. Of course, such a Budget will attack small businesses as well as everyone else.

The measures that the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced yesterday enabled Tory Back-Bench Members to wave their Order Papers. It is significant that the hon. Member for Colchester, North did not pay too many compliments to the Chancellor when he moved his motion. I do not think that he said, "What a wonderful job you have done." The hon. Gentleman has probably read the newspapers.

Mr. Jenkin: I wish to place on the record my congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on an excellent autumn statement, which was realistic, tough and especially good for small businesses. Included within it was the abolition of car tax, the extension of first year capital allowances, and many other measures that will help small businesses, not least the reduction in interest rates, which will be good for small businesses that are borrowing.

Mr. Skinner: I am sure that the Chancellor will know before the day is out that the hon. Gentleman is not keen on some of the Government's policies and that he praised him only when I deliberately provoked him to do so.

We are talking about taking measures to make small businesses flourish. Apart from the steps that I have said I would take to get the money, I would tax the Queen and all the hangers-on.

Mr. Couchman: That would not produce much money.

Mr. Skinner: I agree, but, according to all the surveys, about 80 per cent. of the population would be very pleased. I know one or two business men and women who would say, "That would not put much money in our pockets but it would be symbolic and it is something that should be done." I do not want any lectures from Tories about there being a lack of money.

We must defend our manufacturing base. The number of people engaged in manufacturing has fallen to 4·5 million. Over the 13 years of Tory government, there had been a 30 per cent. fall. Over that period, the greatest slice ever has been removed from the manufacturing base. There are fewer employed in manufacturing today in Tory Britain than are employed in hotels and shops.

I am not knocking those who have to work in hotels and shops, most of whom are part time and low paid. Of course, the Government add those part-time workers to their employment figures to make it appear that there are more people in full-time work than there really are. I do not knock those people's efforts in the service industries, but we cannot live by bread alone. We must build up

[Mr. Skinner]

Britain's manufacturing base. If it goes any further down the pan, Britain will end up as a third-rate economy like some of those in the far east.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I used to work in manufacturing industry. It is important to note that during the 1970s its competitiveness declined rapidly under the Labour Administration. There was a shake-out in the 1980s which resulted in vastly improved productivity and rising exports of manufactured goods. I was, in part, involved in that process. The Government's record on manufacturing industry is good and there will be further improvements in the 1990s with increases in productivity and exports.

Mr. Skinner: One can find all sorts of small anecdotal examples. I am talking about the general sweep. There was a massive decline in manufacturing industry in 1981. The hon. Gentleman called it a shake-out, but the truth is that some manufacturing industries never recovered. In the east and west midlands many businesses went under, never to recover.

The recession has achieved something else. Generally, people thought that unemployment happened only in the north, in the Celtic areas of Scotland and Wales and in the heavy industrial areas of the north-east. Many people in the south below the Trent, where many Tory Members of Parliament have their seats, did not fully understand the implications for them when employment reached more than 3 million in 1981. They did not know much about unemployment, although they felt sympathy for the unemployed when they were marching. Now, with the Tory Government having created the deepest recession since the 1930s, the people in the south understand what unemployment means. Every family either has someone within the family or knows of someone who is suffering the effects of unemployment.

That is why there was a sea change in opinion a few weeks ago and why many people from the south joined the miners' march. Many small business men joined it. One stood on the platform with me and said, "I have voted Tory all my life. I have never been on a platform and I don't know what to do because I have never had a microphone in my hand before." However, he managed to splutter out the words, "I'll never vote Tory again because my business is being threatened."

The slump is spreading like a cancer across Britain. The tin-pot measures that the Chancellor announced yesterday are just a flea bite. They will take purchasing power out of the economy. Asking low-paid workers to accept only a 1.5 per cent. pay increase means that they will be unable to spend the money that they should have had, which will lead to an even deeper slump.

Local authorities use many small businesses for the supply of services. The Chancellor said yesterday that there would be a 3 per cent. increase in the money allocated to local authorities, but that is not true. Those authorities have already spent more than was anticipated last year, so that the real increase in allocation will be only 0.5 per cent. With an inflation rate of between 3 and 5 per cent., in reality there will be a massive reduction in the amount of money that local authorities can spend. That will result in a reduction in purchasing power.

Tory Members waved their Order Papers yesterday, but it is a different story this morning. People have woken up to the fact that the Chancellor's statement is not quite what it seemed. Small business men throughout the country have read the small print and found the Government's insurance policy. Once they had read the tabloids, they knew that it was a different story.

If the manufacturing base is to be rescued, something else must be done. I know that this will be controversial, but I shall say it anyway: the Government should introduce import controls. If we are to plan our internal economy, there must be a limit on how far we can refuse to plan it externally. I accept that some of my hon. Friends take a different view, as do the tin-pot Liberal Democrats who rescued the Government when they were in dire trouble. I certainly do not need any lectures from them.

As a socialist, I have always believed in planning the economy. If the strong are to help the weak, there needs to be both a regional and a national plan to achieve that. I have always thought it odd that some in the Labour movement who share my philosophical views shy away from admitting that if we are to plan the internal economy we must plan it externally, as far as that is possible. Of course, we cannot plan everything externally, but we can have an effect.

When people say to me, "Stop the import of coal", I ask, "Does that apply to other manufactured goods as well?" They say, "Oh no." Is not that funny? Some 19·6 million tonnes of coal were imported into Britain last year, which resulted in the loss of 19 pits and 19,000 jobs. Can that continue? Most people say, "Cut coal imports." I believe that there should be controls across the whole of the economy and it is high time that the Government took that on board.

It would also help British businesses, large and small, if exchange controls were reintroduced. After the Tories were elected in 1979, we were told that they could not be introduced because of the Common Market and all that rubbish. Is not that funny? On black Wednesday, the Chancellor, instead of giving £10 billion to those in need and to help boost the economy, threw that money at the stock exchange. The City financiers, who are represented by many Tory Members, lined their pockets. One of them said that he had picked up £2 million in three hours. In total, the country probably lost about £2 billion. The other £8 billion might come back to Britain, but we lost £2 billion through having to buy back the pound at a lower rate because of the devaluation.

Exchange controls should be introduced. Following black Wednesday, three countries in the Common Market did just that, yet we had been told that that was impossible within Common Market rules. If the economy is to be planned for the benefit of the people, exchange controls must be reintroduced.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): The hon. Gentleman has been a regular visitor to my constituency over the years. Has he ever told the ferry workers in Dover that he wants import controls that would restrict the freight imports that support most of the ferry industry and provide revenue? Has he told them that exports would be lost because the continent would not take our exports if we imposed import controls?

Mr. Skinner: I have heard that story before. People say that if we impose import controls other countries will retaliate. How could Germany retaliate when our balance of payments deficit with that country is so high? Germany is doing very well out of Britain—it is even selling us some of its coal at £110 a tonne, when Britain can produce it for less than £40 tonne. I do not believe all that nonsense. It is the same with Japan. The Japanese sell more goods to us than we sell to them. They have some fancy ideas to stop imports—for example, they will not import some oranges because they say that they are too big for Japanese stomachs. There are all sorts of regulations. I do not believe that nonsense. I would say to those people down at Dover that if they accept my policy the result will be that we will export more and get more trade and business. I know that the Tories believe in the philosophy of market forces; I do not.

I remind Tory Members that what the Chancellor did yesterday was to intervene a little—not much, just a little. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), who is a keen market forces philosopher, agrees with some of the little efforts to intervene. Does he? He is not sure. I do not know whether he is nodding or shaking his head. Perhaps he is after a job. He may think that if he says the wrong thing here he will not get a job.

We have already ruled out the hon. Member for Colchester, North, who moved the motion. He put his foot in it by not praising the Chancellor in his half-hour speech. Now the hon. Member for Dover is not sure what he ought to do. He knows that there will be a reshuffle shortly. He knows that small-business-type Tory Members will be shuffled on to the Front Bench. About five Cabinet Ministers will get the chop. I think that they should all go, but it is generally reckoned that about five of them are in serious trouble.

There is a battle royal between those who want to get rid of the right wing of the Cabinet and some who want to get rid of the left wing of the Cabinet—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) says that he is one of those, so he must be after a job as well. However, he has not praised the Chancellor either.

We are talking about small business. We are talking about the small business of the Government because they are operating on only a small business level. The country is going down the pan and the manufacturing base is being destroyed daily. There is talk of shutting another 30-odd pits, which will result in many more people losing their jobs. It is high time that we had a change of Government so that we can start planning the economy instead of having pay freezes and pay cuts for low-paid workers. Low-paid workers are having to carry the can for this nasty little Government. It is time that we had a Government who will look after workers, not the bosses.

10.41 am

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I had intended to welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was making a speech in the Chamber instead of what we are used to hearing—the daily soundbite. However, in view of the interminable length of his speech, I find it difficult to welcome it. Perhaps the hon. Member was trying to make up for the lack of time that he spends on Committees. I am not sure when he last served on a Standing Committee that considered a major Bill.

Mr. Skinner: It was last year on the Coal Industry Bill. I have never been opposed to serving on Standing Committees; I oppose the sloppy consensus of Select Committees.

Mr. Riddick: I wonder how many Committees the hon. Gentleman has served on in the past five or six years.

Mr. Skinner: When I first became a Member, I was anxious to understand the procedures of the House—

Mr. Riddick: I asked about the past five or six years.

Mr. Skinner: I volunteered to serve on the Committee that considered a housing Bill. Consideration of that Bill lasted for six months. One week we went Upstairs on Monday morning at 10.30 and sat until Friday afternoon. I never left the building for a whole week and never put my mac on in the cloakroom—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. It might be a good idea to get back to the debate on small business.

Mr. Riddick: I know that it was a mistake. I gave the hon. Member for Bolsover an opportunity to continue his rant. He gave the game away when he said that he was talking about the general sweep of things. He showed today that he is not good at talking about detail.

I was absolutely appalled at the hon. Gentleman's attack on British Coal Enterprise. It was absolutely disgraceful. British Coal Enterprise does a good job of trying to create new job opportunities in the mining industry. The hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself for that attack.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) was too modest by half. I congratulate him on an extremely good and able speech. He pinpointed several serious problems which confront small businesses. He referred to the problem of late payment. There is no easy solution to that problem. However, we all hear about it from our small businesses.

My hon. Friend referred to the problem of fraudulent directors and the problems caused to small businesses by banks. Some banks have a minimum lending rate of about 8 per cent. As we reduce interest rates to below 8 per cent., banks will not be able to reduce the interest rates that they charge their small businesses. I hope that the banks will be able to do something about that. Indeed, there are signs that the banks are doing something. This week, Natwest announced that it is trying to address that particular problem.

I should like to apologise to the House and to my hon. Friend the Minister for having to leave early; I need to get back to my constituency in Yorkshire. I am sorry that I shall miss the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister, because he always gives a scintillating performance. His speeches are usually brilliant.

I agree with the hon. Member for Bolsover on one matter—the need to address the problem of unemployment. It is small businesses which will create the new employment that we all want to see. New employment will not come from the big companies; big companies tend to shed labour. I fear that that process will continue.

When I had a proper job, I worked for Coca-Cola and Schweppes. That company has built a new canning factory near Wakefield. It employs about 200 people to produce the same number of canned drinks as were produced previously by 1,800 people in other factories. That is a massive productivity gain. However, it shows what happens to employment.

Small businesses are vital to the economy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North said, there are

[Mr. Riddick]

about 5 million small businesses in Britain. They employ a third of the private sector work force and produce almost a quarter of the total United Kingdom turnover. Small businesses have been one of the success stories of this Government.

Between 1979 and 1990, 1·5 million more people became self-employed. In 1978, under the last Labour Government, small business closures exceeded start-ups by 100 a week. By 1989, after 10 years of a Conservative Government, start-ups exceeded closures by 1,700 a week. The manufacturing sector grew strongly. There was a pattern of sluggish long-term growth between 1963 and 1979. The number of manufacturing firms increased by 1,500 per annum, or 30 a week. Between 1979 and 1990 the increase was 5,000 a year, or 100 a week. Obviously, that is good news.

That good news did not happen by accident; it was the result of the Government changing the climate. The Conservative Government made it worth while for people to work hard and be successful. They reduced income tax and reformed capital taxation. They reformed inheritance tax so that people who wanted to work hard could pass on the fruits of their work to their children. We reformed the corporate taxation structure so that small businesses were not penalised for making profits.

Over the years, the Government have introduced several schemes, including the business expansion scheme, the enterprise allowance scheme and the loan guarantee scheme. It is amazing how many people took advantage of the enterprise allowance scheme and started small businesses, even though it provided only £40 a week to unemployed people. The scheme has certainly been a great success.

In my constituency of Colne Valley, the textile industry has been in serious long-term decline for many years. Yet in the past few years, many new jobs have been created, not by big firms or Government Departments relocating to Huddersfield or Colne Valley but by small firms starting up and individuals seeking to make their own way in life. There are lots of old mills in my constituency which have been converted into small workshop units and in which a lot of small businesses are situated. The most vital task is to create the right economic climate.

The Government encouraged enterprise, kept inflation low, controlled public spending, sustained moderate taxation and created freer and more open markets.

Things started to go wrong when we played around with the exchange rate mechanism. I believe that the ERM is at the root of the recession. It all started in 1987-88 with my noble Friend Lord Lawson, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, who started to shadow the deutschmark, and we joined—it seemed for good—in 1990. I did not support that decision, and in a vote in the House I quietly abstained. I did not support the ERM then, and I do not do so now.

The lesson is that when a Conservative Government, the Labour party, Liberal Democrats, Trades Union Congress, Confederation of British Industry, Treasury and the Foreign Office all agree on a particular course of action, one can be sure that it is the wrong one. The ERM has proved to be a very big mistake. Interest rates were kept too high over the past six to 12 months to maintain Britain's position within the ERM.

I view 16 September not as black Wednesday but as golden Wednesday—the day when the Government and the British people were provided with fresh opportunities. I find it frustrating that company directors cannot resist the lure of the exchange rate mechanism because of their desire for stable currencies. In a MORI poll conducted a week after black Wednesday, main board directors were asked whether the pound should be allowed to float freely. At that time, 48 per cent. said that it should. Two weeks ago, the directors were asked the same question, but the figure had fallen to 30 per cent. It appears that many directors have short memories. They ought to bear in mind the wider implications of fixed exchange rates.

Mr. Jenkin: May I reinforce my hon. Friend's point about the opinions of businessmen? Does my hon. Friend recall that during the 1970s the Confederation of British Industry advised Governments that it would be unwise to legislate on industrial relations? The perceived wisdom of the CBI is not necessarily justified by history.

Mr. Riddick: It is important to maintain today's climate of opinion, which is one of some hostility to fixed exchange rates and to rejoining the ERM. We must encourage business leaders not to take us down that road again—and we must persuade our colleagues in the Government not to do so.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has set out clear monetary indicators, which he will follow. Just as we were able to control money supply and inflation in the 1980s by paying attention to monetary indicators, we can do so again in the 1990s. After all, the Germans do not look to exchange rates so much as to their domestic monetary situation in deciding interest rate levels.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): Will the hon. Gentleman clarify that point by his own definitions, does he unreservedly condemn the profligacy and incompetence of the Chancellor's actions on 16 September, in attempting to keep Britain within the ERM?

Mr. Riddick: I explained that I do not support the ERM—but once we joined it, we were obliged to try to make it work. I was relieved when we came out of the ERM, because that provided the opportunities to reduce interest rates. The Government's economic policy is now on the right track. We have reduced interest rates. They have fallen from 10 to 7 per cent. over the past seven to eight weeks, which will help businesses to invest, consumers and mortgage holders—and that must be good news.

I also welcome yesterday's autumn statement. I ask the hon. Member for Bolsover to note my belief that it was an excellent statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, who is providing help for those sectors of the economy that need it—the wealth creators. Unless wealth is produced in the first place, the Government cannot spend on schools, hospitals and other public services. My right hon. Friend was right to increase first year capital allowances, which will also help industry and encourage investment, and the abolition of car tax will assist the motor industry.

Tight control of public spending is vital, and I hope that we will hold to the figure of £244 billion over the next year. I am so pleased to note also that spending on education is to increase. Education is of crucial importance and I am pleased to see that its budget was not cut. I trust that there will be a massive increase in grant-maintained schools because the better the education that people receive, the better will be their prospects for the economy of the future.

The difficult times have led to more calls from some quarters for the Government to have an industrial policy. I view these calls with some foreboding. Although I believe that the Government should be in the business of helping industry, I dread any return to the days when the Government tried to pick winners—when politicians and civil servants attempted to determine long-term strategies to conquer particular industrial sectors.

Industry should be calling for the kind of industrial strategy in which the Government take practical steps in areas where they are directly involved. We saw that in yesterday's autumn statement. The Government should also be reducing paperwork and red tape and establishing a hands-on approach by British embassies to help exporters. We should also be changing the culture in schools, so that manufacturing is viewed more favourably. The chattering classes, who tend to support the Labour party, talk of the importance of manufacturing industry—but, my God one thing that they do not want is for their children to work in it. We must also tackle, although there is no easy answer, the scourge of small businesses—late payment.

I was interested to read the press release on the paper issued by the Institute of Directors calling for the abolition of a number of licences. That would be a useful step. The institute referred to the licensing of late night cafes, driving instructors, ear piercing and tattooists, scrap metal dealers, private hire care operators, seafarers employment agencies, game dealers and entertainment booking offices. There is a whole host of licences that would be scrapped. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Quite apart from licences, does he agree that there was nothing in yesterday's statement to help small businesses. In due course would he care to justify the iniquitous uniform business rate in the context of small firms?

Mr. Riddick: If a 1 per cent. cut in interest rates does not help small businesses, I do not know what will. Interest rates have been cut by 3 per cent. over the past few weeks so that is obviously a great help. There were a whole host of other measures as well.

I was intrigued by the licences highlighted by the IOD that are issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The institute suggested that among the licences that should be abolished are those for the approval of a bull as a semen donor, the processing of bovine semen, the supply of bovine semen, running a bovine semen shop and farm storage of bovine semen. There are licences for all those processes. If the institute has its way, bulls will have a field day. There may be good reasons for some of the licences that I mentioned, but I hope that the Government will be able to scrap a number of them.

Many businesses are also concerned by the introduction and increasing stringency of fire regulations. A small retail business in my constituency has been plagued by the West Yorkshire fire authority in connection with regulations, and I think that my hon. Friend the Minister should examine the position.

I hope that my hon. Friend will report on the success of the deregulation unit in the Department of Trade and Industry. I think that, in future, we should examine every piece of legislation that comes out of every Department and to see what effect it will have on industry, whether it will provide more controls and give industry more work to do. If the answer is yes, we should think twice about whether the legislation is necessary. As we all know, the Food Safety Act 1990 has imposed more regulation and red tape on small shops and businesses in our constituencies, and environmental measures have had a similar effect. In my part of the world, the textile industry has been particularly badly hit by such measures.

I am certain of one thing: we cannot rely on the Labour party. Labour does not understand small businesses and entrepreneurs. It wants to load industry with costs through the social charter; it has opposed all our changes and reductions in capital taxes. Its spending plans would necessitate massive rises in personal and corporate taxation, and, as we know, a Labour Government failed industry and small businesses.

The Conservatives understand private enterprise, free markets and small businesses. We understand the agony that some businesses have experienced as a result of the recession. That is why we want to recreate the right economic conditions—conditions that include low inflation, moderate taxation, well-controlled public spending, minimum regulation and policy stability. Following our withdrawal from the ERM and yesterday's autumn statement, I am confident that we are recreating the conditions that brought us success in the 1980s, and I believe that we can achieve similar success in the 1980s.

11.2 am

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Two aspects of the speech that we have just heard gave me cause for concern. First, although I have no real problem with the idea that licences should be continually reviewed and updated, the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) seemed to imply that we should return to the bad old days before the introduction of factory Acts, environmental protection measures and so forth. Such legislation was introduced not out of a malicious desire to interfere, but to ensure that "clean" processes operated and that account was taken of the need to be good neighbours and provide safe working conditions. If the Conservative vision of free enterprise involves deregulation to dismantle those conditions, I do not think that it is the kind of future that many people wish to see. When we tear up regulations, we should be careful not to tear up those that were introduced for good reasons.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman's peroration about the Conservatives' understanding of small businesses would be a little more acceptable if the present climate were different. After 13 years of Conservative Government, more small businesses are failing than at any time in our history. That is not a spectacularly successful record or one that makes many small business people feel that they are benefiting from a Conservative regime. Indeed, all too many of them are suffering from the concentration of economic power that the Government have brought about, and from their failure to recognise the need for a level playing field to enable small businesses to compete, thrive and grow rather than being gobbled up and squeezed out of operation by the predatory nature of big business.

Mr. Riddick: I accept that many small businesses are going out of operation, but that is not just because of the recession; it is also because the Government have brought

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about the creation of so many new businesses—a record number. More new small businesses are being created every week than are going out of operation. That did not happen under the Lib-Lab pact in 1977-78.

Mr. Bruce: As a matter of fact it did, but for a different reason. As a direct result of our insistence, there was a Cabinet Minister for small businesses at that time.

I was coming to the point that the hon. Gentleman raised. I believe that people with enterprise and ideas who want to run businesses should be actively encouraged to do so. They face a number of restrictions and difficulties at present, and the Government should act positively to end those difficulties. Before exulting in the hon. Gentleman's claim that more and more small businesses are being formed and citing it as a demonstration of enterprise, we should examine that claim a little more closely—even if it is statistically true.

At a time of massive business failures, cuts and closures, trying to find a way of earning a living through the creation of small businesses may be the only way forward for those who have been made redundant or unemployed. Too many such people, however, are ill-prepared and ill-financed; they know nothing of the area of business that they plan to enter, and therefore they are almost doomed to failure. We must recognise that that is not a particularly dynamic and successful part of the economy.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) spoke of the effect of pit closures on many mining communities. The same applies to the reduction of employment in manufacturing in many parts of the United Kingdom. The fact is that people with considerable experience and skills in factory or coal mining work may not immediately translate into successful entrepreneurs. Some do, of course, but it is unrealistic to expect all of them to—and they certainly cannot do so without a great deal more practical help and support than they currently receive.

In the context of the autumn statement, the main problem for the whole business community is a lack of confidence. It is too early to deduce that, following black Wednesday, we have a completely new economic policy that will transform the economy. The fall in interest rates may look very good in the short run, and of course many people will welcome it; but so many people have suffered so severely that a number of them will be helped only to repay some of the debt that they have accumulated, rather than to invest for the future.

Exporters—traders in general, in fact—must judge the likely stability and predictability of exchange rates over time. We tend to forget that many manufacturers have to import raw materials. It is extremely difficult for them to absorb a 20 per cent. increase in costs in the space of a few weeks during a recession, but the Government do not seem to understand that.

Even manufacturers who may see a prospect of an easier export market must accept that in the time that it takes them to get their products on to the market and to be paid, the exchange rate may move in the opposite direction. Similarly, the current interest rate reductions may not be sustained if there is severe pressure on the pound. It will be some months, at least, before there is sufficient confidence that the climate is stable enough to lead to a substantial increase in new investment. I think that some Conservative Members are becoming carried away by their enthusiasm for the post-ERM position and are refusing to acknowledge the existence of real uncertainties that are likely to last for some time.

I wish to concentrate on the problems of cash flow and indebtedness. I believe that—contrary to the rather optimistic assertions made by the hon. Member for Colchester, North. (Mr. Jenkin)—the banks, having been squeezed by recession, are now intensifying the squeeze on many small businesses to protect their own interests. The practices of many banks are reprehensible and should be investigated; codes of practice need to be altered radically.

A constituent of mine has suffered considerably at the hands of one of the Scottish banks—admittedly, partly owing to problems of his own making. It is now four years since his farm was forced into liquidation; during that period, he has faced enormous difficulties in trying to establish that the bank, having sequestrated his assets, disposed of them in a way that showed a proper duty of care to him and to other creditors in the business.

My constituent had not just a farm but a mineral extraction quarry on the farm that had generated substantial revenue before his farm was sequestered. He had it independently valued at between £1 million and £4 million. After sequestration, the bank put the farm on the market but placed no valuation on the mineral deposits, which could have made all the difference, not only to whether my constituent got anything out of the process but to whether his creditors got anything out of it. All that the bank cared about was to obtain enough money to cover its debt. It was prepared, therefore, to sell the farm at below its full market valuation.

I do not believe that banks should be allowed to behave in that manner. There should be some means of testing whether they have demonstrated a duty of care not just to their shareholders but to other creditors. Banks always take the first charge on any business but do not always exercise it in what I regard as a responsible way. Most hon. Members and most businesses have no idea what the real bank interest rate is or what the real bank charges are. If we sat down and worked it out, we might be astonished at how much the banks are taking from us without even the courtesy of telling us how much it amounts to, or why, or when.

Last month, I received the annual letter from my bank in which it said that it was renewing the arrangements that had been provided for the previous year. I am led to believe that £35 will be deducted from next month's account—the bank's charge for the privilege of sending me that letter. That is an outrageous practice.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman ought to bank with the Co-op.

Mr. Bruce: As a matter of fact, I bank partly with the Co-op.

Mr. Skinner: It does not make those charges.

Mr. Bruce: No, it does not. I do not bank exclusively with the Co-op——

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman should.

Mr. Bruce: I may take the hon. Gentleman up on that. He will be disappointed, however, to know that the Liberal Democrats and the Co-operative bank have an extremely good and close working relationship, as a party. I agree that the Co-operative bank has qualities that other banks do not enjoy. The reality, however, is that most banks have introduced charges and vary the interest rate levels that they charge in circumstances which, in my view, do not benefit small businesses. That is leading to an increasing chorus of dissent.

An article in the Financial Money Guardian states:

> "Hold it—this is a stick-up!"

The stick-up is by the banks of their customers for the charges that they have introduced. In the past, banks have lent imprudently. During the great "triumphs" of the Thatcher years, they put money into property developments which have now gone sour. They put more money into third world lending and third world contracts which have not been honoured. Millions of small businesses here are paying for those bad decisions by the banks. Probably everybody with a bank account is now paying for Canary Wharf and third world debt by means of their interest charges. That is unacceptable.

Mr. Skinner: They got tax relief on it.

Mr. Bruce: They may have got tax relief on it, but they sustained the losses and those losses were passed on to their customers being overcharged by as much as 3 per cent., and in some cases more than that. An investigation is taking place to try to find out who has been overcharged and whether they should be repaid.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman has been knocking the banks. I am the last person to rush to their defence, but I thought that the policy of the Liberal Democrats was to encourage lending to the third world. As the hon. Gentleman attacked the banks for lending to the third world, it strikes me that he is trying to have his cake and eat it.

Mr. Bruce: That is a different subject. The way in which lending to the third world is conducted is inappropriate. We do not approve of much of that lending. The big corporations have diverted money into projects that have often been environmentally damaging and have not helped poorer people. Consequently, those projects have gone sour. We are certainly in favour of increasing aid and lending to the third world, but the way in which that lending is structured is unacceptable. I am not prepared to stand up and say that farmers in my constituency should be bankrupted because the bank involved has misjudged its lending elsewhere, either in the City of London or in the third world. Those losses should be carried by the shareholders, not by the customers. I was trying to highlight that injustice.

Many small businesses are locked into deals with the banks by means of a minimum lending rate that is not geared to the banks' minimum lending rate, to ensure that in the present climate, when the minimum lending rate is coming down, the banks' margins go up. Banks should be obliged to pass on any benefit they get to their customers, especially their small business customers.

Many Conservative Members claim that they know about business and imply that the Opposition do not. I have run a small business. When I went to see the bank manager before setting it up to discuss with him what arrangements I could make, and on what terms, the first thing he said to me was, "How much is your house worth?" He never looked at my business plan. He said, "I do not understand your business; I am not interested in your business plan. I am only interested in how much your house is worth." He then got me to sign a personal guarantee for the full amount of the offer, but, because I was setting up a new business, he charged me a premium rate of interest on the fully secured loan. I do not regard that as risk taking. I regard that as robbery.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Extortion.

Mr. Bruce: Yes, absolute extortion; yet that is the way the banks behave every day.

As it was a publishing business, I needed to acquire some publishing and word processing equipment. The suppliers said to me, "As you are a new business, we shall extend no credit to you. We want a bank letter of credit up front before we will deliver the machines." Every way one turns, one is faced with increased costs, compared with those of established, larger businesses. One is squeezed by the bank and the suppliers. No wonder many businesses find it extremely difficult to get off the ground. I should point out that my business was not one of those that failed. I have no connection whatever with it now, but that small business is successful. However, the way in which the business was launched very nearly took us over the edge in the first two years. We had no help from big business or from the banks.

I wholly support the action group that has been formed, consisting of people who have suffered as a result of the banks' actions. It is to make detailed proposals. They ought to be taken fully into account. I hope that the Government will listen to those people. Legislation on the late payment of debt, particularly by big businesses, will have to be introduced. In a recession, too many big businesses decide that they are going to survive at the expense of their small business customers. That is unacceptable and is not in the national economic interest.

Mr. Dowd: In the light of those remarks, how does the hon. Gentleman regard the attitude of many companies —that systematic late payment is, in their eyes, very prudent cash management?

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. In its early days, Tesco financed its expansion entirely by that process. For a large business simply to delay payment—which may add up to millions of pounds—to a range of suppliers by an extra two to four weeks is a very substantial cash advantage. That is why I believe that people who say that that is bad and ought to be stopped will have no effect. I do not see how it can be stopped other than by legislation that leads to automatic interest surcharges on late payment.

Mr. Couchman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that many small businesses, whether or not they establish proper trading terms with their major contractors, are loth to take action against them because those contractors may be their only customer, or at least their main customer? If the small businesses press too hard for payment, they may find that they are set to one side by the main contractor, with the result that another firm benefits.

Mr. Bruce: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I have been in that situation. Companies cannot afford to offend their main suppliers—they cannot bite the hand that feeds. Payment should be by agreed terms and any delay should be subject to an automatic surcharge. I cannot see any other way of reversing the process.

Unfortunately, one or two hon. Members, have been disparaging of local authorities' role in developing small

[Mr. Bruce]

businesses. Local authorities play a useful role in helping to promote and assist small businesses, not least because they have local knowledge that other agencies cannot bring to bear. Gordon district council's economic development unit has been able to provide practical, down-to-earth assistance to many small businesses, which have acknowledged to me that that has sometimes made the difference between weathering a storm and achieving expansion. It is not always a matter of money; sometimes the unit can guide small businesses through red tape or the way in which planning applications are dealt with. Those applications can be processed either in a way that is helpful or in a way that can destroy business. Sensitivity and understanding are critical.

District and regional councils in my area have stepped in when companies have got into financial difficulties and have offered practical assistance by taking over premises and leasing them back, releasing capital to restructure the business. It is a risk and it does not always work, but on balance the community has benefited through businesses and jobs being saved and, subsequently, jobs being created. If the Government do not recognise the role of local authorities or squeeze them so that they are unable take such action, no other agency is likely to step in and fill the gap. The role of local authorities should be acknowledged and recognised.

Mention has been made of the venture capital or risk capital gap facing small businesses. This is a particular hobby-horse of mine. I believe that it is a very genuine problem and some imaginative measures are necessary to deal with it. I have explained why the banking sector is failing many small businesses. It is not providing the support that they need and it is imposing charges that can prove fatal and are contrary to creating a healthy business climate.

Often small businesses are expected to provide finance from resources wholly secured against the personal capital of the individuals involved, yet they are in markets where bigger businesses can get wholly unsecured capital at more competitive rates. Small businesses have to have some additional advantage—the imagination of their product, which gives them a competitive edge, the hours that they are prepared to work or some other factor. There should be access to capital funding that is assessed properly on the basis of the commercial risk but is not always fully secured by the personal investment of principals in the company.

The Chancellor acknowledged yesterday that the problems in the housing market are a significant source of the lack of confidence in the economy. Over the years, many small businesses have financed their expansion on the basis of the security of the bricks and mortar of their principals. We must find a better way of financing small businesses, because in a recession, when the value of property falls and often the equity in a property falls below the borrowing secured against it, banks are not willing to lend and company directors are not willing to take the risk of borrowing against that lack of security. We shall have to re-inject confidence in the housing market over a significant period before getting out of this hole, but in the meantime we must look for a mechanism that will provide risk capital to small businesses without requiring the security of a house to be put on the line. Banks must recognise that that will secure a successful, thriving small business economy, to the benefit of the whole of our society and big and small businesses alike.

If we do not act now, the recession will go on longer because there is a lack of confidence to invest in the future, and I am afraid to say that lower interest rates are not enough to resolve that. I hope that the Government will recognise that if ever there was an opportunity to introduce less secured risk capital for small business, this is it. If they can bring that forward in the next year, they may begin to get business confidence going and small businesses thriving again.

11.25 am

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on securing this debate on small businesses. As chairman of the Back-Bench Conservative small businesses committee, I welcome his appointment as secretary of the committee; I know that it will prosper with him as its secretary.

I apologise for the fact that, because I have to attend my constituency advice bureau, I shall have to leave before the winding-up speeches. I enjoy the speeches of my hon. Friend the Minister, and I shall make a great effort to read his interesting speech on Monday in the *Official Report*.

The importance of the small business sector has been highlighted by Conservative Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North mentioned the significant employment gains that have been made by the small business sector. Even in the depths of recession, there are some 400,000 business starts each year. We may ask why, and the answer is that, just as people want to own their own homes, they want to start their own businesses.

We must continue to encourage small business men and women. If society's values are right, no one should receive greater applause from the public than the business man or women who meets the pay cheque at the end of the week or month. Meeting the pay cheque is a great skill which should be widely respected and well rewarded.

Sadly, there is little or no encouragement from the Labour party. We were entertained by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), but in his 40-minute speech he did not mention the word "profits". He criticised the education system, and I accept that he knows what a good education is. Indeed, he had one at grammar school. But, I wonder, would the hon. Member join me in arguing that our education system should include small businesses as a subject on the curriculum?

I also wonder why the hon. Member for Bolsover is now advocating import controls. His advocacy is significant, because he turned Labour party policy on Europe in the past few weeks and managed to make it vote against the Maastricht Bill. He alone did that. What he advocates today becomes Labour party policy tomorrow. Perhaps import controls will be Labour policy, if not tomorrow perhaps by the end of next week.

Mr. Jenkin: Labour will vote against GATT.

Mr. Shaw: The Labour party may vote against the GATT agreements.

I enjoy the possibility of facing my electorate in Dover knowing that I can say that the Labour party wants to impose import controls, which would damage the ferry industry of Dover tremendously. I am grateful that the hon. Member for Bolsover has come out today with what should be true Labour party policy.

We should be depressed if we looked at the Labour party manifestos of 1979, of 1983 and of 1987. I cannot find there any mention of small businesses or any advocacy of support for them. In the 1992 manifesto, the Labour party mentioned small businesses, but we know that Labour promised support for everything in a manifesto that was long on promises and short on credibility.

I could not find any mention of profits in any Labour manifesto or in any other Labour document. I invite hon. Members to say whether they have ever heard a Labour party spokesman explain why business needs to earn profits. Have hon. Members ever heard a Labour party spokesman ask or answer the question about how businesses earn profits?

Mr. Jenkin: I recall a Labour party document on the economy which criticised the level of profitability in some British businesses on the ground that it added to inflation. Can anyone imagine the logic of criticising the profits made by big businesses on the ground that they add to inflation? What a distorted sense of priority the Labour party must have.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is correct. To the Labour party, profits mean inflation. Any business man or anyone who understands business knows that approximately one third of profits goes to the Government in tax, approximately one third goes into investment, and approximately one third is retained by the business for working capital and for future expansion. Without profits, we have no businesses.

If the Labour party cannot utter the P word—profits—how can it have a policy on business or on small business? Why do Labour spokesmen never explain to their supporters the need to earn profits? Is it because the Labour party's foundations are still firmly based on a bedrock of envy? For a Labour party politician to go to Labour party meetings and to argue the case that businesses need profits and must make profits might offend the base of the Labour party's support.

I will refer to the Government's many achievements in connection with small businesses. The 1980s were a successful period for small businesses. There were low income tax rates, there were incentives to start and to expand small businesses, and there were incentives to invest. The business expansion scheme and venture capital finance meant that far more finance was available for small businesses. It is important that many of those policies are continued and that finance is readily available for small businesses in the 1990s.

The Government recently raised the VAT threshold and many small businesses, especially the really tiny ones such as the guest houses in my contituency, could become VAT-free. That has been immensely helpful to the really small guest houses in Dover and in other areas.

Small shopkeepers have had the deferral of the increase in uniform business rate this year. That deferral has been popular in Dover and Deal, and in other constituencies where there are many shopkeepers.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): How does the hon. Gentleman respond to the fact that the Government have just announced that the maximum uniform business rate poundage is to be levied next year? Will that not be far more significant for many small businesses than anything in the autumn statement yesterday?

Mr. Shaw: All small businesses have to pay a certain amount in taxation. There is no question but that there must be a contribution to local services. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, whose party always advocates massive expenditure in public services and in local councils, accepts that we have to raise some finance from small businesses. However, the deferral this year has meant a one-off, significant improvement in the cash flow of small businesses. Although I should love another deferral next year, I am a realist. The public expenditure position is such that we shall have to ask small businesses to make that contribution next year.

Mr. Cousins: Is the hon. Gentleman telling the House that he is happy that a small business in his constituency which pays the uniform business rate will help to subsidise the introduction of the council tax? Does he see that as a right use of small businesses and their incomes?

Mr. Shaw: I pointed out to the hon. Gentleman that there has been a one-off deferral this year which has benefited small businesses immensely. Next year, small businesses will not see an increase in the proportion that they will donate to the totality of the expenditure towards the council tax. The Treasury will find the resources to support the council tax from other sources and not from the uniform business rate, which will not go up by more than inflation.

The Government, through the Local Government Finance Act 1988—I was a member of the Committee that debated the Bill—capped for the first time the maximum that small businesses would have to pay in annual increases to the level of inflation. That was very significant. It was Labour councils that squeezed small businesses with 60 per cent. increases in rates. Opposition Members cannot support Labour councils that increased rates for small businesses by 60 per cent. The Government have now ensured that the uniform business rate cannot go up by more than the level of inflation, whereas Labour councils introduced real increases.

Mr. Cousins: I should very much welcome the hon. Gentleman's travelling from Dover to Newcastle to explain to my small business constituents why they will have to wait another eight years for the full benefit of the rate revaluation that accompanied the introduction of the uniform business rate. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could encourage the Government to move a little faster.

Mr. Shaw: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am prepared to speak to any suffering small business man in a Labour constituency and to explain why he should vote Conservative and why he should stay with the Conservative party.

Another Government achievement is that, for the first time, they have tried to tackle the issue of late payment. It is a difficult and sensitive area. If the matter is mishandled in the private sector, it could result in many small businesses losing business and contracts. The Government have been responsible in insisting on prompt payment by their contractors to sub-contractors. That means that there will be a greater emphasis on big companies making prompt payments.

[Mr. Shaw]

I also congratulate the Government on the introduction of one-stop shops. Please may I have one in Dover, and please may we ensure that one-stop shops are introduced all over the place as soon as possible?

Conservative Members have been challenged to say that we support the Chancellor and his autumn statement. I said that I did in every media opportunity yesterday and I say so again in the House. I greatly regret that I was not called yesterday by Madam Speaker. Many Conservative Members wanted to speak so that they could say that they supported what the Chancellor had done.

Forty per cent. capital allowances are very good news. For the past two years, I have advocated the inclusion of such a measure in Finance Bills and I shall continue to advocate that the allowance should be retained. The interest rate reduction to 7 per cent. is very good news for small businesses. The maintenance for capital expenditure on schools, on the roads programme and on the health programme is very good news. Small businesses will benefit from that.

My only regret about the autumn statement is that the poor media were wound up to expect really bad news. Their computer systems were rolling and the words were already on the screens from which the broadcasters read in the expectation of delivering bad news. How could they deliver bad news when we have a 1 per cent. reduction in interest rates and when all the key capital programmes are retained? The only conceivable bad news was that the public sector payroll would have to be curtailed in the way in which the private sector payroll has been curtailed in the past few years. That was fair news, not bad news.

I have a few suggestions on small businesses for the Government to consider. Red tape is always with us. I should like the Government to abolish red tape for businesses employing five people or fewer.

Mr. Elletson: My hon. Friend is suggesting a few ideas for the Government to consider. Does he agree that tourism plays an important role in the economy that has hitherto not been as widely recognised as it ought to have been? Tourism is also a sector in which small businesses are especially active and on which thousands, if not millions, of people's jobs depend. Does my hon. Friend further agree, therefore, that the Government should consider new ways of supporting and developing the British industry, which is a world-beating, world-class industry and which is experiencing difficult times as a result of the world recession?

Tourism could do with all the extra support that it can get from the Government. We need a proper tourism strategy to assist the English tourist board and other national and regional tourist boards to promote holidays and visits to England and the other countries of the British Isles. Will my hon. Friend join me in urging the Government to consider that question?

Does he also agree——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions are supposed to be brief. I appreciate the fact that the hon. Gentleman is trying to get his point across, but may I ask him to bear that in mind? Mr. Shaw.

Mr. Shaw: I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) to the House, not least as I knew him before he came here. As one would expect, given the constituency that he represents, he is a strong advocate of tourism. Employees, self-employed business men and others employed in the industry in Blackpool, North may be justly proud of their representative's advocacy of their cause, from which they will no doubt benefit. Such is my hon. Friend's enthusiasm that he wanted to make a double intervention.

Mr. Elletson: On that point, does my hon. Friend agree that the withdrawal of grant under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 from England but not from Scotland and Wales has discouraged the development of tourism in England, and that that is something which the Government should reconsider?

Mr. Shaw: I take note of the technical detail that my hon. Friend adduces. There is no question but that any change to the Development of Tourism Act—especially the change that he has assiduously discovered—should be considered carefully by the Government. No doubt this is a matter of considerable concern to my hon. Friend's constituents and he advances a good case for examining that section of the Act and considering whether we can continue to support tourism under it.

I was referring to red tape. I believe that, for businesses employing five or fewer people, the form-filling exercise should be restricted to one day a year, which could be national small businesses form filling day. I recommend that that day should be a bank holiday for large businesses and public sector companies, and hope that those working in such enterprises, who would have no forms to fill, would go to church and pray for the small business men and women as they fill their forms.

On that day, and only on that day, would small business men be required to fill out forms for the Inland Revenue and the VAT man and in respect of statistics collected by the Government. The Inland Revenue and the VAT people should be banned from requiring forms from small business men at any other time of the year.

I repeat that I refer only to really small businesses employing five people or fewer—the businesses that find form filling such a problem. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is keen to abolish the communist May day bank holiday. I suggest that it should be replaced with another socialist, bureaucratic, communist-type bank holdday that would benefit small business men, who will no doubt have the sympathy of those who work in the public sector and large companies who will join together to pray for the health of the small business sector.

Mr. Dowd: The hon. Gentleman is clearly an enthusiastic advocate of small business. Perhaps he can give me some advice. Sainsbury's, which is generally recognised as a well-run and laudable organisation providing good value for money and good service, proposes a major development in Lewisham. That development is bitterly opposed by all the small local businesses, many of which employ fewer than five people. What advice should I give to whom in those circumstances?

Mr. Shaw: If the hon. Gentleman does not know whom to advise and how to represent his constituency interests, he should resign and let a Conservative take the seat.

Mr. Dowd: Is that the hon. Gentleman's advice?

Mr. Shaw: That is my advice to the hon. Gentleman.

Let me commend to the Government an idea about taxes. The first £5,000 of small business profits should be tax free to enable small businesses to pay for audit requirements, if they are limited companies, and for bureaucracy and form filling. That would be the Government's contribution to small business and no doubt would be widely welcomed.

I would also suggest that, until a small business has £100,000-worth of net assets, it should not pay corporation tax. Everyone in the country should have the right to start a business and build it up to a new asset value of £100,000 before having to pay tax. That would provide a secure base and would mean that many more small businesses would survive recessionary and difficult periods. They could survive a major customer going bankrupt and other similar problems that small businesses face.

I repeat that I welcome the 40 per cent. capital allowances, but feel that they should be permanent for all businesses, whether small or large.

I also advocate a potential benefit for small business women and women who work in small businesses. At present, child care facilities—workplace nursery schemes—are available to Whitehall civil servants and to many who work in large companies. Why should child care be available only to the children of bureaucrats and people who work in large companies such as banks? Why cannot we have tax relief for small business women and women who work in small businesses?

More should be done to give tax relief for investment in small enterprises. The business expansion scheme is due to cease operation at the end of this year. I hope that I shall not reveal any confidences if I say that, having attended a dinner at which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was present last night, I have been encouraged to feel that small businesses are on the agenda for next year's Budget. If the Prime Minister can ensure that the Chancellor never allows them to be dropped from that agenda, we shall be very supportive of his Budget next year, as we were of his autumn statement yesterday.

We need a replacement for the business expansion scheme. We should encourage small businesses and improve the climate in which they operate through education. Why cannot the national curriculum include small business? It is all very well teaching English, our native language, and mathematics—and perhaps, on the practical side of mathematics, a little finance—but, as historically we are supposed to be a nation of shopkeepers, why do not we teach small business, one of the nation's historic subjects?

I also believe that the Government have a role in monitoring the banks. Many hon. Members have referred to the increase in margins that the banks have required of small businesses during the recession. That is especially wrong in view of the fact that many of the banks' losses are due to loans to large companies and to the third world.

The training of bank managers can always be improved. It is never of a high enough standard. The Government should require bank chairmen to consider their training policies regularly so that businesses can increasingly borrow money based on their cash flow and not based on the security of people's homes.

I commend to the House the way in which the DTI consultancy scheme is operating. The scheme is very useful, but will my hon. Friend the Minister consider whether it can be further improved? I wrote to a Minister in the DTI recently about a business in my constituency. I did not know at the time that the business was receiving help under the consultancy scheme in respect of quality assurance standard achievement. That was good news, but I had written because the business man had lobbied me to discover whether he could receive help under the marketing consultancy arrangements.

I was disturbed to find that we had supported the business man in respect of quality assurance standards, but when that was achieved he could not be helped in respect of marketing because he had already been helped in one project. If we were to go the whole hog, he would be helped to produce his product to a high quality and would then be helped to market his product in this country and in Europe. The consultancy scheme should be available not just initially to produce products well, but for the second stage to market those products.

The Government have done much to help small businesses, but more can always be done. I argue that more should be done to help small businesses.

11.51 am

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I want to begin by disabusing the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) of some of his illusions and prejudices about the experiences of Opposition Members by declaring an interest. I am a director of a small business which, like many other people, I set up when I faced redundancy five years ago. I have subsequently operated that business through very difficult times and have provided employment for a limited number of people. It continues to operate in these difficult times. That has given me some experience of today's subject for debate.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), who sadly is not in the Chamber at the moment, on his good fortune in securing the debate and on his good judgment in choosing this important subject of small businesses in Britain today.

He was right to emphasise the importance of small businesses in the British economy. They are a substantial component in the economy and will be of increasing importance in changing economic and technological circumstances in which there will be an ever-greater emphasis on creativity, the need for rapid and flexible responses to changing technology and an emphasis on innovation, new ideas and technical solutions to existing problems. Additionally, small businesses are crucial as one of the few options available to people who are losing their jobs in so many areas where large businesses are failing as a result of the tragically damaging recession in which the country is sadly locked at the moment.

However, it is important to flag up two crucial caveats about the context in which small businesses operate. The first is that small businesses cannot, in general, operate in isolation. Many of them are dependent on large businesses in their areas for a significant part of their order books.

There was much discussion in the mid-1980s about the way in which clusters of small businesses developed around large firms. That created a virtuous economic cycle in which small and large businesses contributed to the economic well-being of the area. Sadly, the converse is also true. In areas where the recession is hitting most severely,

[Mr. Nick Raynsford]

there is the contrary phenomenon of small businesses failing because their order books have been hit by the reduction in the work, or even the failure, of larger firms.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) rightly reminded us of the problems facing mining communities at the moment. Many small businesses may fail if the pits close and the main economic lifeblood of the area is no longer available.

The second caveat is obvious. It is the very high failure rate among small businesses and among businesses as a whole. Failures have reached unprecedented levels and we must not overlook the disastrous personal hurt and hardship which flow from that. Many people have invested a life-time's experience and all their savings, and have devoted an inordinate amount of work and personal commitment, into building up a small business. However, they now face the end of their dreams because they cannot keep the company alive in the current tragically difficult circumstances. Where a business has been founded on loans secured against a home, there is an even greater personal problem because people face not just the loss of their business, but the loss of the family home.

In such circumstances, it is important to stress that however crucial small businesses are to the British economy, we cannot look solely to small businesses to pull Britain out of recession. I must disagree with the suggestion of the hon. Member for Colchester, North that the DTI should become a Department for small businesses. There must be a strategic approach to business as a whole. The DTI has an important role to play and we should like to see it playing a more active and interventionist role supporting all types of business—small and large—and acting in our national interests like the equivalent Departments in countries such as France and Japan which act consistently and decisively in the interests of businesses of all sizes to ensure that they can compete successfully in the international market.

Of the detailed concerns raised by the hon. Member for Colchester, North, I want to comment on late payment, VAT and the services provided by the banks. There is no question that late payment is a crucial problem for many small businesses that have tight cash flows. However, from my experience, that problem cannot be attributed uniquely or even disproportionately to late payment by public sector organisations. Some public sector organisations are slow in paying, but so, too, are many private sector organisations. The problem of non-payment and total default is largely found in the private sector. It does not arise in respect of public sector credit.

Measures to encourage and require prompt payment are necessary, but they should be handled sensitively. We should not forget that small businesses can sometimes be slow in making payments if they do not receive what is due to them on time. Delayed payments can be a means of avoiding financial difficulties. There should be measures to ensure and promote prompt payment, but we should not forget that late payment can often be a lifeline to a small business that might otherwise be in difficulty if it had to meet all its bills on the day that they fell due.

I have been surprised by the number of firms that have approached me over the past seven months—since I have been the hon. Member for Greenwich—with serious problems caused by VAT demands. Customs and Excise have pressed rigorously for payment on time, without any concern or sympathy for the practical difficulties facing those firms. When I have taken up such cases—I have taken up several—with Customs and Excise, I have generally received a sympathetic and helpful response from head office. In some cases it has been possible to ensure that pressures are diminished and that agreement is reached with the firm to enable it to pay over a period. At least two firms have been saved from closure and liquidation. That makes sense. It can be in no one's interest, and certainly not in the interest of Customs and Excise, to force a firm into bankruptcy, which would preclude the possibility of outstanding VAT being paid in full and would result in other creditors failing to be paid. Indeed, people who are dependent on the firm would risk losing their jobs or contracts. There is much sense in adopting a more realistic and sensible approach.

When a business is going to fail, that approach may not be appropriate, but where allowing the rescheduling of VAT payments can enable the survival of a business which is otherwise sound and has good prospects of survival it must make sense. We should urge the Government to take a more sympathetic approach, and we should urge Customs and Excise to take a more sympathetic and flexible approach, deal with cases on their merits, and agree to reschedule the payment of VAT when doing so will prevent a firm from going into liquidation.

We also have to promote an entirely different approach by the banks in their treatment of small businesses. How many cases have been brought to hon. Members by small businesses telling us about unacceptable behaviour by the main clearing banks imposing extortionate charges? The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) rightly raised that point in an intervention. From my experience, I can only endorse his point about businesses being charged extortionate rates instead of appropriate and fair rates of interest.

Often, there is a harsh response, leading to the closure of a business when it is in difficulty, by banks which promoted their services by talking about how sympathetic they are, how flexible and understanding they will be, how they will listen to the business and how they will help it in its formative years. However, as soon as the first difficulty arises, the bank turns the screw, reduces the overdraft facility, calls in the loan and forces the business into liquidation. How many cases have involved businesses that were essentially sound but could have continued if the bank had been more realistic, understood short-term cash flow difficulties that businesses face, and been prepared to support those businesses through their difficult time? Sadly, all too often in their attitudes to small businesses, banks display the same short-term thinking and the same lack of understanding of the needs of business and the British economy that they have demonstrated in their lending policy in respect of very much larger ventures.

I believe that we must do all that we can to encourage the banks to avoid that chronic short-termism which has been such a damaging feature of British banking practice and take a more realistic and more sympathetic approach in which there is a closer association with businesses and a greater understanding of their needs and a willingness to support them through difficult times. Not only a code of good practice but a change of attitude is required in relation to banks and small businesses.

The hon. Members for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) and for Dover (Mr. Shaw) are no longer present as they have to visit their constituencies. I, too, have to visit one of the larger businesses in Greenwich this afternoon, so I will not be able to stay until the end of the debate. I apologise to the Minister and to my colleagues on the Front Bench for not being present. I shall be visiting a business which is crucial to the economic well-being of my constituency.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley suggested the removal of requirements to satisfy fire regulations and the hon. Member for Dover advocated the abolition of red tape for businesses employing five people or fewer, which is an entirely inappropriate approach. I do not encourage the proliferation of form-filling and red tape, but there are certain requirements which, in the public interest, must be maintained. Fire safety is absolutely crucial.

I refer to one example. There are a number of small businesses running hotels or houses in which several people are living, often in the most squalid and dangerous conditions. We know about them when a scandal occurs, when a hotel or lodging house burns down. One such incident occurred this year in Hove, causing death or injury to a significant number of people. It is unacceptable to put the public and the people living in such places at risk to try to encourage a few irresponsible entrepreneurs to make more profit.

Mr. Couchman: My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) was not complaining that we need fire regulations and proper inspection; he was complaining about the constant ratchet effect of tightening the regulations, which can result in this year's fire officer's proposals for fire safety being derided by next year's inspector as inadequate and often wrong-headed.

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I was about to make a plea for the tightening up of fire regulations in relation to houses in multiple occupation. The present regulations do not ensure adequate safety for people living in such houses, and the rate of accidents and deaths is unacceptable. Responsible business people and responsible entrepreneurs accept that there must be a proper regulatory framework to deal with the public interest in matters of such importance. As I have said, I do not advocate a plethora of red tape and regulations just for their sake, but in crucial issues such as fire safety we cannot possibly afford to scrimp and reduce standards.

It is important to distinguish between measures that will encourage responsible businesses and responsible entrepreneurs who are going to try to make their profit in a way that provides a genuine service to a high standard to the public and those who are trying to make a profit at the expense of other people, often putting people's lives at risk.

As I have emphasised, small businesses are vital to the needs of the country. More needs to be done to assist and support them. I pay tribute to the imaginative ventures in many parts of the country to encourage and support small businesses. In my constituency of Greenwich, a local enterprise board was set up by the local authority in conjunction with private sector interests. It is a separate company—it is not part of the local authority, but it receives support from it—and it is making important contributions to assisting small businesses and newly established businesses in the area. Advice, training, the provision of small factory units and workshops and assistance on a variety of technical issues are available from that small initiative. I have already seen the value of its work since I became Member of Parliament for Greenwich at the general election.

I am always disappointed when I hear Conservative Members' blanket condemnations of public sector initiatives. We should encourage precisely those initiatives involving the public sector, working in co-operation with the private sector. We should not knock them. I should like a more positive response by Conservative Members to such initiatives which local authorities in great financial difficulty—my local authority is certainly one—are taking to try to help business.

Mr. Dowd: Does my hon. Friend agree that such extremely valuable but none the less discretionary services provided by local authorities in combination with private undertakings are the first to come under threat when local authority budgets are so constrained that they can barely meet their statutory obligations in other sectors?

Mr. Raynsford: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention with which I concur. It would be tragic if such imaginative initiatives were put at risk because authorities face financial difficulties. I am not experienced in the detailed arrangements in Lewisham, but no doubt it is taking similar positive measures to those in Greenwich.

It is important to support and encourage small businesses, but it is an illusion to believe that they alone can solve our economic problems. The measures announced in the autumn statement will be insufficient to generate a full and lasting economic recovery. We need more; we need a real industrial strategy and a strategy for tackling unemployment. As part of that, we need measures that will assist small businesses to grow, to continue in operation and to survive the difficult pressures that they are facing. In some cases they will grow into large businesses, which will contribute more importantly in the future.

12.10 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I liked the speech by the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), which contained some interesting thoughts, many of which could have been expressed by one of my hon. Friends. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman might consider crossing the Floor when he next makes a speech like that, because it contained many things with which Conservative Members would agree.

I hope that I shall be forgiven for not following the speeches of many other hon. Members. Most speeches today have taken about 20 minutes; some have taken about 40. I shall make a short speech, because although other speeches have been interesting and stimulating, mine might be improved by trying to keep to the traditional 10 minutes.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on his skill in winning the debate. Friday debates are always worth while.

I shall home in at once on the subject of red tape and bureaucracy. The centralised bureaucracy of communist regimes did not work and tended to stifle local enterprise. In this country, we have tended to avoid that mistake and have not suffered from the excesses of centralisation and over-bureaucracy; as a result, we have an enterprise culture. In the past decade, as I am sure the hon. Member for Greenwich will agree, I sense that bureaucracy has

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increased and that many more rules and regulations have pulverised and unnecessarily destroyed many small enterprises. Taken alone, new safety, health and security measures may appear sensible and responsible and appear to have little impact on small enterprises, but, when taken together, they can have a crucial impact. During the recession, which we have all been enduring, those rules and regulations bite most and can entirely destroy a small business.

The recession of the early 1970s and 1980s tended to reduce the amount of manufacturing. It rooted out many of the large industries. The hon. Member for Greenwich mentioned its impact on small companies. Out of the slump in the 1970s and 1980s, tens of thousands of small firms sprang up. The Government have encouraged them and promised them better times and it is up to the Government to protect them now when times are bad.

The autumn statement will do much to stimulate the economy, especially in the south-west. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has introduced some excellent macro and micro-economic measures.

I shall now concentrate on the attitude of public officials to private enterprise, which has not been discussed in the debate. That attitude has damaged many of our businesses. Central Government, quangos and local government officials do not always seem to regard enterprise as a flower to be cultivated. Private enterprise is seen as a weed which needs to be rooted out and choked rather than a flower that must bloom. Not only do we seem to pass more regulations here than many other European countries, but our officials pursue those regulations with the vigour and tenacity of a west highland white terrier or a Jack Russell. They are not merely efficient; often they are officious.

I shall cite an example along the lines of the VAT case mentioned by the hon. Member for Greenwich. In Dartmouth, a successful company, Western Approaches Yachts, has been making steel-hulled boats. It employs five skilled men and for four years it paid its VAT on time. It was late for the first time because of the boat show. Not only has the company been told to pay the VAT, but it has been punished with a penalty of £1,200, which is equivalent to the wage bill for one week. The VAT people are inflexible and are not prepared to compromise. Following the experience of the hon. Member for Greenwich, I intend to approach them.

Our job in government should not be to root out and to destroy private enterprises but should be to help them when they are going through a difficult time. Take the uniform business rate. Perhaps it should be adjusted yearly according to a company's profits in the previous year. There should be a relationship between the rate and a company's ability to pay and profitability.

Consider the health and hygiene regulations. Many smaller hotels and guest houses in my constituency cannot afford to introduce them all at once. There were no widespread outbreaks of illness and poisoning before they were introduced, so why must they be implemented so speedily now?

Trago Mills is a fine small retail company situated in Devon and Cornwall, which decided to build new headquarters. The company was told that it could not do so without following the building regulations, which included installing a lift to enable handicapped people to be interviewed for jobs. It cost that company £30,000 to install that lift. Although the company has advertised jobs and has a lift costing £30,000 to take handicapped people to the first floor, it has not received one application. That is a good example of a bad regulation. If the company had not installed the lift, it would not have received permission to build the new offices.

I wish to mention what is happening in the Department of Trade and Industry—a subject mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) and for Dover (Mr. Shaw). There is something called the deregulation unit in the Department. It is buried deep in the Department's corridors—I am not sure where—and, as you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, its job is to consider every statutory instrument and Bill to find out their effects on small industries and businesses. That procedure is called compliance cost assessment.

Mr. Cousins: I am looking forward to pressing the Government on that matter. There are not merely officials, but a whole raft of advisers involved in the operation. There is also an entire structure of committees, chaired by the chairman of Slough Estates, the property company. It would be nice to know what was going on in all those committees, would it not?

Mr. Steen: I should have looked forward to hearing the hon. Gentleman's speech, but for the fact that I, too, must go to my constituency, which is a bit further away than those of other hon. Members who have spoken. I shall read what the hon. Gentleman has to say.

What are those officials doing if they are allowing regulations to be introduced that would cripple small firms? Public officials whose job should be to help small enterprises, should go out of their way to find the means to assist small enterprises and to ensure that new regulations are not passed in Parliament if they would have a negative impact on small business. Many small businesses in the south-west are facing cash flow problems and financial difficulties. Those who are involved in compliance cost assessment are accepting regulations without having any idea of the impact that they will have on small businesses. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to tell us how many of those engaged in CCA have worked in a small business. How many of those people know what they are talking about?

Is my hon. Friend the Minister aware of what the President of the Board of Trade is doing in the EEC? Does he appreciate there is a little group of civil servants that is exactly like the CCA group? It is called the fiche d'impact. Whenever EEC regulations emerge from Brussels, a team of our civil servants considers their impact on small firms in the United Kingdom. I want to know how many of the regulations that have emerged from Brussels over the past two or three years have had a fiche d'impact. If they have all had fiches d'impact, the findings have all been wrong. We all know that EEC regulations disadvantage British industries.

It might help the House if my hon. Friend the Minister were to place in the Library CCAs of all regulations that have been passed in the House since the Government were elected. I hope that we can see the assessments and the regulations that it was considered would not have an impact on small firms. Perhaps the President of the Board of Trade will take similar action in respect of the regulations that stem from the EEC.

It seems wrong that regulations from Europe should be enforced with tremendous enthusiasm, but unilaterally, by our officials in the United Kingdom when in other European countries—especially Greece and Portugal—the same regulations are not enforced at all. Perhaps the most damaging action that we are taking against small firms is enforcing upon them, without regard for the impact that they will have on their profitability, regulations which other European countries are not implementing. If we wish to achieve a level playing field, we should not enforce regulations here until other European countries enforce the same regulations. It may be that the best way to proceed post-Maastricht is by way of cross-enforcement, so our inspectors go to Greece, for example, to enforce regulations and to ensure that there is compliance.

Rules and regulations should be introduced to help small firms. Our officials and bureaucrats in central Government and local government should be instructed by Ministers that their sole role is to serve the small shopkeeper and the small firm. They should be told that their job is not to make life difficult for small businesses; instead, they should be instructed to help small businesses in every possible way. I am not concerned that Napoleon called us a nation of shopkeepers. I am worried that we are becoming a nation of public officials and bureaucrats.

12.24 pm

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): I shall follow the example of the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and speak for only a short time. I am not sure whether I shall be as successful, or unsuccessful, as he.

I have not run a small business, but I have worked in large, medium and small businesses over the years. Given the way in which the House operates and the way that the Inland Revenue treats me, perhaps Members are small businesses.

Small firms are extremely important and significant. They are often centres of innovation. "Risk taking" seems to be a shorthand description of their activities, but it is not solely a matter of taking risks. Indeed, that description suggests that the activities of small businesses are reckless. It is more a matter of using imagination and responding to changing needs and opportunities. Small businesses are often far more flexible, imaginative and willing to adapt and change than many of their larger counterparts.

Some say that the plight of small businesses has never been so great and that their prospects have never been more bleak. That is because many of them were once large businesses. The Government's policies over recent years have had that effect.

I wish to concentrate on the relationship between small and large companies. I might as well join all those who have contributed to the debate in roundly condemning the banks for their performance and their attitude towards small businesses. It seems that many of them will use the interest rate cut—if not the one announced yesterday by the Chancellor of the Exchequer then the one after that, assuming there is one—not to ease the burden on their customers, especially small businesses, but to make up their margins. I join all those who would condemn that action as unreasonable. It may be that one or two of the banks are having a twinge of conscience about that, but that is not adequate.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) talked about the Co-operative bank. I take the opportunity to place on the record the considerable acheivement of that bank in the immediate aftermath of black Wednesday. It issued a statement to all its customers to inform them that it would never, in any circumstances, use the proceeds of the accounts of customers—all of whom are British citizens—to indulge in speculation against their currency. That is an example which our large financial institutions should follow. Such action would benefit customers and the nation generally.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) talked about local authority support for small businesses, enterprise and start-ups, as far as it is able to offer it. In fairness, local authorities co-ordinate what assistance is available from the Department of Trade and Industry and other Departments. The more enlightened of our urban authorities have a good record in trying directly and indirectly to assist. In Lewisham, the small business advisory centre cannot make outright grants or loans, but in certain circumstances it can provide assistance with the tedious form filling and accountancy to which the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) referred.

Local authority contracts are valued. Conservative Members often act in an atavistic way at the mere mention of local government. They tend immediately to condemn all its workings. Yet many small businesses are only too willing to take on local authority contracts and to work with authorities, because they know that they will be paid. The time that passes before payment is sometimes to be deplored, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich said, local authority contracts are secure and small businesses are very willing to take them up.

Regulation of the relationship between small and large companies has been neglected. I used to work for GEC. I am sure that it is now a far better organisation, but it used to impose a contract on suppliers that stated clearly that they would not be paid in fewer than 90 days from the date of invoice and that, in some circumstances, they might not be paid for 120 days—four months. There was nothing underhand about that as it was clearly stated in the agreement that had to be signed by suppliers before they would be accepted by GEC. I am sure that all hon. Members regard such muscle flexing in the marketplace as reprehensible. Regulation is obviously needed.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I, too, worked for GEC for a while. I recently spoke to Lord Prior about the issue that the hon. Gentleman has raised. He assured me that GEC has reviewed many of its policies and is now being much fairer with its suppliers—although some of that would bear scrutiny.

Mr. Dowd: I am sure that my status was a great deal more lowly than that of the hon. Gentleman. As I said, I assumed that improvements had been made. After all, there is great scope for doing so.

I want to raise another issue on which some action has been taken recently by the Office of Fair Trading, but only after considerable prompting over a long period. It is the behaviour of newspaper publishers towards the archetypal small business, and the one that springs most readily to most people's minds—the corner shop newsagent. I am

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sure that other hon. Members were also approached by local traders when *The Daily Telegraph*—sometimes known as the Conservative party house journal—inflicted a new arrangement on newsagents, through the wholesalers, under which their margins were cut overnight. It could not be called an agreement because it was one sided and unilateral. *The Daily Telegraph* even took out court injunctions to prevent any of the retailers from reducing their orders.

It is one matter if firms want to put up their prices—and understandably most would be reluctant to do so—but it is quite another if a firm does not just increase its prices but says to its retailers, "Not only will you pay those increased prices, but we will take you to court if you do not." If the marketplace is to have the freedom for which it is renowned, there must be the freedom to withdraw custom.

I am delighted that the Office of Fair Trading has agreed to investigate what I believe to be an abuse by *The Daily Telegraph*. I am not singling out that newspaper, as I believe that it is acting as a standard bearer for the rest of what used to be known as Fleet street—our national press.

However, I am not certain that the Office of Fair Trading will examine every aspect of the arrangement. The wholesale operation within the newspaper distribution sector would bear considerable scrutiny. It is anti-competitive and not in the best interests of the newsagents and other small businesses.

Mr. Couchman: I have pursued the issue of *The Daily Telegraph's* arrangements and I understand that the reduction in margins applies to the Saturday issue. I asked the newsagents' association what had happened to the cash, as opposed to the percentage, margin. That has actually increased by 25 per cent., which is quite interesting.

Mr. Dowd: I am not sure how that carries the argument forward. The newsagents have a unanimous view about the arrangement and they have no doubt that it is injurious to their interests. I will ask them whether they are complaining to me that *The Daily Telegraph* has insisted that they have 25 per cent. more. I suspect that they are not.

There is a slight paradox in many of the speeches by Conservative Members today. They claim that, by definition, regulation is bad and that it is conducted by bureaucrats or agents of the state—yet it is clear that in some areas regulation is necessary to ensure a fair deal for small businesses. Only the most ideologically blinded do not recognise that the argument is not between the command economy—with total regulation and the manufacture of markets, which clearly do not work—and the Friedmanite excesses on the right—which also clearly do not work, as can be seen in many South American economies. The argument about the existence of the market rests on the degree of regulation that a market needs in order to be most beneficial to those who are in it and the consumers who use it. That is the only argument. The degree of regulation that is necessary will vary from market to market.

Opposition Members do not share the belief that minimum regulation is always the best level. There is an optimum level of regulation. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) made it clear that there is an optimum level of regulation when he referred to some of the services, especially as they relate to public safety and the safety of individual employees. I am not sure of the code words used by the modern Conservative party, but small businesses and support for deregulation seem to have assumed an almost quasi-religious significance for some people. They trot out totems, imagining that they expand the bounds of human freedom by merely recanting them. That is not the Opposition's view of it.

When some of the wilder exponents of the argument talk about abolishing regulation, they conjure up images of wanting to go back to some of the worst excesses of exploitation of workers and customers which took place decades ago.

The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) said that meeting a pay cheque is the highest achievement that one can make. I do not disagree that that is an achievement; it is one for which those who work for companies should be grateful. However, when it is elevated almost to a mystical significance of absolutism the argument gets out of proportion. All those who contribute to the success of private or public sector companies or undertakings deserve congratulation as long as they provide a service and are trading profitably and energetically. There will be an absolute test and it will be that companies and undertakings provide services and are successful in so doing.

The hon. Member for Dover referred to the autumn statement and the disappointment of the media in it. That is no surprise at all. He was feigning his response to the statement. The Government's disinformation team spent the entire week employing its snow-job, saying how bad everything would be and how the Government would do a range of things which they never intended. That was done simply so that anything done against that background of public expectation which was not a total disaster could then be held as a triumph. That is exactly what happened yesterday.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, a colder assessment during the light of day shows that the chickens are coming home to roost. I am looking at the headline in today's *Evening Standard* about tube and rail investment, "London has been betrayed". The story says that London tube chiefs are looking at investment plans that have been slashed. They feel that they have been betrayed in view of the promises that were made last year. That is part of the full import of yesterday's statement.

Hon. Members will be able to read the article later, but it says that up to 7,000 jobs will be lost, many of them in small contracting businesses that support not simply the Jubilee line but much of the work that is going on in London Transport.

The hon. Member for Dover mentioned form filling. We all have a degree of sympathy with him on that. The matter needs to be examined. I make a plea to the Minister to ensure that, wherever possible, the forms are written in what has become known as plain English. The forms should be simplified so that people can deal with them as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, it is simply unavoidable that all businesses, organisations and undertakings must make an account of their activities. Those accounts must be verifiable at a later date.

The victims of VAT are spread far and wide. The former leader of the Conservative group on Lewisham council was hauled up not long ago for failing to complete the VAT returns for his business. In dealing with VAT demands, the Customs and Excise authorities could do no worse than to take advice from the Inland Revenue when it deals with matters such as corporation tax. Businesses in my constituency find the approach of the Inland Revenue in pursuing corporation tax infinitely more understanding and preferable to the brutal way in which the Customs and Excise go about enforcing VAT requirements.

It is common currency across the House that the Government must provide responsive support for small businesses so that they can play their part and meet their responsibilities to both the local community and the nation.

12.40 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on winning the ballot for this morning's debate and on choosing this subject. It must be rare indeed that within three days of one another both Houses of Parliament have chosen the subject of small and medium-sized enterprises for a debate. It is entirely appropriate and relevant to debate the matter now because the state of the economy is heavily bound up with the future of small and medium-sized enterprises.

I must declare my interest, as many of my colleagues and some Opposition Members have done. I always declare my vested interest, partly because it establishes a credential to speak on the subject. I still run my family's business—I am sure that if the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) were in his place he would rubbish me—in a hands-on manner. It has been in my family for 80 years and operates seven public houses which formerly were tenanted but are now leased in London. We have an annual turnover of perhaps £2 million and we still count ourselves as a small business. We face the same problems as all small businesses in these difficult times.

Although I am not unique by any manner of means among hon. Members, I think that I am one of a small minority who is still engaged in what was pejoratively called trade in my grandfather's day. There is still a tendency to look with disdain on those whose business is engaged in buying and selling products or services for profit. I well remember being taken to task by one of my barrister colleagues for referring inadvertently to the licensed trade as a profession. "Profession!", he said. I was not allowed to forget my impertinence by him of a higher calling. I suggest that people both in this place and outside still sneer at the profit motive.

I shall certainly give praise where praise is due to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his autumn statement yesterday. It would be extremely churlish not to applaud the several important initiatives that he has undertaken. Undoubtedly, the abolition of car tax will be welcomed by the manufacturers, spearheaded by our former colleague Sir Hal Miller.

The measures taken to allow local authorities to use their capital receipts for the forthcoming year, and the money made available to the Housing Corporation to reduce the unsold residential property overhang will certainly help to stimulate house building. The construction industry has undoubtedly suffered most grievously in the recession. Of course, not only the construction industry suffers in these times. So many other businesses, including removal firms, solicitors, people who supply building materials, DIY stores and furniture stores depend on a buoyant housing market. I am sure that the relief that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has given to the building trade will be welcome.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), I welcome the increase in first-year capital allowances; they should certainly help many businesses to invest.

Yesterday's 1 per cent. drop in interest rates, which followed the 2 per cent. reduction made when Britain left the ERM two months ago, will be widely welcomed by the many businesses to whom the cost of borrowed money is a crushing overhead. I repeat my declaration of vested interest in that regard.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was right to flag up a warning to banks in respect of the artificial floors that many of them instituted by imposing minimum lending rates, which mean that further cuts in the base rate are of no value. The money that my company invested in the building trade over the past 18 months was borrowed on terms that require interest of the bank base rate plus 2·5 per cent.—but no less than 9·5 per cent. It seems likely that many companies are caught by similar terms. I hope that the banks will do something about that—but not just for my sake. After all, I agreed to those terms—albeit at a time when 9·5 per cent. interest appeared very modest.

In the course of my brief contribution to the debate on the Loyal Address, I expressed a certain cynicism about the role then played by the banks—or perhaps that which they were not playing—in an attempt to lift the economy. I shall not repeat my remarks except to plead again with the high street banks to start helping their small and medium-sized customers invest for the future.

The British Chambers of Commerce reports that small firms involving fewer than 200 people—but which in total employ 12 million people or 60 per cent. of the non-governmental work force—account for 99·3 per cent. of insolvencies. That is a horrifying statistic. Small firms have frequently failed and gone bust because their bank pulled the plug. The BBC also comments that it is no longer only badly managed companies that fail. Many do so because of late payment of debt. I doubt whether the answer lies in the statutory imposition of trading terms. Some firms would use it as an extension of their existing credit terms.

GEC was cited by two Members on opposite sides of the House as one of the worst offenders in that respect. It is the largest employer in the Medway towns in my constituency. GEC would claim that part of the trouble is that the Government pay very slowly for the work that the company undertakes—particularly for the Ministry of Defence. It behoves local and central Government to take a lead in rapid payment, to serve as an example to slow payers—who seem content still to live off the backs of their subcontractors.

I said in an earlier intervention that small companies contracted to large businesses such as GEC and major defence and construction companies are worried about losing their main customer if they press too hard for payment. If something can be done, it is more likely to be achieved through education than statute.

Another reason for company failures is the current chronic lack of consumer confidence. I only hope that yesterday's autumn statement will lead to a gradual

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rebuilding of consumer confidence, because that will more certainly lead us to recovery than any fiscal step that my right hon. Friend may take.

My noble Friend Lord Weatherill, who until recently chaired the proceedings of this House with such distinction, chose to make small businesses the subject of his maiden speech in another place. He reminded their Lordships of the many years that he worked for his family tailoring business. He is a formidable champion of the 97 per cent. of all businesses that employ fewer than 20 people, for my noble Friend acknowledges the enormous contribution that small firms can make to recovery. He is conscious, as I am, of the continuing, burgeoning bureaucracy that so bedevils them. The House professes to unshackle business men of administrative burdens and to deregulate, but at the same time we and the European Community produce monstrous legislation.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen): the Food Safety Act 1990 will impose burdens at all stages in the production, distribution and selling chain. No one—from the sheller of peas to the seller of the humble chocolate bar, via the grandest of restaurateurs—will be able to ignore the Act. Moreover, it follows all the other legislation that affects small businesses: legislation governing health and safety and employment protection, not to mention the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise, of which I have all too recent experience. Welcoming their representatives to one's premises is always an uncomfortable experience, even when a routine inquiry is all that is involved.

According to the Federation of Small Businesses, the average owner of a small business spends at least one day a week satisfying the requirements of Government bureaucracy—and I believe that that is a gross underestimate. The problem is not just the time taken up by form filling; the worst feature of bureaucracy is the confusion and worry that it causes. Many owners of small businesses find it very difficult to keep pace with the imposts of the Government and EC. Even if they can find out what is expected of them, they cannot afford the specialists who are employed by large firms to keep abreast of legislation.

Even if a business man manages to keep up with the legislation and manages, to the best of his ability, to apply it to his firm, he can expect no consistency in regard to inspection. As I said to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) when he was talking about fire regulations, no one wants bad fire safety standards to apply; but it is not on to expect a fire officer who has applied a particular set of conditions to a major building project in year one to institute a completely new set in year three, when his successor claims that the original conditions are inadequate or, indeed, totally wrong. People in the fire service should look out for such behaviour. The same applies to environmental health officers, whose lack of consistency in applying regulations is notorious throughout the country.

The Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise carry out regular and routine visits to businesses. Often they find nothing seriously wrong, but they will always try to expose some minor infringement: that, after all, is what justifies the visit and the salary. They then tend to submit huge, potentially fatal claims covering six back years. Not only are such claims extremely worrying for the businesses concerned; more important, fighting them will cost an enormous amount in professional fees and time, and frequently ends in a settlement amounting to a few hundred pounds. The Revenue and Customs and Excise incur no penalty in such circumstances. I think that the Government should act. I fear that we owe a great debt to the good Professor Keith, who was at the bottom of many of the current regulations governing PAYE and Customs and Excise payments.

Ministers must bear a much heavier burden in helping to stimulate the economy and to provide a catalyst for recovery. They would do well to pay attention to small and medium-sized companies, for it is from them that the recovery in jobs will come. We have heard much heroic talk about the shrinking of the manufacturing base, and the hon. Member for Bolsover gave us a wonderful tirade about the contrast between the present low level of manufacturing employment and the great days that he remembers. Let me cite my recent visit to CAV Lucas, when I was shown an all-singing, all-dancing machine that was said to perform 27 different tasks and to do 81 jobs in three shifts. It was managed by a single operative on each shift, which meant a net loss of 78 manufacturing jobs. There is no doubt that much of the erosion of the manufacturing base, in employment terms, is due to the introduction of automation.

I believe that small businesses will give us the new jobs that will help recovery. It is essential for Ministers—not just officials—to consider all legislation with a view to deciding what the burden on business will be. If those burdens and imposts are considered to be too heavy, they must set the legislation to one side. We cannot continue to have our time, as managers, taken up entirely by having to satisfy the whims of Government bureaucracy. That is so important that a group of Ministers, at Minister of State level at least, should consider the issue. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Technology, if that is regarded as something of a slight. Ministers of all the Departments involved, in terms of their impact on industry, should meet and report regularly and should seek to ease the non-fiscal burdens on industry and commerce. That would contribute to the renaissance of our business base. it would make the United Kingdom even more attractive to companies from the United States, Japan and other Asian and Pacific countries that seek a European base and which find attractive our language, tax regime, industrial relations and attitude to the social on-cost of labour.

I end, as I began, by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North on his choice of subject. I must also apologise to him. I fear that he may find himself very lonely at the end of the debate. I, too, must leave the House to attend to the needs of my constituents in my constituency surgery. I apologise also to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for my absence at the end of the debate.

12.55 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): I, too, welcome the debate and thank the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) for introducing it. I intend to deal with some of the smallest businesses—the small shops. We were reminded earlier that it was Napoleon who described us as a nation of small shopkeepers. I remembered that it was a great European who said that, but I could not remember whether it was Napoleon, Jacques Delors or Lord Tebbit.

Small shopkeepers are a particularly neglected group in our debates in the House. They are also neglected by the big institutions. However, in my constituency, the small shop is a crucial feature of the local economy and, therefore, of the national economy. Small shopkeepers work tremendously hard and show much enterprise and energy. Many small shops are run by those whom we refer to as the ethnic minorities. Many Asian businesses form a vital part of the economy and a vital part of our communities. I say "communities" because I am struck by the fact that shops often form the most crucial parts of those communities. When shops close down throughout Britain, and certainly in Croydon, that is bad news for shopkeepers and customers. It is also bad news for the local communities. Many elderly people rely on talking to shopkeepers. It forms a major social contact for them. They do not get that contact in the Sainsbury's or Tesco's. We are therefore talking about shops in both the social and the economic sense.

Many shops are now bruised and battered and feel under threat from many sources. Many shops are boarded up. Recently, I have spoken to between 40 and 50 shopkeepers in my constituency. With few exceptions, the impression I gained was that many are clinging on by their fingernails to economic survival. The events of the next few weeks and months will determine whether they survive.

Many shopkeepers feel betrayed by those who purport to discuss economics and economic policy. They feel that there is a general lack of understanding of their position. They certainly feel neglected. I believe that they are neglected by what I describe as the big institutions—the media, in terms of their reporting of economics, the finance pages, the City pages, the finance houses and the large companies. They say little about the small shops. Despite the lip service that they pay to small shopkeepers, when the Confederation of British Industry and Institute of Directors plead on behalf of their members to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister, they often talk about large industry rather than small shopkeepers.

Political parties have often served small shopkeepers badly. That is certainly true of most Conservative Members, who have greater understanding of finance houses, large companies and landed interests than of the small shopkeeper. Historically, that has been true of Labour Members. We have better understood large industry, trade unions and workers in large enterprises than we have shopkeepers. Labour Members' attitudes are now changing, but hon. Members should self-critically examine how well they speak for small shopkeepers.

I wonder how many members of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee are shopkeepers. I heard that only one member of the Home Affairs Select Committee is not a lawyer. I wondered whether that meant that there were too many lawyers or too few on the Committee. I suspect that few members of Select Committees and of the other institutions of the House that are concerned with economics and finance are greengrocers or hardware merchants. It is important that such people are represented on Committees, because, despite this debate, we usually neglect such matters.

Small shopkeepers are at risk on a number of fronts, and many hon. Members have articulated better than I the different factors that they are facing. The vital factors are recession and unemployment, because more people have less money in their pockets or purses to [illegible] goods in shops. The explanation of the collapse of some small shops is clear.

Interest rates have been a crucial factor. Of course we welcome the fact that they are coming down, but I sometimes think that the small shopkeeper must feel bemused and bewildered by the rollercoaster that has become macro-economic and monetary policy. He or she must wonder why the economics of the fishmonger or greengrocer should be affected by something called the ERM or about the monetary policy of the Chancellor of the day. What thread links those great economic debates to the economics of the small hardware shop, the finances of the greengrocer in Norbury or the economics of the pharmacist in Thornton Heath? Those people want stable finance and money policies, but they have not had them in recent years and, I suspect, recent decades.

Hon. Members have spoken of the impact of the business rate. Rent reviews are another aspect. The VAT authorities and the other institutions and policies seem to betray a lack of understanding and insensitivity to the needs of small businesses and small shops. That is my experience, but I need not add to that subject.

Hon. Members have spoken of the banks, and I repeat some of those remarks. Banks are regarded as fair-weather friends by small shopkeepers. Last night, I said to a business man, "I have seen the advertisements on the television. There is a friendly bank manager and a special person looking after small businesses. He looks a nice chap. He comes along to your house and shop, looks at the production line, shakes you by the hand, pats your children on the head and is even pleasant to the dog." I shall not repeat the words of that small business man, but he did not recognise the bank manager.

Why should banks, which made colossal mistakes and thereby incurred huge debts on foreign enterprises, take it out on the shopkeepers of Croydon or Britain, who are the links that we need to develop? When the going gets tough for shopkeepers, the banks cut up rough. That is not on and we should debate that more.

I apologise for the fact that constituency duties meant that I could not be here for the whole debate. I do not know whether other hon. Members have touched on the aspect of planning and transportation. To what extent do out local and national authorities, when talking about planning and transportation issues, have regard to the small shops? There is a crucial link.

People in my constituency are worried about the red routes. They may make sense in terms of speeding cars through communities, but the shopkeepers tell me that they make no sense if people cannot park near or outside shops and pop in to buy things. People in Croydon see the red routes policy as a threat to the local economy and to shops. Those are important matters.

If planners allow more and more superstores and supermarkets to be built on the outskirts of our towns and cities, it may be good news for the superstores, and for those who shop once a week in great Volvo estates and who have refrigerators in which to store the goods. It is not such good news for the shopkeepers, or for the elderly, for single mothers and for those without cars who want to shop in local shops. Planning authorities should take into account the impact on small businesses and small shops.

[Mr. Malcolm Wicks]

I shall not say much about Sunday trading, which we shall discuss on another occasion, except to say that it is related closely to this matter. Sunday trading is bad news for small shops. If we allow Tesco and Sainsbury to open on Sundays in flagrant breach of the law, there is an impact on small businesses and shops.

The managing director and chairman of a local bakery wrote to me recently. The bakery bakes the products and then sells them through shops. He said that, although trade had been increasing by 5 to 10 per cent. over a year, there was now a decrease in trade of between 5 and 10 per cent.—and more in some shops—on Saturdays and Mondays because of Sunday trading. The managing director writes:

> "The only outcome for us will be some very drastic pruning and offloading of our lower-taking shops, which in turn will put a lot of people out of work."

The issue of Sunday trading will be debated on several fronts, including the moral and theological fronts. It also needs to be debated in terms of the impact on local economies and on local shops.

Our perspective today is needed in a number of our debates on economic policy, on finance and on much else. There is a sense in which the pharmacist, the newsagent and the small grocery, multiplied many thousands of times across our nation, are as important to our society, to our community and to our economy as are ICI and Hanson. It is time that we debated their concerns more often and more rigorously. I therefore thank the hon. Member for Colchester, North for giving us the opportunity to debate this crucial matter.

1.7 pm

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Our debate today, ably introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), who gave a tour d'horizon of the problems facing small firms today, takes place against a background of world economic downturn. I suspect that the worries expressed in our debate are mirrored in almost every other country. The state of small businesses in the United States is not very good because its economy is also in a downturn.

We should be grateful to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for a measure in the Budget just before the general election. That measure would not have been taken up by the Labour party if it had won the election. In the Budget, the inheritance tax for small businesses was effectively abolished. The Small Business Bureau and the Union of Independent Companies, which represents middle-sized manufacturing businesses, have been campaigning for that for years. We have been asking for that welcome change for about 10 years.

If a Government and a society are to encourage people to risk their money, time and often their houses in building up a business, it is not only sensible but right that they should be allowed to pass that business on intact to the next generation—whether it be family or managers. It is an economic fact that almost no business reaches its optimum size in one generation. It is generally family businesses, built up over many generations, that progress.

The penal rates of capital inheritance taxation that pertained until the time of the previous Budget made matters very difficult and were very damaging over a long period. We can rejoice at that change; even if, in the middle of a recession, it is not something about which every firm is thinking the most, that fundamental long-term reform is crucial.

During the 1980s, as a result of measures taken to encourage entrepreneurship, many new very small businesses came into being. Such businesses have become a feature of British industrial society. The encouraging thing about the difficult days through which we are living is that the rate of birth of new businesses has been maintained. The fundamental changes that were made in the 1980s encouraged people in the hope and belief that it was worth while starting their own firms.

At the other end of the scale, we have a large number of very large firms that are among the most successful in the world. What we lack is a sufficient number of medium-sized, family, owner-managed businesses in the middle—not only in high tech but in engineering. To sustain an effective and competitive economy, one needs a vast number of middle-sized businesses employing 200, 300 or 500 employees. One of the great successes of Japan and Germany has been that they have had a substantial number of those firms. In Germany and, to a degree, in Japan, competition policy has been aimed at the preservation of medium-sized firms and at encouraging their growth.

We would be wise to fill that gap in our industrial society. Very small firms are all very well, but we should pay more attention to independent medium-sized businesses, and my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North was quite right to include medium-sized firms in the motion. We must do everything that we can to try to fill that gap.

One subject that has been much talked about—quite rightly, given the present climate—has been the problem that many of our smaller and medium-sized businesses have faced in their relationship with their banks. There are two aspects to that problem. The first is the rate of interest charged, and the conditions of lending imposed, by the banks. There has rightly been much criticism of the banks for charging small firms too high a rate of interest. It seems odd that we treat businesses so differently, given that we recognise the need to help young fragile people to get on their feet and become adults, so that when they fly the nest they can look after themselves. Large firms receive the special preferential interest rates. They can even borrow on the Eurodollar market. However, small firms pay penal interest rates. No doubt, it may be said that such firms are more at risk, but that is not a sensible way of doing things.

As we criticise the banks, it is vital that we recognise that they have faced severe problems. Like all of us, they have made mistakes. Indeed, they have made mega-mistakes which made very large holes in their balance sheets. As responsible private sector organisations, the banks must restore their balance sheets. However, that must be achieved by prudence. It must not be achieved at the risk of damaging too many of our smaller firms.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: The hon. Gentleman is making an important point which follows on from an issue that I raised earlier. Should we not convince the banks that the argument about greater risk is not true? If small businesses are required to put their houses on the line, the banks have more security than they have from large corporations which, during a recession, leave the banks exposed. The argument that the banks are entitled to charge premium interest rates to small businesses does not even stand up on risk assessment criteria.

Sir Michael Grylls: I accept the hon. Gentlemen's point and I agree with him. I was making the point for argument's sake. It was by no means my argument.

Although there is a problem with interest rates, we must also consider an issue that is fundamentally of more long-term importance, because I believe that the banks will rectify the interest rate problem as a result of public pressure. The minimum lending rate has dropped. All hon. Members must maintain pressure on the banks in that respect.

The more fundamental problem is that we do not have a tradition in Great Britain of long-term structured lending to medium-sized firms or what we might colloquially call "industrial banking". Ours has been a more mercantile lending system—lending for trade rather than for long-term investment. That is not necessarily the fault of the people who run the banks in 1992. It is a long-term historical problem. It is part of our culture and I am not sure how it grew up.

Somehow, we must persuade our financial institutions that they must consider long-term secure lending. The Opposition may have a lot of fun ribbing us about the problems facing the country because of the recession, but even they know that recessions will come around again and that there is such a thing as an economic cycle. It is like the weather cycle of sunshine and rain. We will certainly have more recessions. They will occur regularly.

If there is no system for long-term lending for firms to invest in expansion projects, to develop products and market them and to do all the things that firms must do to be successful and compete in the world at large, the disaster that we face now with too many successful, profitable firms being put out of business simply because the banks have run into problems and need to bring money in to rebuild their balance sheets will be repeated in the next five, six or seven years.

When the banks want to rebuild their balance sheets, they do not go to the unsuccessful firms that are about to go bust, because they would not get much money from them. They go to the more successful firms and tell them that they must cut their lending from £500,000 to £300,000 or £200,000. The banks do not say that they are doing that because they need the money, but that is the truth of it. It is appalling to do that to successful businesses and we must resolve that problem.

The banks have been too reliant on using the trick or gadget of demanding a floating charge over all the assets of a company. That is almost unique to Britain. That restricts competition and, more important, results in the banks being cavalier about lending. If one has a floating charge on a company, one lends to it and then says, "It is all right, we can just pull the plug and we will get it all in again." There is a big difference between a floating charge and a single charge over an asset.

My hon. Friend the Minister is generous, and if he were to lend me £50,000—a small sum for him—to build a new factory, he would say, "I shall lend you that money, but I should like a charge over the asset that I have helped to create by my loan to you," and I would not quibble. However, if he said—I am sure that he would not because he is an extremely progressive Minister—"I want a charge over the whole of your business, including all the assets that I have not helped to create," that would be wrong. That is the difference between a floating charge and an actual charge. We need to examine that matter. It is a hangover from an old-fashioned industrial society and we should chuck it out the window. If that is not done by legislation, I hope that the banks will do it voluntarily, although I am not too optimistic.

There was an interesting maiden speech in the other place on Wednesday by Lord Inchyra. He is the director general of the British Bankers Association. I read his speech with great interest. Obviously, he is a gentleman with great experience and knowledge—much more than mine—of the banking world. However, there was a whitewash. There was not much mention of the cases that I have described in which profitable firms are being pushed out of business because the banks need the money again. I shall quote a couple of lines from his speech. He said:

> "What I regret that I do not have is a figure for the percentage of borrowing customers who are struggling to stay afloat. However, I am told by the banks"—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but it is not our custom and it is not in order to quote speeches in the other place unless they are Government policy represented by a Minister.

Sir Michael Grylls: I stand reprimanded, and I shall throw away my copy of *Hansard*. Suffice to say that Lord Inchyra was saying that he does not have the figures but that four out of five cases manage to keep going. There is a problem and it needs to be looked at. It is a challenge to the Government to see what can be done about it.

It would be worth while for the Government to look at an interesting institution in Frankfurt in Germany, called KFW. My German is not very good, but if I may without another admonition from you, Madam Deputy Speaker, because of linguistic difficulties, I shall quote the title. It is, "Kreditanstalt fur Wiederaufbau". In other words, that financial institution was set up at the end of the war, using money from the Marshall aid funds for reconstruction in what was then West Germany. It has been outstandingly successful. It is able to make structured loans for fixed periods to small and medium-sized firms. It has been promoting the interests of small and medium-sized firms in the German economy since the end of the war. It has about DM100 million on its balance sheet to lend. Under statute, that organisation is allowed to lend to German firms operating in other EC countries. Therefore, it is allowed to make long-term loans to German firms operating in Great Britain. It is allowed to lend to British firms operating in west Germany or to firms owned in any other EC country that operate in Germany. The only firms that do not get the benefit of such a good form of borrowing are British firms operating in Britain. That cannot be sensible.

Obviously, there is not time today, but the Government should consider the structure of the KFW. I hope that they will link that with consideration of how to resolve the difficulties of providing long-term secure money. I know that the banks will say, "You don't know what you're talking about, of course we lend long." There are loan agreements, such as small business development loans, but if one looks at the small print on the back of the piece of paper, it states that the loan is "repayable on demand." The manager who arranges the loan probably does not even mention that and the business man thinks that he has a loan that is repayable over seven years, but it is really no

[Sir Michael Grylls]

more than an overdraft, which is also repayable on demand, as everyone knows. That is the problem that our businesses have to face and too many of them are suffering because of that small print.

Many financial institutions say that we should provide more equity for small businesses. There is a role for equity in small businesses, but most people who have started and are running their own firms do not want to bring in outside equity. If they did, they would work for a big firm. They want to keep the equity in their control, not dilute it. It might be all right for the owner of a high-flying, high-tech company to part with 40 per cent. of its equity, because the other 60 per cent. will be worth an awful lot of money —it will probably be virtually as good as 100 per cent. However, the owners of most engineering businesses, which do not have such a high growth rate, are reluctant to part with equity to outside investors. They should have the same facilities as equivalent firms in Germany and Japan and should be able to borrow for their needs on a fixed, structural basis.

A distinguished entrepreneur in the United States, George Zalucki, who is also a great psychologist and friend of mine, wisely said, "If you don't understand the invisible, you will never achieve the impossible." In these circumstances, the invisible is getting into the mind of the entrepreneur and not merely telling him to get in more equity when it is not what he wants. Entrepreneurs want to be able to borrow on secure terms so that they know that their firms can survive if there is a recession—and there certainly will be other recessions. That is the challenge facing the Government and I hope that some progress will be made in that direction in the years ahead.

1.27 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I shall speak only briefly. May I express the apologies of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks), who had to leave after speaking to catch a plane?

My credentials for speaking in the debate are that I am one of the few £100 entrepreneurs in the House of Commons. I am certainly one of the few entrepreneurs on the Labour Benches. I left business in 1977 to come into Parliament in 1979, and for about 10 years, I experienced the issues that hon. Members have mentioned in this debate.

When I left my business we were exporting throughout the world the product that I had designed and manufactured in Lancashire. Many problems confronting business men today are the same as those that I experienced, although to a lesser degree, at that time. I was driving through my constituency the other day thinking about that time and wondering how people manage to survive in today's conditions. When I discuss such matters with companies in my constituency I find that conditions are worse today than those that I remember during the worst periods of the late 1960s. Yes, that was under a Labour Government, and conditions were difficult, but they were not as bad as they are today. We had problems in the 1970s, but they were not on the scale of those that are now being experienced.

There are several areas in which the Government can help small businesses. There are measures and initiatives that are as valid today as they were many years ago. If it is true that we shall not have domestic consumption-led growth and that to some extent revival of the economy is to be based on export-led growth, we must have an export strategy. Yesterday, in the autumn statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced some concessions on the ECGD front, but we must go much further than that. The Government must devise a strategy to promote exports and to help those in business into export markets. There are many companies that, despite all the information that is made available by various Departments, do not understand how to get into export markets. That might be because there is a tradition in the United Kingdom of not learning a foreign language to the standard required to enable one to converse properly with people overseas. It might be that there is antagonism towards people in other parts of the world when it comes to trading with them.

We must ease companies into export markets, and the best approach is to help them in market research overseas. I accept that help is given by the commercial sections of our embassies overseas, but far more work should be done on market research overseas and on the identification of products that can be produced in the United Kingdom. Far more help should be given to enable people to participate in exhibitions of British products overseas. That means an expanded role for what we used to call the British Overseas Trade Board. When I was in business, the board had an important role to play. The subsidising of stands at foreign exhibitions overseas and the sponsoring of exhibitions by regional enterprise agencies and by the Board of Trade should be at the top of the agenda. In every way we should help our exporters to identify markets.

There is another area that is worthy of further consideration, and that is factoring and invoice discounting. Given the expense involved with the premiums that are paid to the companies that act in this area, invoice discounting and factoring have become, to some extent, unpopular. They are, however, good ways of raising money in businesses. I do not want to depart from Labour policy, but I think that there is a role for the state to play in further examining the part played by the invoice discounter and factorer in helping small businesses to survive, especially in the present difficult conditions.

How often do we come across companies that have long debtor lists and are owed far more money than they have borrowed from the banks? If only they could turn their debts into real cash, they might be helped through the difficult conditions that they are now experiencing. As I have said, there is room for some further consideration on that front.

There are major problems in my constituency. The Government could take an initiative and help small and medium-sized companies to survive by acting on enterprise zone strategy. I am sure that Ministers will recall that I was one of the few Labour Members to support the zones in the early 1980s. The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who is now the President of the Board of Trade, gave Workington an enterprise zone, and we have made it successful. It did not lead to a sort of Hong Kong economy, which many said would happen. The enterprise zone worked and many modern factories were opened. They are now, of course, suffering from the recession. Unfortunately, a number of them are empty.

In my view, these matters are cyclical and are only aggravated by Government policy. The reality is that at some stage in future the empty factories will be reoccupied.

The real problem is that they are no longer in an enterprise zone. The Government should not think only in terms of creating new zones. Instead, they should be thinking of expanding existing zones, particularly where there has been success, as in Workington. I have corresponded with Ministers on that matter, but, to date, their policy remains not to expand existing zones. That is a mistake.

Another concern about the future for small businesses is regional policy. My constituency is part of the northern region. The Minister has visited west Cumbria and is aware of the problems. If we lose development area status it will be a body blow to our economy. It will destroy our opportunity to attract companies and jobs. It would be devastating and it cannot be allowed to happen. Indeed, it is the universal view in the county, irrespective of political persuasion, that it must not happen.

If my area does not meet the statistical criteria today, it certainly will within the next 13 months. It can almost guarantee that by the end of 1993 a further 1,300 or 1,400 jobs will be lost, certainly in my constituency, bringing our unemployment rate to 17·7 per cent. We could not attract industry in the conditions that would be created if we were to lose development area status. I ask the Minister earnestly to consider the matter.

Only this morning I received a letter from a constituent about his problems with his bank. He owns a hotel. I have had a number of similar letters during recent months and on a number of occasions I have directly approached regional managers of banks to try to renegotiate debt facilities. My constituent wrote to the National Westminster bank:

> "I am writing to you, as the head of Small Business Services, to question your policy of setting a minimum rate of interest on loans to small businesses.
>
> When my wife and I took out a mortgage with you to expand out business in 1988/9, we were told that this was standard policy with all banks; however, I have recently learnt that it is in fact the policy of only yourselves . . .
>
> Whilst it is true that this condition is pointed out at the time of applying for the loan, it is surely also true that there can be little justification for such a large increase to your own profits in this way. If, as is hoped, the Government lowers interest rates to 6 or even 5 per cent. in the near future, it will be for the express purpose of helping the economy to grow again by allowing people like ourselves to invest. It will not be to allow banks to line their own pockets.
>
> I hope you can give me an assurance that this practice is under urgent review and will be brought to an end in the very near future so that your customers can join with those of other banks and help lift this country out of recession."

That letter could have been written by hundreds of thousands of proprietors of small businesses throughout the country. The banks must get off their backsides and recognise that people are dependent on their lending policies. They can destroy businesses overnight. I understand that the banks have problems because they have to offset large debt lists that have been created over recent years, but I do not want the small businesses in my constituency to be wiped out.

I can think of two or three occasions during the past few months when I have intervened, looked at a company's books, made my own evaluation and then gone to the regional manager of the bank to argue that it is being too aggressive and that if it were to give the company more time it would survive. Only because of my intervention have such companies been saved. Of course, I have been approached by companies with unsatisfactory books and I have refused to intervene. One retains credibility in these matters only by arguing good cases. There have been occasions when banks have tried to wipe out decent companies and I appeal to them to review that practice.

1.38 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Before I whip through the many points that I intend to make, I wish to congratulate my former Select Committee colleague, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), on his elevation to the Front Bench. I trust that he will long remain an Opposition spokesman.

I very much endorse the comments about banks and borrowing rates. I also believe that exhortation about the late payment of bills is not enough.

Another point that is often overlooked relates to bank borrowing. Small companies depend on and supply large companies. Large companies are suffering now, but when they expand they often put horrendous demands on small companies, which are their suppliers. It is hard for those small companies to find the necessary investment, which is large compared to the capital base of the company. I wonder whether the banks or, indeed, the general financial system reaches down far enough to small companies. In other words, the smaller a manufacturing firm—say, one which employs fewer than 30 people—the larger is the proportional increase in capital base required to respond to any increase in demand, yet the lower is its ability to command loan finance. Lord Walker's regeneration agency should examine that matter when it comes to developing the regions and depressed areas.

I was surprised to read in *The Times* today that the chief executive of the Forum of Private Business said:

> "It is regrettable that the main benefit will be to big business while small businesses are left to pick up the crumbs."

It is obvious that there is no such entity as a small business as such. The vast majority are dependent on big businesses. They are the component suppliers and service suppliers. We are moving ever closer to a pyramid system in which larger companies on the European and global scale pull behind them a plethora of small companies. That is why many small businesses have been created. So the measures to reduce interest rates and to assist the car industry—which pulls in the component manufacturers—and a range of other measures dealt with in the autumn statement will help directly to recreate confidence among people whose wealth base has fallen as a result of the drop in house prices. That is fundamental.

No business man will accept incentives to expand unless he sees the prospect for increased orders. Unless we can persuade people to spend, there will be no prospect of increased orders. That is largely the dilemma of reliance on interest rates.

Our economy has a debt load twice that of France and significantly more than that of Germany. As in the United States, the recovery is slow. Our debt load is higher than that in the United States. Their interest rates are slightly more than half our interest rates. As recovery is slow, it is necessary to fill the gap with public programmes such as the Chancellor announced yesterday. They will have a stimulating effect.

For example, it is largely overlooked that to allow higher education institutions to borrow against their Exchequer-funded assets will have a dramatic effect on a local scale. The potential effect on a city such as Leeds,

[Dr. Keith Hampson]

which has 30,000 students and two huge universities, could be dramatic. There will be a knock-on effect throughout the Leeds economy and small firms.

Mr. Cousins: Can the hon. Gentleman tell us what additional public spending beyond existing plans was announced yesterday?

Dr. Hampson: I shall not do it now. My point is that a dramatic change in Exchequer rules such as the waiving of the Ryrie rules would have a significant effect. Some hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, have argued for universities to have the freedom to borrow against their assets. We have seen local authorities use the potential to borrow against assets to the point of abuse. However, such a freedom could have a remarkable effect. It is not just about the capital injection that is given to institutions. They can now raise their own capital to a remarkably greater extent.

I welcome the partnership between local and central Government. Both play a part in public programmes. There are problems with the limits that are placed on local government. However, it is vital for a city such as Leeds to set out the essential priorities. The Royal Armoury relocation from the Tower of London to Leeds has potentially the most dramatic economic effect on the Leeds economy. It will transform the inner part of Leeds and the effect will ripple through Leeds to the regional economy.

The construction and design of the building will have an impact on the economy, as will the tourists who visit it. That could start next year, provided that the Government's £20 million is supported by contributions from Leeds and the private sector. I hope that they will consider that a priority use of their funds, and that the urban development corporation—whose proposal and land it is—will not have its budget cut. I note that UDCs—one of the best concepts launched by the Government—have had their overall budgets cut by one quarter. I trust that shortfall is accounted for by the lack of need for the huge programmes that were instigated in the London docklands and that those of smaller UDCs, such as Leeds, will be preserved.

Leeds also has the superb idea of establishing a northern version of the national film theatre, linked either to the urban development corporation or the Quarry Hill theatre. That would provide a significant stimulus at relatively little cost.

The British economy embraces far too many legislative requirements and regulations, many of which are suited more to big companies than to small firms. Large organisations can usually handle planning issues more easily than can small businesses. In many instances, local authorities are even worse than the Europeans. The difference in requirements across local authority boundaries must be examined, together with the zealousness of local authority officials in implementing them.

Councillor Nigel Francis of Otley is a market trader who wrote to tell me that one day, out of the blue, two local health inspectors descended on the street market to implement the Food Hygiene (Market Stalls and Delivery Vehicles) Regulations 1966, which require every stall to have running hot water, a washbasin, and a nail brush. Is it seriously suggested that a trader who sells raw potatoes needs hot water to wash his hands in case he dirties them? Is it suggested also that Cllr. Francis, who sells packaged sweets, must have a sink and hot water on his market stall? That is entering the realms of lunacy, and is wholly detrimental to trading and success.

Even if many regulations were stripped away, companies would still need help in coping with those that remain. The Government must drive ahead with the deregulation unit and the provision of general advice to small firms. More than 60 per cent. of companies are ignorant of Department of Trade and Industry initiatives. The figure is probably dramatically higher for small businesses. A report by Cambridge university's small business research centre, "The State of British Enterprise", states:

> "There is a strong link apparent between the amount of external advice taken and the rate of growth of small businesses."

We must get the one-stop shop concept working as fast as we can.

As the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said, with the single market in mind we must pursue the concept of export clinics and export clubs. Many firms do not know of their existence—or they may not exist in certain areas. The Government could give a little help in the campaign to save the NatWest's scheme involving 4,000 small business advisers. Accountancy advice is of particular importance. A partnership is available, and small business advice days could be held throughout the country, rather than be staged just here and there, in a hit-and-miss fashion.

Britain must also establish more trade with eastern Europe. How on earth can a large business, let alone a small or medium-sized firm, know of the opportunities that exist? I have argued for some time that the Government should establish an east European trade centre. Most embassies like the idea, and are willing to second commercial staff to such a venture. All the east European countries, and possibly the Baltic states, would have in one place a showcase for their products and an opportunity to make known those that they want to buy. Conference and other facilities could also be provided. It could be placed next to the European bank for reconstruction and development. Instead, our only advice centre—the East European trade council, which is funded by the Government—is sitting in a flat in Artillery row. It is too small to cope even with existing demand. If we take such matters more seriously and ensure that companies receive the necessary advice, they will be able to operate.

I know that we must improve standards, but it is essential to the resurgence of the economy that we help the construction industry, and small builders in particular. The small builder is the man who can pick up the small schemes, both private and public; he is the man who can take up labour immediately, as rapidly as he sacks it when times are bad. Everyone is currently asked to try to meet the BS5750 standard, but councils such as Bradford now allow no one to tender without it. It is very difficult for a small builder to achieve that standard, and it involves a good deal of paperwork. At this stage in the economic cycle, councils should not be imposing such requirements.

Bradford also says that tenders will not be put out unless they are in packages of £3 million. It is gathering together all the smaller packages that it used to offer to builders. Many builders cannot afford such tenders. For heaven's sake, let us have a partnership between the Government and the public works programmes, the local councils and the private sector; but let us get our act together and provide the right advice. We should minimise regulation, and stop coming up with more and more burdens—for that is what we seem to be doing, almost arbitrarily, even in the midst of a recession.

1.51 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on his excellent choice of subject. It is an important subject, and one which matters; and it is close to my heart.

During a recent conversation, I asked why the Conservative party was so fascinated—even obsessed—by small businesses. The answer is that small businesses are really about individuals, about dreams and aspirations and about the creation of new ideas. New ideas create jobs, and jobs mean that people have extra money to spend. Good, solid Conservative principles are at the heart of the matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North described the creation of 1 million new jobs in the 1980s as a great success story, and pointed out that some 60 per cent. of turnover in the economy is due to small businesses. We should understand why the country is so deeply affected by the creation of new jobs via small businesses. The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) cited Napoleon's observation that this was a nation of shopkeepers. Napoleon, of course, meant that as an insult: he intended to block off Britain from Europe, so that we would immediately go under. But we took it as a compliment, because we have always been a nation of shopkeepers, traders and small businesses. We have always led the world with our exports per head of population, and we still do: we export more per head than Japan, the United States or Germany. We have been world traders and small business men—and the two are closely connected, because small businesses grow and feed into larger businesses.

The business culture of any nation that does not provide for small businesses is essentially moribund. It is the seedcorn of small businesses that grows into larger businesses. That process is desperately important; in this case, it really is a question of looking after the pennies and letting the pounds slowly take care of themselves.

If we examine the history of the British economy, we can chart some of the decline in the 1930s with the collapse of small businesses. There was a net decrease in the number of small businesses from the 1930s until the late 1970s, which exactly mirrored the steady decline in the economy from the high peaks of the early part of the century. It was not until the late 1970s, and particularly under the Conservatives in the 1980s, that there was a tremendous surge of net growth in businesses, which reversed that trend. All the graphs clearly demonstrate that fact.

Small businesses face what I regard as three very important problems. Reference has already been made to them, but I want to stress them again. The first problem is bank lending. Small businesses face their biggest problems in their first three or four years. They are heavily indebted to and deeply reliant upon bank reasonableness, in the sense of how those loans are pushed or taken back. During that critical period, small businesses need the banks to work in partnership with them, not against them. As soon as times grow hard, small businesses do not want the banks to withdraw their loans, particularly if the problem is not one of their own making.

During the late 1980s, the clearing banks undertook a massive lending programme for property development, particularly commercial property development. Anyone with a commercial property portfolio could, it seemed, walk through the door and obtain vast sums of money from many banks. Small businesses had to sweat blood to get money from the banks and had to put up vast amounts of collateral. The banks had one rule for commercial property developers and another for small business men throughout the country.

It is interesting to note that in 1987 bank lending to property development increased by 40 per cent. In 1988 it rose by 53 per cent. In 1989 it rose by 62 per cent. and in 1990 by 33 per cent. Those are staggering figures, for by 1990 we had already begun to experience a downturn, a recession. Nevertheless, the banks were still dramatically increasing the amount that they were lending for commercial property.

If we were to run end to end all the office space available in central London, we should find that there are about one and a half square miles of unused floor space. That is mostly due to some of the most irresponsible lending that I have ever read about. It has caused a tremendous problem. Now that we need more money to be injected by the banks into the economy, we find that they are unable to do that. They are holding at inflated rates vast amounts of commercial property that they are unable to sell.

The banks have therefore turned to small businesses. They regard them as liquid assets and want to realise some cash to keep them going from month to month. If small businesses are facing a few problems, the banks are tempted to close them down quickly so that they can take back their assets and make something out of them, thus enabling the banks to keep their cash flow running. I do not want to bash the banks, but this is a big problem area which has not been looked at. The banks owe a debt of responsibility to small businesses and should be far more reasonable about the way they treat them, in the light of the way they have lent money in the past.

As for late payment, I referred earlier to a conversation I had with Lord Prior of GEC. It is beholden on big businesses to make sure that they stick to the letter of their agreements. If they have a 90-day payment term, they must pay within 90 days. It is no good stretching it to 95 or 100 days. It is those five to 10 days which crush small business. There is a flow down of debt. It ends up with the smallest person at the bottom. He ends up holding the total parcel of debt for British business. It is unfair on such people and immoral.

Before I became a Member of Parliament, I worked in business. We paid particular attention to making sure that we dealt fairly with our suppliers. We ensured that we could make savings by asking them to reduce their costs and prices to us, but we said that there was no point in crushing a company until it went to the wall because we should then have to look for another supplier. Big businesses must show a sense of responsibility towards small businesses. It is a partnership. If the one treats the other well during a recession, one hopes that the converse will happen when times are better.

Many hon. Members have mentioned the payment of VAT. It would be perhaps a little kinder if some of the pressures of VAT bills were seen in the light of moneys

[Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith]

owed by bigger business to smaller business and if the pressure that is put on small business by Customs and Excise were tempered a little. I do not know whether that is feasible.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North on chosing an excellent topic which drives to the heart of Conservative philosophy. I have no doubt that the subject will run and run and that Conservative Members must support it fully. It is deeply important to the survival of business and I offer it my wholehearted support.

2 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I join in congratulating the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on his choice of subject for debate. It is surprising that he did not choose to exercise his power of timing rather better, a day after the autumn statement, and press the Government further on the absence of an industrial strategy, especially for small business, that was so evident in the statement, in which small business played such a minor part.

Several hon. Members have commented on the problems of the uniform business rate. Again, the Government chose yesterday not to exercise fully their power to increase rate poundage. That has an immediate effect on confidence, especially among small businesses that are trying to function in areas where purchasing power is declining and where they are surrounded by a forest of "To Let" and "For Sale" signs. To have relaxed the uniform business rate or made an exemption for empty properties would have been a powerful signal to small businesses that they have a friend in the Government, but it was not to be.

We must take due note of the fact that, in the rather obscure part that the Department of Trade and Industry played in yesterday's proceedings, the Government have made it clear that the spending power of the Department of Trade and Industry is to be halved in the next five years. That accompanies the cuts in spending on urban development corporations, to which the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) drew attention. These are not good times for small businesses, which depend on such spending.

What does an effective cut of half in the Department's rate of spending tell us about its commitment to regional grants and regional aid? What does it tell us about innovation grants, for which £50 million worth of applications were made last year but only £3·5 million worth of approvals? A Government truly committed to encouraging innovation among small business would have moved rather faster than this Government have. It is not without interest that in Scotland and Wales, where grants are administered not by the Department of Trade and Industry but by the Scottish Office and Welsh Office, the rate of approval and spend has been rather higher. The Department's performance is not impressive, and reductions in its spend are a bad sign.

It is fair for hon. Members to point out the important part that small business has played and will continue to play in employment and business growth. But it is also fair to point out that in the past few years we have seen skewed growth in small business. The northern regions have benefited far less from the growth in small business than the south-east and London. I say that in the hope that the Government will launch some programmes to encourage more growth in small business in the north. We, too, should have the right to share in the growth of small business.

Dr. Hampson: It is not all bad news in the north. In Otley, Garnetts paper mill has increased its work force from 169 to 231 and a new £1·8 million production line has been installed. It is good management which has turned the mill round.

Mr. Cousins: Of course, we welcome the news for a paper mill in Otley. We should have preferred that there was a raft of paper mills at Otley benefiting from the same experience. The hon. Gentleman earlier encouraged local and public authorities in his constituency to raise money by borrowing more on their capital base. He gave the game away about what the Government's true policies were in the autumn statement. The Government basically told the nation that everyone had an increase in their credit card limits. That is no basis for sustained growth in spending and could lead to an increase in the problems of debt overhang which threatens the future of so many small businesses.

In welcoming the growth of small business, it is right to refer to the present position. Company insolvencies are increasing at 25 per cent. a year. Personal insolvencies, which can often be the most tragic, are increasing at 40 per cent. a year. Surely, the Government must do something to relieve the pressure because they have the power in their own hands to do so. Reforms in the workings of the Insolvency Service and in insolvency legislation are long overdue. Reforms could at least assist in the winding down of enterprises that, sadly, are going bust as a result of the Government's policies. The process could take place in a more civilised way and in a way that was less devastating for the households that depend on those businesses.

We are in a grim situation. This year, there will be the 2 millionth VAT deregistration under this Government. Each deregistration leaves behind it a frustrated opportunity, family difficulties and household problems. It adds to the stock of people who are experiencing the pressure of the growth of unemployment, which is entirely planned and entirely the result of the lack of an industrial strategy.

Small business, above all business, most depends on the stability of economic outlook. Yesterday, the Government substituted for a policy of no quick fix a policy of quick no fix. There is no predictability in the expansion that the Government have in mind. An 18-month extension of the relaxation on corporation tax is of little benefit to companies that are trying to plan ahead for the medium and long term. The planned value of the corporation tax concessions is £200 billion. We learned from the autumn statement yesterday that the expected reduction in corporation tax revenue is £2 billion. That reduction of profitability outweighs tenfold any benefit from the relaxation of corporation tax.

The Government have power in their hands which they are not exercising. We have spent too much time in previous debates and in this debate discussing VAT. It is entirely possible for the Government to introduce reforms in the administration of VAT, without any cost in public money. Such reforms would ease the problems of many small businesses.

It is possible for the Government to be far more vigorous in the pursuit of the late payment problem. The Government have said that they have instructed their contractors to make payments more promptly. It would be nice to be assured that the Department of Trade and Industry, above all Departments, monitored that process, reported on it and ensured that all public bodies kept to that good code of practice.

It would be churlish for a Labour party spokesman not to join in the criticisms of the banks. The Government could do much by encouraging all the clearing banks to have a minimum lending rate equivalent to base rate; that has not been done.

We understand that the Government are to request that companies report on their late payment practices in their company reports. It would be nice to know whether that is definite, and what powers the Government are taking to scrutinise those reports and ensure that they are meaningful.

I have already referred to insolvency. Reform of the insolvency laws is long overdue. There has long been a need to increase the performance of the Insolvency Service to allow for the winding down of small businesses in a more courteous and civilised way.

Much remains to be done about the problem of leasing. Commercial leasehold reform has been in the system for more than five years now and would address many of the problems of small businesses that assign their leases and still find themselves with incalculable legal obligations hanging over them.

The Government could also do something about licensing—a matter to which our attention has rightly been drawn today. It is crazy that a small independent supermarket in my constituency should have to deal with 26 different forms of licensing. The problem is not necessarily that 26 different forms of licensing exist but that the approach and synchronisation of the licensing authorities are so poor as to stretch the ability of a small independent business to deal with them.

It would be sensible for the Government to organise themselves so that VAT inspections and Inland Revenue inspections occurred in a synchronised way. The fact that small businesses are faced with a constant stream of different inquiries from different Revenue departments places an entirely unnecessary burden on them.

The Government could take many practical measures to improve the financial viability of small businesses. Far more could be done with enterprise funds, particularly in the regions. It is not sufficient to have one or two casual experiments. The funds should be introduced as a national policy and underwritten by the Government.

Given that the Government are criticising banks, it would be nice to think that the premium rates that they charge on their own loan guarantee scheme could be reviewed. If hon. Members are asking banks to bring down their minimum lending rate to base rate, it seems only reasonable that we should ask the Government to do the same for the loan guarantee scheme, which is focused on inner-city areas and areas of Britain where purchasing power is most under pressure.

The Government could do far more for trade missions. It seems extraordinary that, at a time when we are hoping for export growth, spending on trade missions should be declining rather than growing.

As an experiment, the Government are to launch 15 one-stop shops, but with no new money. All the money to finance the experiment is to be clawed back from the existing TEC budget, undermining the TEC's ability to support enterprise and training initiatives in their areas. Something could be done to reduce the huge wastage rate of enterprise allowance take-up, at present financed by the TECs. There has been no movement on such matters. Over the past three years, there has been a desperate need to increase the take-up of enterprise consultancy grants, but such grants have increased by only 3,000 during that period. Far more could have been done by the Department to improve matters.

Let us consider how the Department's main budgets bear on small business. It is interesting to note that, in a tiny corner of the autumn statement, we learnt that the take from the Post Office is to be increased from £75 million to £180 million. That may be an example in which profits do, indeed, equal inflation. At present, we have a freeze on letter post charges. What does the increased take from the Post Office tell us about the Post Office's own charges in the immediate future?

What does the increased predicted take from Nuclear Electric tell us about the future pattern of energy charges when the Government propose to double their take from Nuclear Electric? What does that tell us about energy policy over the medium term? Surely it implies a considerable increase in energy charges. All those matters are of great concern to small businesses.

I wish briefly to refer to the problem in my region. The growth in small businesses in my region is particularly important to secure the region's future economic base. What are the area's chambers of commerce and enterprise agen[illegible] telling hon. Members? They are saying that the evidence of a double-dip recession is nowhere more apparent than in the north-east. They have stated:

> "In third quarter, the northern economy suffered a dramatic reversal of fortune. The cautious optimism signalled in a previous survey was swept away by a set of results which show that the region has fallen back to a level to which it plunged 18 months ago, but with prospects bleaker."

That is reflected around the country. The most recent surveys show that a quarter of the households in Britain are experiencing and have experienced the difficulties of unemployment over the past two years. That has a direct bearing on the future of small businesses because they are confronting the falling purchasing power of their clients and customers.

The DTI seems to consider its role as one of punkah wallah intervention: it flaps a cooling fan before meal time. Even if the Department is prepared to accept such a limited status for itself and not play a central part in making industrial strategy, it would still be possible for the Department to be far more effective on all the practical matters referred to in the debate. We look forward to the Minister's reply.

2.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on his success in the ballot and on the able way in which he

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

moved his motion. I also thank the hon. Members who have taken part in this long and wide-ranging debate: my hon. Friends the Members for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith), for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls), for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick). I welcome the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) to the Dispatch Box and congratulate him on the way in which he made his points. I also thank the hon. Members for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks), for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), who made a most thoughtful speech, and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) who provided light, if lengthy, relief.

Everyone who spoke in the debate agreed that small firms are a crucial source of new ideas, products and services. They extend consumer choice and provide industry with the flexibility needed to adapt to changing market conditions. They stimulate competition and help individuals to realise personal ambitions. From among their ranks will appear some of the bigger names of tomorrow. If not always beautiful, small firms are usually at least attractive. They are always dynamic and agents for change.

The debate gives the Government the opportunity to assure hon. Members that our long-standing commitment to the well-being of small firms remains undiminished and to set out how we shall continue to help them to start, survive and grow in future. My noble Friend Baroness Denton has talked about hugging small firms as only she can. As I am not the Minister responsible for small firms, I might not express my support in quite the same words. However, I am no less sincere in my and the Government's support for them.

Throughout the 1980s the development of an enterprise culture, mentioned by so many of my hon. Friends in the debate, was a vital element in providing a healthy economy. The Government recognised at the outset that we had to tackle the structural obstacles in the way of a more competitive and successful market economy. We had to help create and generate new economic activity. We knew that the lion's share of that would involve small businesses. We created conditions that made the United Kingdom one of the easiest environments in which to start a new business. The United Kingdom economy now depends heavily on their contribution.

The number of new businesses in the United Kingdom is now about 3 million, of which 97 per cent. are small firms employing fewer than 20 people. Such firms provide 17 per cent. of United Kingdom turnover. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North that our right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade views himself as the Minister for small firms in the Cabinet.

Government policy has a number of elements. The first is to get the economic climate for business right. Yesterday, in his autumn statement, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out clearly the Government's new framework for economic policy. His statement will boost confidence and promote recovery to the benefit of all enterprises, large, medium and small. The second element of the Government's strategy is to do all that they can to give United Kingdom companies the best possible chance of winning in world markets. That is why my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made his announcement on the Export Credits Guarantee Department yesterday.

The third element of our strategy is to ensure that all our policies are based on a clear understanding of their implications for our competitiveness. That means that government, and my Department in particular, must be closely in touch with industry's needs and involved in effective dialogue about them. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has recently reorganised the DTI to give each industry a recognised and knowledgeable point of contact within government. He set up a new division with the specific task of identifying the factors that are impeding our industrial performance.

The improved understanding that will follow from those policies does not mean that we will seek to take decisions that are best left to individual firms, but whenever an issue arises that affects our competitiveness we can be sure that we will fight for the best possible deal for business, small and large, throughout the United Kingdom.

The debate has centred on three main points: deregulation, late payment and the relationship of small companies with banks. Sadly, because my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North and I wanted to give all hon. Members a chance to speak, we have been left with little time. I shall try to cover as much of this complex matter as I can, but I assure hon. Members who have taken part in the debate that I shall ask my officials to examine *Hansard* so that I can answer in writing any detailed points that I cannot answer now.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North rightly focused his attention on the importance of minimising burdens on business. I warmly endorse his views. I assure him that the Government's commitment to minimising the burden of taxation and, of equal importance, to significantly reducing administrative and regulatory burdens on business is no passing whim. It is a key plank of our economic policy generally and our policy towards small firms in particular. Much has been achieved, but there is, I accept, much to do. The task remains, and the commitment to tackle that task is as strong as ever.

It might be helpful if I clarify what I mean by deregulation. Its meaning is not always well understood. I assure the hon. Member for Gordon that deregulation does not mean no regulation. It does not mean striking down well-focused and carefully framed regulation, regardless of the benefit that it brings—not at all. We certainly aim to strike out unnecessary regulation while trying to improve the quality of all regulation.

For regulation that is already on the statute book, deregulation may mean refinement to narrow the scope and concentrate on the aspects where the mischief is greatest or on the simplification of provisions so that the purpose of the legislation is clear and unambiguous. Where proposals for new regulation are under consideration, deregulation means ensuring that the proposals are justified and that there is a genuine problem that can be effectively addressed only by legislation. I assure my hon. Friends who made that point, particularly my hon. Friends the Members for Colchester, North, for Colne Valley, for Dover and for Gillingham that we will bear in mind their strictures and advice.

Where the need for regulation is clear, the potential impact on business must be understood. The costs of compliance, which my hon. Friend the Member for South

Hams dealt with, and enforcement costs, too, must be taken into account so that, as well as ensuring that the objective will achieve the expected benefits, we impose the minimum possible burden on business and on the Exchequer.

Our aim is not less regulation, but better regulation. The business of the Government is not the government of business. Since 1979, we have targeted constraints on the freedom of business in all sectors of the economy. There is no time to list all the deregulatory measures that have been taken to benefit business—it would take a long time to do so. We have systematically identified burdens on business and have as systematically set about reducing them, for example, by simplifying tax accounts for small businesses and the VAT return, which some hon. Members have mentioned. We have also streamlined the pay tax tables.

Continuing progress in that area is the aim of the Government's deregulation initiative, which was formally launched in 1985 and is being driven forward by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. As a first step, Departments are assessing the body of regulation for which they are responsible, and working to produce a strong programme for action in 1993 and beyond to reduce a burden which in many cases can fall disproportionately on small businesses.

Let me give a few examples. Is it really necessary for a business to apply for three licences to operate a karaoke machine? Surely, all that is required is a sense of humour and perhaps a pair of ear muffs. Can there be a compelling reason for requiring scrap metal merchants to be licensed by the Home Office and registered by the Department of the Environment? With form-filling requirements like that, it is surprising that Steptoe and Son even managed to find time to get their horse and cart out of the yard. What mischief is prevented by banning betting offices from selling cashew nuts and prawn crackers, while allowing them to sell peanuts and crisps?

I know that business licences are a concern for smaller firms. A recent report from the Institute of Directors shows that a number of those licences should be abolished. The deregulation unit is reviewing business licensing requirements and the views of the Institute of Directors are being taken into account. We have already made considerable progress in removing unnecessary licences.

The Government are well aware of the disproportionate effect that excessive or ill-focused regulations can have on small firms—what my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams described as a "crushing" impact.

Late payment of bills was mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Colchester, North and for Dover and the hon. Members for Gordon and for Greenwich.

I am aware of the difficulties that late payment of bills can cause to small firms. Any delay in payment due can have significant implications for smaller businesses. It damages their cash flow and, at worst, can threaten their very survival. Late payment is ethically deplorable and it damages the prospects for recovery for the economy as a whole.

According to recent National Westminster bank small business surveys, late payment and cash flow are the second most important problems facing small businesses, after lack of orders. I also know it generates more correspondence for the Minister for small firms, Baroness Denton, than any other small firms issue.

I am afraid that it must be said that there is no quick fix for late payment; no magic wand that the Government can wave to make the problem go away. If there were we would certainly have waved it before now. Late payment is one of the most frustrating and difficult small firms issues that we have to face. It is not a new problem. I expect that there are still contractors waiting to be paid for the Great Western railway. With the best will in the world, the problem will not be eradicated tomorrow.

I am aware that there are calls for the Government to enact legislation in this area. The Government would not be opposed in principle to such legislation if we thought that it would work. I want to make it clear that we are not objecting to legislation on some obscure grounds of dogma. We have expressed our readiness to consider legislative proposals that could have a positive effect on the problem.

What we all have to ask, however, is: would such legislation be effective in reducing late payment? Would it be of real help to the small firms sector? Evidence that a statutory right to interest would satisfy those criteria is so far inconclusive.

It is no accident that the majority of small firms' representative organisations remain opposed to statutory interest. They share our concerns that the practical effects of legislation would, at best, be minimal and that it could damage small businesses. There is good reason to believe that statutory interest would merely be used against small firms, rather than by them—that large companies would be encouraged to impose longer credit terms.

Ministers and officials have devoted considerable time to examining how the problem can be tackled. They have considered also the enactment of legislation. Elsewhere in Europe there is concern about delayed invoices. Contrary to popular belief, late payment to small businesses is not especially a British disease. The experience of our European neighbours—even those with appropriate legislation—demonstrates clearly that there is a lack of evidence in support of statutory interest.

In 1989, the European Commission published the results of an investigation into late payment——

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

UNADOPTED ROADS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): With the permission of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 11 December.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 11 December.

ADOPTION OF ROADS (COMPULSORY PROCEDURES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Skinner: With the permission of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 11 December.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 11 December.

HOMICIDE (DEFENCE OF PROVOCATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Skinner: With the permission of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 11 December.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 11 December.

FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Skinner: With the permission of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 11 December.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 11 December.

PRIVATE SECURITY (REGISTRATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Skinner: With the permission of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 11 December.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 11 December.

SPORTING EVENTS (CONTROL OF ALCOHOL ETC.) (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 November.

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 November.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

2·31 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): In this debate I intend to thrust a stake through the heart of Professor Tomlinson's report and show that the professor has produced, as far as Bart's is concerned, a discreditable document which henceforth will be seen as such by fair-minded and clear-minded people.

I shall begin with three general points. First, the Bart's site at Smithfield lies in the constituency of the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), the Secretary of State for National Heritage. I know that the right hon. Gentleman is extremely concerned for the future of the hospital.

Secondly, the much respected Dr. Brian Jarman, the professor of primary care at St. Mary's, has concluded that the Tomlinson report is flawed because there is no surplus of beds in London. Both Tomlinson and the King's Fund have misinterpreted the statistics.

Thirdly, when the Minister for Health went to Bart's eight days ago, he was given evidence by the North East Thames regional health authority that it was treating the consultation period as a mere formality. The question is whether Ministers and civil servants have put the region up to this disgraceful conduct or whether the region is acting in contempt of Parliament and behind Ministers' backs. How do Ministers justify putting pressure on Conservative members of the Select Committee on Health not to hold a full inquiry into the Tomlinson report but merely to hear only the biased professor? Are Ministers now reduced to rigging Select Committees?

The main point made by Tomlinson against Bart's is that the introduction of the internal market has shown that Bart's does not have enough patients to be viable. According to Tomlinson, Bart's has, and always will have, a deficit because it is in the wrong place. It is an extraordinary argument, and one which is 100 per cent. wrong.

The Minister for Health was told by Professor Mike Besser that the argument that Bart's has no patients is plain silly. Within a two-mile radius of the Smithfield site, Bart's serves 100,000 people from south Hackney and 100,000 from south Islington, as well as 314,000 daily commuters and 5,000 who live in the City.

Professor Besser says:

> "Our beds are full and there is no evidence to suggest that they will not remain so. During September this year Bart's hospital recorded its highest ever bed-occupancy rate of 96 per cent."

As for the treatment of accident and emergency patients, Professor Besser has asked me to put the following point to the Minister:

> "Bart's would like to know what would happen if there were another Cannon street train disaster, or St. Mary's Axe bomb, another Marchioness boat sank or if there were another artillery Guards bombing. Bart's would like to know where the 39,713 patients who attended Bart's at Smithfield's A & E department in the year to March 1992 would go."

Professor Besser and everyone else at Bart's are angry that Tomlinson never bothered to find out to what extent money did not follow patients at Bart's or how, if it did, there would be a surplus rather than a deficit. He asked me to make the relevant figures public for the first time. They are contained in a note dated 28 October prepared by Mr. Dalton, the deputy general manager. He wrote:

> "At 31 September, the Trust had exceeded its planned contract level with our 55 block contract purchases by 5,600 episodes.
>
> If this level of activity continued, accounting for the winter season, we will over-achieve by approximately 13,000 episodes or +27 per cent. of our agreed plan.
>
> The problem is clearly not with our patient flows but with the failure of the 'market' to enable money to follow the patients."

Mr. Dalton told me that if the money had followed the patients in those 13,000 episodes, and if the purchasers had paid the full cost of the treatment, Bart's would have received a staggering additional £22 million. If the purchasers had paid the marginal cost, which is one fifth of the total cost, and if Bart's had been prepared to allow the purchasers to do that where money was not following the patients, Bart's would have received an additional £4·4 million. That figure is almost exactly equal to the projected in-year deficit for 1992-93. In short, the figures show that the deficit would disappear, even though Bart's is in the absurd position of having to make a capital charge for every patient it treats based on current City land values —although the hospital was given the land 900 years ago by act of God.

Patients wish and need to go to Bart's and their general practitioners want to send them there. However, the figures show that thousands of patients are receiving treatment at Bart's but the purchasers are refusing to pay for that treatment. They show that the internal market has broken down, that money is not following the patient, and that there is not a patients charter but only a contract-makers charter. The figures also show that the Secretary of State and the Minister have been misled by those who drew up the Tomlinson and King's Fund reports—the mad hatters and march hares of the bureaucratic medical world.

The horrifying question now being asked by the people of London is why Tomlinson did not even consider that matter, which constitutes the critical point of his inquiry as it relates to Bart's. Was it through ignorance or laziness, or were more malign forces at work?

To balance the books, Bart's now proposes to turn away thousands of patients. Mr. Dalton writes:

> "The projection report I commissioned reveals that if we only undertook emergency admissions from now to 31 March and stopped all elective cases, then to live within our contract plans we could only admit 465 elective patients (21/week). This compares with our volume for the first six months of the year of 11,500 (422/week).
>
> If purchasers refuse to pay then we must carefully and sensitively notify the patient's GP (and patient) that the hospital wishes to treat the patient but is being prevented from doing so by the purchaser.
>
> This contract management system is bound to be controversial but the principle remains: purchasers must pay for the service they wish us to provide. I hope therefore that the system will be a catalyst for the release of additional funds to us and enable a fuller debate on getting the market to work properly."

What a wicked scandal it is that the Secretary of State has produced a system that forces one of the best hospitals in the world to turn away patients. If the Minister has any decency left, he will inform Parliament today that the proposal to close Bart's will be swiftly consigned to the dustbin of medical history. I keep reading that, because Bart's is nigh on 900 years old, it is a conservative institution which is resistant to change. What nonsense!

[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]

In the past five years, £60 million has been spent on Bart's, providing, among other things, new children's and cancer wards. Bart's has an operating theatre complex which is the most technically advanced in Europe and a day centre surgery which meets the highest standards. The medical college has an international reputation for excellence in teaching and research. At Charterhouse square there is one of the best medical research centres in Europe, with 400 researchers.

Tomlinson declined to visit the research centre. I understand that when the Minister for Health went there he asked whether the continuation of the work at Charterhouse square depended on the juxtaposition of the hospital. He was told unambiguously by Professor Lesley Rees, the dean of the medical school, that that was the case. Changes in the undergraduate medical curriculum at Bart's even pre-empted the General Medical Council proposals for the modernisation of medical education in Britain.

The King's Fund organisational audit, which was carried out only a few weeks ago, showed that Bart's had cracked the problem of multi-disciplinary work, especially in its linking of hospital work with GP work and community care.

Yesterday, Dr. Lesley Southgate, a local GP in a group practice and the only female professor of general practice in the United Kingdom said:

> "I agree that primary and community services are under-developed but evidence shows that if money is spent in these areas in deprived places such as Hackney hospital referral rates will go up as more illnesses are diagnosed as requiring hospitalisation."

A cross-section of GPs from Hackney to whom I spoke on Monday were united on two points: first, they want to remain generalists; and secondly, although they want more money for primary care, they do not see that resulting in a fall in the demand for hospital beds. My own GP, Dr. Janet Kirton, who works in one of the most deprived areas in Hackney, and hence Britain, warns of dire results if Bart's closes. Tomlinson does not know. She knows. She is bright, young and progressive.

The Minister for Health knows how innovative Bart's can be. When he visited the hospital eight days ago I understand that he was completely thrown by the fact that he was presented with a new strategy for Bart's, Homerton hospital and St. Mark's. It must be obvious to everyone that Bart's has drawn up an alternative proposal, because it has concluded that the Government will never allow the creation of a system in which money genuinely follows the patients. Bart's has concluded that purchasers will always and for ever be allowed to rig and distort the market, even if it is against the best interests of patients.

The new plan provides for savings of £22 million at Smithfield. Even the Secretary of State must see that as innovative. I stress that, with or without this plan, there is no rational argument for closing Bart's on medical or financial grounds.

So that leaves the question of how Tomlinson managed to get it so wrong. The most likely answer lies in the complete absence of methodology in the Tomlinson report. One expert in health economics described the report as being of slovenly intellect. Another put it more prosaically when he said:

> "I wouldn't close a corner shop on the basis of this report, let alone one of the best hospitals in the world at Bart's."

The Tomlinson report contains no statistical analysis, costings or financial underpinning of its arguments. It uses no known scientific method, unless the making of didactic statements is deemed to be such.

The proposal to close Bart's is a proposal to tear up history, throw away precious medical research and science and deny some of the most deprived people in Britain of a first-class hospital service. The proposal has left the local community, patients, hospital staff and the medical college bewildered and angry. At Bart's we have irreplaceable human and capital resources and an incomparable reservoir of knowledge, medical care and love. Surely, there is no other country in the world that would even dream of destroying such a magnificent asset.

The poet Tennyson wrote:

> "For I dipt into the future, far as human eye can see
> Saw the vision of the world and all the wonder there could be."

With Bart's it is somewhat different. It has been part of our island story since time immemorial. It represents all that is fine and noble in the human spirit. It is a wholly good institution in a world where goodness is in short supply. Bart's matters because it is part of the vision of the world.

It is inconceivable that Parliament should allow it to be destroyed. We all expect the Minister to lift the dark and menacing cloud that hangs over our hospital today and so enable us to rejoice in the next 900 years of its existence.

2.46 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to speak briefly in the debate to back up his powerful, moving case. I bitterly oppose Professor Tomlinson's suggestion that Bart's should close. I urge the Government to keep Bart's open in its entirety, with all its expertise and experience and the services that it provides—especially to my local constituents.

Not only does Professor Tomlinson suggest that 900 years of history should be dismissed in seven paragraphs; not only does he suggest that a centre of real medical excellence should disappear—a centre of excellence which even in recent years has improved and developed, with improvements ranging from new facilities for the treatment of HIV and AIDS to new facilities for child oncology—he also suggests that the local hospital, which serves thousands of people in the southern part of Islington and Finsbury, should be simply wiped from the map.

This morning I spoke to a general practitioner, who has a list of 6,000 local patients who look to Bart's as their local hospital. It is suggested that they should go to Homerton hospital, the Royal London hospital or somewhere else. Many of the people who look to Bart's as their local hospital are elderly and frail and find it difficult to imagine, let alone make, the journey half way across London to so-called alternative facilities. I hope that the Government will think again about Professor Tomlinson's proposal. The experience, excellence, work and service that Bart's provides are too precious to too many people to throw away so lightly.

My hon. Friend referred to the King's Fund organisational audit of Bart's. It gave glowing praise to the work that Bart's does. I finish by drawing attention to just one factor of that praise. The report said:

"They were also struck by the loyalty of staff to the organisation and the way everyone seemed to be working together. They commended these as very special qualities which should be cherished."

Professor Tomlinson's way of cherishing those qualities is to force them into complete oblivion. We do not want to see that and nor do local people. I urge the Government to save Bart's hospital.

2.48 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The usual arrangement in an Adjournment debate is that the debate is between the hon. Member who raises the subject and the Minister. Another hon. Member may speak only with the premission of the hon. Member who introduced the debate. I have been informed of only one hon. Member who had permission to speak from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore).

Mr. Sedgemore: I am willing to allow the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) to speak.

2.49 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) for allowing me to make a brief contribution to his Adjournment debate. I register an interest, having been trained at Bart's. However, my arguments are based not on sentimentality but on sound, practical grounds. Believing as I do in the excellence of the national health service generally, every member of my family—my wife, two sons, one of whom was born at Bart's, and I—has received superb treatment at Bart's.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows that I generally welcome the Tomlinson report, but today we are debating a narrower but highly important issue. I hope that the report will not be simply rubber-stamped without being critically re-examined.

Bart's is justifiably proud of its 900-year history. It has always looked to the future, and only in that way has it maintained its international pre-eminence over the years. Before Tomlinson, at a time when Bart's was told that it was not under threat, it had already established a strategy group to change and adapt to present-day needs in line with Government policy.

It was proposed that Bart's at Smithfield, which serves the constituents of certain Opposition Members as well as residents of the City, should take as its theme three aspects highlighted in "The Health of the Nation"—cancer, heart disease and AIDS. Combined with that, on a contracted site, was to be a city health centre to care for the 300,000 people who commute to the City daily. Bart's serves half a million people during the day, yet Tomlinson claims that it will be all too easy to move patients suffering from heart attacks or strokes across the river to Guy's, St. Thomas's, the Royal London, or University College hospital. I imagine that those of my constituents who work in the City would, like me, be extremely unhappy about the time involved in travelling to receive expert care.

Bart's has shown over the years that its policies work. Contrary to recent assertions, consultant episodes, in-patient activity and day cases have improved dramatically. Surely we cannot allow a savage prescription to be administered without further examination. The suggested solution of co-operation with the Royal London hospital linked to the disposal of the magnificent site is flawed—medically, statistically and financially. The most important thing of all is not Bart's history but proper treatment of national health service patients in future.

2.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) for this opportunity to debate the future of St. Bartholomew's hospital. In publishing Sir Bernard Tomlinson's report on London's health services last month, the Government made clear their intention that there should be a period of reflection and discussion before key decisions are taken. This afternoon's debate is a valuable part of that process.

I listened carefully to the views that were expressed, and all that was said by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch will be carefully considered. I assure the House that the Government will take those views into account in presenting our detailed proposals for change in the light of the Tomlinson report.

No hospital has a longer or more distinguished tradition of caring for the sick than Bart's. Many of the country's doctors and nurses began their training there. A great many more benefited from the expert treatment that they received at Bart's.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister going to save the hospital? Yes or no.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister should be allowed, in the short time available to him, to make progress with his speech.

Mr. Sackville: It is entirely understandable that a hospital with such an eminent history attracts fierce loyalties and that the prospect that it might cease to provide services on the Smithfield site—its home for several hundred years—arouses strong emotions.

Many of those feelings were clearly expressed today by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch and by my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes), but we must understand the context in which this debate takes place. The real issue is not the future of Bart's, St. Thomas's, the Middlesex or any of London's other institutions. The issue is the future of London's health services as a whole and how we can secure a better NHS for Londoners.

Just over a year ago, the Government asked Sir Bernard Tomlinson and a small team to carry out an inquiry. We did so because of the widely held view that, despite the very large sums that had been spent on the NHS in the capital, London's health service had become increasingly poorly matched to the needs of the people who live there. We believe that the time was ripe to take a fresh look at London's existing patterns of health care provision and at how they might be improved.

Sir Bernard's advice to Ministers was published last month. His report clearly points to the need for a major shift in the focus of health services in London to meet the city's current and future health needs. Understandably, much public and media attention has concentrated on his recommendations for individual hospitals; but this is emphatically not a report just about the hospitals. It is

[Mr. Sackville]

about the changes that are required to enable the NHS to provide a service that is better attuned to people's current and future health needs.

The heart of the report addresses a familiar problem: over a period of decades, resources have been swallowed up by the large hospitals, to the growing detriment of other health services. The House will be familiar with Sir Bernard's main conclusions, but let me repeat them. He found that the trend in hospital practice for shorter in-patient stays, coupled with the growing number of conditions that could be treated outside hospital altogether, meant that progressively fewer hospital beds would be needed; that acute hospitals dominated the scene, and that not enough attention was paid to health services delivered in the community by GPs, health visitors and others through surgeries, health centres and in patients' homes; and that expensive specialist services were needlessly duplicated in London and were in urgent need of rationalisation.

The report recommends a programme of mergers and closures of several hospitals over the next few years, preserving the best from each in a way that will maximise efficiency and quality of service. Savings arising from hospital rationalisation, Sir Bernard argues, should be ploughed into community-based services and into much-needed improvements in general practice and primary care.

The Tomlinson report presents a compelling case for radical change in London's health service; but, of course, Sir Bernard's is not the only study to have reached that conclusion. A detailed review carried out last year by the independent King's Fund—in which the hon. Gentleman's colleague in another place, Baroness Hollis, played a leading role—adopted broadly the same view. If anything, the King's Fund report suggested changes on a greater scale than those recommended by Sir Bernard and his team.

The need for a fundamental shift in the balance of health services in London is widely recognised across the political parties. I remind the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch that his party's health spokesman has made a number of statements on the subject, including —on 15 October—the statement that

"the status quo is no longer an option."

Following an interview with *The Times*, it was reported that

"Mr. Blunkett indicated that Labour would not necessarily oppose closures."

I know that, since then, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) has made a number of statements that directly contradict that view.

In a recent statement to the House, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health explained how the Government would handle consideration of the Tomlinson report. This is the most important part of what I have to say. Ministers are currently engaged in an intensive period of discussion with the many interested parties involved—health authorities, hospitals, the professions, London university and others. As part of the process, my hon. Friend the Minister for Health is visiting the institutions most affected by the report to listen to their views. We expect to present early in the new year detailed proposals in the light of those discussions.

Let me repeat the assurance given to the House at the time of my right hon. Friend's statement: no major decisions—particularly about closures or mergers of individual hospitals—will be made without proper consultation, and I entirely reject any suggestion that employees of regional health authorities or others seek to prejudice that consultation. None the less, we accept that London has too many hospitals and that extensive rationalisation will be necessary. We also accept the need to improve London's primary and community services—an issue also highlighted in the King's Fund report. Often, services that are taken for granted in other parts of the country are second rate in London. That needs to change, and we shall be exploring Sir Bernard's recommendations for improvement as a matter of urgency.

Sir Bernard's report makes several recommendations that bear directly on Bart's. Reference has been made to the fact that he has made it clear that he does not believe that there is a long-term future for the hospital on its present Smithfield site; that services between Bart's and the neighbouring Royal London hospital should be rationalised and that the two hospitals should merge on the Royal London site——

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): So that the site can be sold.

Mr. Sackville: —and that their medical schools should proceed quickly towards full integration. He also recommends that the Homerton and St. Mark's hospitals, both of which are currently part of Bart's acute unit, should be separated from it. In his view, the Homerton should be managed as an independent unit and become eventually an NHS trust, while St. Mark's would relocate to Northwick Park, Harrow.

I have already told the House that we cannot take any decisions at this stage. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch knows that I am unable to make any commitment of the nature that he asked for today. However, may I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon that the Government's response will be taken in the light of everything that has been said today. It will not be a rubber stamp of the Tomlinson report.

Mrs. Dunwoody: It will be a whitewash.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Lady must contain herself.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I have not started yet, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not expect remarks of that kind from a seated position.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 2 November 1992

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Society for the Protection of Unborn Children

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Attorney-General when the Director of Public Prosecutions intends to take a decision on whether to prosecute the SPUC under the Representation of the People Act 1986 in connection with the last general election in the constituency of Halifax.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions is considering allegations that an offence under the Representation of the People Act 1983 has been committed by the SPUC in connection with the last general election in constituencies in West Yorkshire—Halifax—Avon—Weston-super-Mare—and Lancashire—Hyndburn. The Director is seeking the advice of counsel and a decision on whether any offence appears to have been committed by any person will be taken in the light of that advice.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Murderers

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average number of years which have been served by prisoners convicted for murder who have been released in the last two years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: According to the records held centrally, which are approximate, the average time served under sentence in prison service establishments by murderers first released on licence in 1990 was 12·4 years. The provisional estimate for 1991 is 12·1 years.

These figures are published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales"—table 8.5 of the volume for 1990, Cm 1800.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees, and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The readily available information about the appointments for which my Department is responsible, including salary details, is given in "Public Bodies" which is published annually and in "Public Appointments: A Handbook for Women's Organisations" which also gives information on the period of appointments and the qualifications and background required of candidates. Copies of both publications are in the Library. The 1992 editions of both publications, with information about the most recent appointments, are due to be published in December.

Fire Brigades (Fleet Maintenance)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fleet mechanics are employed within each fire brigade area in Wales; and how many are also employed as part-time fire fighters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The figures supplied by brigades on 23 October 1992 are as follows:

A *Brigade*	*B* *Number of brigade fleet mechanics*	*C* *Number in column B who retained firefighters*
Clwyd	nil (local authority staff)	nil
Dyfed	6	5
Mid Glamorgan	11	nil
South Glamorgan	4	nil
West Glamorgan	nil (local authority staff)	nil
Gwent	nil (local authority staff)	nil
Gwynedd	5	nil
Powys	4	2
Totals	30	7

Animal Abuse

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to update and increase as appropriate the penalties for offences of animal abuse in the relevant legislation from 1822 to 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The maximum penalties available to the courts for offences in legislation relating to animal abuse for which my right hon. and learned Friend, the Home Secretary, is responsible are kept under regular review. However, the Government have no plans at present to increase existing penalty levels.

Under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, the monetary values of the levels on the standard scale of fines for offences tried in magistrates courts, which will include many animal abuse offences, were uprated from 1 October 1992.

Stolen Property

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the value of property recorded by the police as stolen in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage of this was recovered.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Information for 1990 is published in tables 2.13 and 2.15 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1990", a copy of which is available in the Library. Information for 1991 has not yet been finalised.

Prison Deaths

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all deaths that have occurred in 1991 of persons detained in prison department establishments, stating, in each case, the age and sex of the inmates and cause of death, the inquest verdict, whether the inmate was sentenced or on remand, the establishment where the inmate was detained, whether the death occurred there or in an outside hospital and, for where the death occurred within the prison, whether the inmate was segregated either in the hospital wing or in the punishment block.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* The information is given in the table. Only one prisoner who died in the prison health care centre was segregated for reasons of good order and discipline—see footnote 6.

Death of prisoners in Her Majesty's Prison Service custody in 1991

Date	*Establishment*	*Age*	*Sex*	*Status*[1]	*Cause of Death*	*Inquest Verdict*	*Location at time of death*[2]
6 January	Gloucester	42	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL
7 January	The Mount	19	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	GOAD
14 January	Lincoln	62	M	S	Uraemia necrosis	Natural	OH
16 January	Norwich	36	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL
18 January	Blundeston	34	M	S	Myocardial dysplasia	Natural	OL
19 January	Wandsworth	29	M	S	Cut throat	Suicide while the balance of his mind was disturbed and aggravated by lack of care	OH[3]
25 January	Full Sutton	35	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	PH
4 February	Maidstone	64	M	S	Heart failure	Natural	OH
11 February	Manchester	22	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	OL
19 February	Stafford	40	M	S	—	Unlawfully killed	OH[4]
22 February	Cardiff	23	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	VPU
2 March	Brixton	37	M	R	Heart failure	Accidental	OH
6 March	Liverpool	22	M	R	Hanging	Suicide in circumstances brought about by lack of care	OL
10 March	Bristol	32	M	S	Hanging	Suicide aggravated by lack of care	PH
21 March	Wakefield	59	M	S	Cardiac arrest	Natural	OL
23 March	Wormwood Scrubs	56	M	S	Haemopericardium	Natural	PRES Hostel
7 April	Oxford	29	M	R	Hanging	Accidental	OL
8 April	Manchester	31	M	R	Overdose	Not yet held	PH
9 April	Wandsworth	25	M	S	Cerebral infarction	Natural	OH
17 April	Garth	38	M	S	Cut wrists	Suicide	OL
19 April	Leeds	31	M	R	Hanging	Open	OL
10 May	Camp Hill	51	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	OH
13 May	Liverpool	30	M	S	Heart/lung failure	Suicide	OH[5]
13 May	Durham	33	M	CU	Possible dystonic reaction to haloperidol	Open	PH[6]
21 May	Wakefield	49	M	S	Myocardial infarction	Natural	OL
22 May	Littlehey	46	M	S	Cardiac arrest	Natural	PH
27 May	Brixton	24	M	CU	Hanging	Suicide in circumstances aggravated by lack of care	PH
27 May	Featherstone	34	M	S	Hanging	Suicide in circumstances aggravated by lack of care	Seg(GOAD)
1 June	Wandsworth	64	M	S	Myocardial infarction	Natural	OH
8 June	Wormwood Scrubs	21	M	S	Hanging	Open	OH
13 June	Haverigg	31	M	S	Sclerosis of liver	Natural	OH
2 July	Blantyre House	27	M	S	Overdose	Accidental	OL
8 July	Durham	27	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL
18 July	Pentonville	54	M	S	Hanging	Suicide while the balance of his mind was disturbed	PH
18 July	Wakefield	37	M	S	Stabbed	Not held	OL
21 July	Parkhurst	29	M	S	Hanging	Suicide brought about by lack of care	OL
26 July	Full Sutton	34	M	S	Hanging	Misadventure	OH[7]
30 July	Liverpool	34	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	PH
31 July	Grendon	30	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OH[8]
31 July	Durham	63	M	S	Acute myocardial infarction	Natural	OH
31 July	Manchester	21	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL
2 August	Birmingham	25	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	PH
11 August	Preston	45	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	PH
16 August	Doncaster	45	M	R	Hanging	Open	OL
18 August	Wakefield	31	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL
26 August	Birmingham	23	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL
31 August	Feltham	18	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL
11 September	Wakefield	65	M	S	Myocardial infarction	Natural	PH

Date	*Establishment*	*Age*	*Sex*	*Status*[1]	*Cause of Death*	*Inquest Verdict*	*Location at time of death*[2]
16 September	Nottingham	45	M	S	Hanging	Not yet held	OL
21 September	Winchester	45	M	R	Drug poisoning	Misadventure	OL
21 September	Glen Parva	20	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	OL
22 September	Feltham	15	M	S	Hanging	Accidental	OL
1 October	Norwich	30	M	S	Asthma attack	Open	OL
5 October	Kirkham	54	M	S	Heart attack	Not held	OH
7 October	Grendon	37	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	APU
8 October	Pentonville	32	M	IA	Acute cardiac[9] failure	Not yet held	Seg(GOAD)
16 October	Cardiff	33	M	R	Overdose	Suicide while balance of mind was disturbed	PH
18 October	Winchester	40	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	PH
25 October	Haverigg	25	M	S	Hanging	Open	OL
25 October	Leicester	65	M	S	Lung cancer	Natural	OH
28 October	Stafford	29	M	S	Hanging	Open	OL
9 November	Usk	52	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	OL
10 November	Maidstone	64	M	S	Cerebral haemorrhage	Natural	OH
12 November	Birmingham	44	M	R	Overdose	Suicide	OL
13 November	Norwich	49	M	R	Overdose	Misadventure	OL
31 November	Swaleside	41	M	S	Pulminary aneurysm	Natural	OL
12 December	Garth	49	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	OL
14 December	Stoke Heath	19	M	CU	Hanging	Suicide	OL
17 December	Long Lartin	52	M	S	Overdose	Suicide	OL
28 December	Leeds	30	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	OL(OP)

[1] **Status:**—
R—Remand.
CU—Convicted unsentenced.
S—Sentenced.
IA—Detained under the Immigration Act..

[2] **Location:**—
OL—Ordinary location within prison.
GOAD—Good order and discipline wing.
PH—Prison health care centre.
VPU—Vulnerable prisoner unit.
PRES—Pre-release hostel.
APU—Acute psychiatric unit within prison.
Seg(GOAD)—Located in the Segregation Unit for reasons of good order and discipline (Rule 430).
OL(OP)—Located on ordinary location, but segregated for prisoner's own protection.

[3] Prisoner cut throat on ordinary location: death occurred in an outside hospital.

[4] Prisoner was assaulted on ordinary location: death occurred in an outside hospital.

[5] Prisoner set fire to himself in prison health care centre: death occurred in an outside hospital.

[6] Prisoner was located in a special cell in the health care centre following a series of violent oubursts. No anatomical cause of death was found, but it was thought to have resulted from a dystonic reaction to haloperidol.

[7] Prisoner was found hanging in Segregation Unit, where he was located for reasons of good order and discipline: death occurred in an outside hospital.

[8] Prisoner was found hanging in the Acute Psychiatric Unit: death occurred in an an outside hospital.

[9] The post mortem failed to reveal the exact cause of death, but concluded there was a 'strong possibility of acute cardiac failure' and a more remote possibility of asphyxia.

Criminal Justice Act 1991

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training has been received by probation officers, judges, magistrates, recorders and justices' clerks in preparation for the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 30 October 1992]*: The probation service has undertaken a major training exercise for probation officers in preparation for the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. This training covered full details of the legislation as well as its implications for probation practice. The Judicial Studies Board has provided comprehensive guidance and training on the Act for both the professional and the lay judiciary. Judges of the Court of Appeal and the High Court were given a briefing in the Lord Chief Justice's court, while judges, recorders and assistant recorders sitting in Crown courts received a guide to the sentencing provisions of the Act as part of the Crown Court bench book on sentencing. The Judicial Studies Board produced an introduction of the Act and a copy of this document was sent to each magistrate. A comprehensive training package was also produced to assist those, usually justices' clerks, who train the magistrates. The Home Office also held a series of special conferences attended by representatives of the agencies involved in the criminal justice system.

Crime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment his Department has made of the likely impact of *(a)* the continued recession and *(b)* the effect of future levels of benefits or public services on (i) the crime rate and (ii) inner city and other disorder; and what assessment he has made of whether the police will be able to cope with such developments.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 30 October 1992]*: There are very many variables that may affect the crime rate—not least the behaviour of individual offenders. The relationship between crime levels and economic activity is analysed in Home Office research study 119 "Trends in Crime and their Interpretation: A Study of Recorded Crime in Post-war England and Wales"—a copy of which is in the Library. Factors which might affect public order in inner cities are kept under constant review. The Government will continue to ensure that the police and other criminal justice services are provided with the necessary resources to respond to crime whatever its source or reason.

Emergency Planning

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the measure of protection to local authority grant to be given within the diminishing total expenditure on civil defence indicated in his speech to the emergency planning conference on 30 June;

(2) what steps he has taken to check preparedness and resources available to local emergency planners in the light of the Amsterdam air disaster.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* Since July 1991, when the then Home Secretary undertook to give a measure of protection to local authority civil defence grant provided that certain conditions were met, current grant has been maintained at the same level despite substantial cuts in civil defence expenditure as a whole. In addition, local authorities have been encouraged to use the grant more flexibly to improve local authority response to local peacetime disasters such as that which occurred in Amsterdam.

The prime responsibility for responding to disasters in this country lies at the local level where the resources and the expertise are to be found. Home Office officials routinely discuss local emergency preparedness as part of the process of monitoring civil defence grant. In addition, the recently published Home Office guidance "Dealing with Disasters" is aimed at assisting the local response.

WALES

Credit Unions

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are currently undertaken by his Department to encourage the establishment of credit unions in rural Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The development of credit unions in Wales is a responsibility of the Welsh Co-operative Development Training Centre. My Department has, however, provided assistance for certain credit unions under the urban programme and I am prepared to consider applications for support towards credit unions in rural areas under the rural initiative capital projects programme, where these meet the criteria of the scheme.

Fishing Fleet

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to protect the viability of the Welsh fishing fleet.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A number of EC, United Kingdom and local measures have been introduced to conserve fish stocks and thus maintain the viability of the fishing industry. In February the Government announced a new package of measures, including decommissioning grants and days at sea allocations, designed to control fishing effort and conserve fish stocks.

NHS Spending

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is NHS spending in Wales, per capita for each year since 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is given in the following table, together with a comparable table of per capita figures expressed in 1992-93 prices.

Year	*Gross NHS per capita expenditure* £	*At 1992-93 prices* £
1979-80	171	415
1980-81	220	450
1981-82	251	468
1982-83	277	485
1983-84	294	491
1984-85	319	506
1985-86	339	511
1986-87	363	531
1987-88	400	553
1988-89	444	573
1989-90	478	578
1990-91	534	597
1991-92	612	639
1992-93	674	674

Drugs

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are under way to combat illegal drug use in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government have a comprehensive strategy for tackling drug misuse. The objective is to attack the problem by simultaneous action on five main fronts:

Reducing supplies from abroad.

Making enforcement even more effective.

Maintaining effective deterrents and tight domestic controls.

Developing prevention.

Improving treatment and rehabilitation.

The Welsh Office has specific responsibility for the last two in Wales, but does take a close interest in the others.

Services are provided on a multi-agency basis by statutory and voluntary organisations, many of which are funded through their district health authority from the central funding initiative, providing a wide range of interventions and prevention campaigns.

Advice on an all-Wales basis is provided to the Department, and to local agencies by the Welsh Committee on Drug Misuse which was established in 1986.

Fish Stocks

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action is being undertaken to protect and enhance sea trout and salmon stocks in the rivers of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In England and Wales statutory responsibility for the maintenance, improvement and development of salmon and sea trout fisheries rests with the National Rivers Authority. I have asked Dr. John Stoner, the NRA Welsh regional manager, to write to my hon. Friend.

Radioactivity

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action is being taken to monitor radioactivity off the coast of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Directorate of fisheries research of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food undertakes monitoring of radioactivity around the coast of Wales on behalf of the Welsh Office. Samples such as fish, shellfish, seaweed and sediments are taken from a number of locations and the results are regularly published. Copies of the reports are kept in the Library of the House. This monitoring work is supplemented by Government-sponsored research on specific aspects of radioactivity in the environment.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cargoes of toxic ash from waste incineration have been brought for storage or burning on landfill sites in Wales during the past five years; and if he will specify the quantity of ash transported in each year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Farm and Countryside Grant Scheme

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many claims under the farm and conservation grant scheme have been disallowed by his Department in each year since its inception.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

	Number
1989	19
1990	110
1991	66
[1]1992	50

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[1] To 30 September.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many claims for sheep annual premium have been disallowed by his Department in each of the past three years.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Year	
1989	51
1990	105
1991	285
1992[1]	96

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[1] to 30 October.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by location and size of site, areas of known contaminated land in Wales; and if he will make a statement on how restorative action will be taken to clean up these sites.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Surveys of possibly contaminated land in Wales were undertaken on behalf of the Welsh Office in 1982 and 1988. Copies of the later report are held in the Library of the House.

The Welsh Development Agency is tackling contaminated land as part of its extensive land reclamation programme. Powers are also available to local authorities to ensure the treatment of contaminated land where it poses a threat to the environment or public health. The National Rivers Authority has powers to remedy pollution of controlled waters. In addition, contaminated land is a material planning consideration for local planning authorities to take account of in considering new development.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement listing which hospitals he will invite to apply for trust status in 1994; and what policy considerations he will use in choosing applicants for 1994 trust status.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend's statement of 29 October at column 1148. The health units and ambulance services invited to prepare formal applications to become NHS trusts in April 1994 are:

Gwynedd Health Authority
Acute Unit (Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor)
Community Health

Gwent Health Authority
North Gwent Acute Unit (Nevill Hall Hospital, Abergavenny)

South Glamorgan Health Authority
Velindre Hospital

Mid Glamorgan Health Authority
Merthyr/Cynon Health Unit (Prince Charles Hospital, Merthyr Tydfil)
Rhondda Health Unit
Taff Ely Health Unit (East Glamorgan Hospital, Church Village)
Rhymney Valley Health Unit (Caerphilly Miners' Hospital)

West Glamorgan Health Authority
North Unit (Morriston Hospital, Swansea)
District Services Unit

East Dyfed Health Authority
Mental Health Unit (St. David's Hospital, Carmarthen)

Ambulance Service
Clwyd and Gwynedd joint proposal
East Dyfed and West Glamorgan joint proposal
Mid Glamorgan

An application for NHS trust status must demonstrate benefits to patients and quality improvement, management capability and capacity, involvement of key professional staff, especially consultants, in management and financial soundness.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to ensure that appointments he makes of chairman or chairwoman for NHS trusts are made regardless of race, creed, gender or political persuasion.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Appointments will be made on the basis of aptitude and merit.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the application for trust status by the South Glamorgan, Powys and Gwent ambulance services;

(2) if he will make a statement on the applications for NHS trust status by Welsh hospitals.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend's statement of 29 October, at column 1148.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for setting the salary of the post of chairman or chairwoman of NHS trusts in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Levels of remuneration for chairmen and chairwomen of NHS trusts in Wales are set in three bands as follows:

	£
Band 1	
Trusts with turnover in excess of £50 million	19,285
Band 2	
Trusts with turnover between £20 million and £50 million	17,145
Band 3	
Trusts with turnover of less than £20 million	15,125

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the representations that have been made with respect to each of the trust applications for operation from 1 April 1993; and if he will categorise them by *(a)* pro, *(b)* anti or *(c)* neutral.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Up to and including 29 October, the number of representations received are as follows:

Health unit	*In support*	*Opposed*	*Undeclared*	*Total*
Clwyd Acute North	11	11	5	27
Clwyd Acute South	9	10	10	29
Clwyd Community and Mental Health	12	8	8	28
Powys	5	15	8	28
South Gwent Acute	3	17	8	28
Gwent Community and Mental Health	5	12	8	25
Llandough Hospital	10	6	4	20
Ogwr	7	11	5	23
West Unit, West Glam	19	49	22	90
East Unit, West Glam	2	13	5	20
Llanelli/Dinefwr	6	4	6	16
Carmarthen/Dinefwr	7	4	7	18
Ceredigion	10	11	15	36
Gwent, Powys and South Glamorgan Ambulance Service	1	22	11	34
Total	107	193	122	422

National Poisons Centre

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to promote the development of the national poisons centre located at Llandough hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are currently no specific proposals to develop the service provided at the Welsh national poisons unit at Llandough hospital. I would expect the service provided by the poisons unit to be responsive to the needs of purchasers and health gain priorities.

Cigarettes

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new measures are being introduced to halt the sale of cigarettes to minors.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The latest measures to halt the sale of cigarettes to minors are contained in the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991, the main provisions of which came into force on 1 March 1992. The Act, among other things, strengthens the law on illegal sales of cigarettes to children under the age of 16 and clarifies the duties of local authorities in enforcing the law in this area.

EDUCATION

Engineering

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to increase the involvement of the Institution of Electrical Engineers in increasing the number of qualified engineers.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend is aware of the work which the Institute of Electrical Engineers carries out in schools. Its distribution of careers literature and provision of speakers to encourage young people to study engineering is most welcome.

The Government are always pleased to welcome any initiatives from those within the engineering profession, to increase the numbers of qualified engineers.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many engineering places are available in advanced education; how many are unfilled; and what action he is taking to encourage the filling of unfilled places and to promote the teaching of engineering in schools.

Mr. Forman: Information on "available" and "unfilled" places in engineering is not collected centrally.

The Government are taking a number of initiatives to encourage the study of engineering. In schools the introduction of the national curriculum has made the teaching of technology, science and mathematics compulsory for all pupils from five to 16. Schools are also being encouraged to offer a range of vocational courses, both alongside the national curriculum and also for over-16s, particularly the new general national vocational qualifications. Currently, one in five entrants to engineering degrees enter on the basis of vocational qualifications. In addition initiatives such as the higher introductory technology and engineering conversion courses have encouraged those previously without a science background to study engineering.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he takes to ensure that the advanced education sector promotes engineering degrees.

Mr. Forman: The planning and funding of the United Kingdom higher education system is essentially demand led. Higher education institutions are autonomous and recruit according to student demand. However, institutions do receive a higher publicly funded fee for students studying laboratory and workshop courses. This should encourage them to promote courses like engineering.

Adult Students

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what funding arrangements his Department proposes to put in place to enable adult returner students to take up courses and learning programmes in further education colleges.

Mr. Forman: The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 places a duty upon the Further Education Funding Council to secure the provision of further education for adults of a type set out in schedule 2 to the Act; and upon local education authorities to secure provision of all other kinds of further education for adults. These duties may be carried out in further education colleges or other institutions providing for adults. The funding of the Council and of LEAs will take account of these statutory duties.

LEAs have the power to make discretionary awards to those on further education courses. Access funds have also been made available to allow FE colleges to provide financial help to full-time students aged 19 or over.

Refugees

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* refugees and *(b)* those applying for refugee status with temporary leave to remain in the United Kingdom are known to be currently attending courses at further education colleges; and from which countries they have come.

Mr. Forman: This information is not collected centrally.

School Dinners

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total number of schoolchildren who had school dinners in each year since 1989.

Mr. Forth: Information about school meal take up in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in England in January of each year is shown in the table.

Thousands

	Nursery/ Primary	*Secondary*	*Special*	*All maintained schools*
[1]1989	1,836	1,105	66	3,007
[2]1990	1,845	1.088	59	2,992
[3]1991	1,808	1,111	57	2,976
[3]1992	1,820	1,160	59	3,039

[1] Includes boarding pupils.
[2] Day pupils only.
[3] Provisional.

Unemployed Students

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps are being taken by his Department to assist further education colleges in inner London to recruit more students, and in particular unemployed students; and if he will take steps to reduce the financial disincentives which currently apply where colleges enrol a high proportion of unemployed students.

Mr. Forman: Access funds have been made available to further education colleges to enable them to assist full-time and sandwich home students aged 19 or over who might otherwise be unable to participate in further education because of financial difficulties. The determination of college budgets, including the account taken of any fee remission schemes for students such as those who are unemployed, is currently a matter for the maintaining local education authority. From 1 April 1993, colleges will be transferred to a new further education sector and funded direct by the Further Education Funding Council. They will have a financial incentive to increase participation and respond flexibly and quickly to demand from all members of the community.

Harris City Technology College, Upper Norwood

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current level of annual expenditure per child at Harris city technology college, Upper Norwood.

Mr. Forth: The level of recurrent grant notified to Harris city technology college for the current academic year, 1992-93, is £3·327 million for 830 pupils under the school-leaving age and 98 pupils over school-leaving age. This includes provision for diseconomies of scale during the college's build-up to full capacity and for services provided centrally by local education authorities to their schools.

Secondary Education

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average spending per child for secondary education in an inner London borough.

Mr. Forth: The latest year for which actual spending information is available is 1990-91. In that year, average funding in secondary schools in inner London boroughs was some £2,470 per pupil. This figure includes unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management schemes. It does not include the cost of services provided centrally by local education authorities such as home to school transport, school meals, LEA central administration, and financing costs of capital expenditure.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to provide ring-fenced funding to grant-maintained schools to cover the cost of educating children with special educational needs who have not received statements from their local education authority.

Mr. Forth: The Education Reform Act places a duty on the governors of every grant-maintained school to use their best endeavours to secure the special educational provision that any individual pupil might require. It is for the governors to decide how to allocate the funds available to them in order to fufil this duty.

Examination Results

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he is collecting on the money spent by local education authorities to publicise GCSE and A-level examination results.

Mr. Forth: Local education authorities have been required to publish information about their schools' examination results in school prospectuses since 1981. No information is collected about the cost to them of so doing. My right hon. Friend is himself responsible for the compilation and publication of the comparative tables of school examination results which will be issued later this month.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will name those schools which have received grant-maintained status with an admissions' policy approved by him which allows for places to be allocated on the basis of ability or aptitude.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has approved the following schools for grant-maintained status with the selective admission arrangements under which they operated as local education authority-maintained schools.

School	*Authority*
Adams' Grammar School	Shropshire
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	Lancashire
Beaconsfield High School	Buckinghamshire
Bournemouth School	Dorset
Bournemouth School for Girls	Dorset
Caistor Grammar School	Lincolnshire
Carre's Grammar School	Lincolnshire
Chatham Grammar School for Girls	Kent
Chelmsford County High School for Girls	Essex
Clitheroe Royal Grammar School	Lancashire
Colyton Grammar School	Devon
Cranbrook School	Kent
Dartford Grammar School	Kent
Dartford Grammar School for Girls	Kent
Handsworth Grammar School for Boys	Birmingham
Heckmondwike Grammar School	Kirklees
Herschel Grammar School	Berkshire
King Edward VI Grammar School (GM)	Essex
King Edward VI School	Lincolnshire
Lancaster Girls Grammar School	Lancashire
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	Lancashire
Langley Grammar School	Berkshire
London Oratory School	Hammersmith
Marling School	Gloucestershire
Newstead Wood School for Girls (GM)	Bromley
Nonsuch High School for Girls	Sutton
Oakwood Park Grammar School	Kent
Parkstone Grammar School	Dorset
Pate's Grant Maintained Grammar School	Gloucestershire
Queen Elizabeth Upper Atherstone GM School	Warwickshire
Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School	Lincolnshire
Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School	Lincolnshire
Rainham Mark Grammar School	Kent
Reading School	Berkshire
Ribston Hall High School	Gloucestershire
Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys	Kent
Sir Roger Manwood's School	Kent
Skegness Grammar School	Lincolnshire
St. George's Grant-Maintained School	Lincolnshire
Stroud High School	Gloucestershire
Sutton Grammar School for Boys	Sutton
The Crossley Heath School	Calderdale
The Crypt School	Gloucestershire
The Gartree Grant Maintained School	Lincolnshire
The Grammar School for Girls Wilmington	Kent
The Kings School Grantham	Lincolnshire
The North Halifax High School	Calderdale
The Skinners' School, Tunbridge Wells	Kent
Westcliff High School for Boys	Essex
Wilmington Grammar School for Boys	Kent
Wilsons School	Sutton
Wolverhampton Girls High School	Wolverhampton

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list each of the responses to the White Paper on the future role of local authorities, referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) on 20 October 1992, *Official Report*, column 266.

Mr. Forth: Responses to the White Paper are treated as private communications from their authors. It would not be appropriate to make them public. There is nothing to prevent respondents from making their comments more widely available if they wish to do so.

Student Loans Company

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the Student Loans Company will publish its annual report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The Student Loans Company is publishing today its report for the academic year 1991-92. It includes the company's accounts for the financial year 1991-92. I have placed a copy of the report in the Library. The report describes a very solid year of achievement on the part of the company, and is a tribute to its board, management and staff.

ENVIRONMENT

Contaminated Land

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to introduce a mechanism for appeal against inclusion on the contaminated land register;

(2) what plans he has to introduce mechanisms for ensuring removal from the contaminated land register of land which has been cleaned up and is no longer contaminated;

(3) what plans he has to support the investigation and clean up of land included on the contaminated land register; and what funding arrangements will be available, with particular reference to cases where the polluter is no longer in existence;

(4) what guidance he proposes to issue on the relationship between parts A and B of the contaminated land register; and how they are to be cross referenced for case of inspection;

(5) what steps he is taking to ensure that unlicensed and unrecorded contaminated land users are identified in the contaminated land register.

Mr. Maclean: Under our current proposals, on which we completed a period of consultation in early October, local authorities would be required under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to compile public registers of land which is, or has been, subject to contaminative uses. The proposals include prior notification of owners and occupiers of sites which are to be registered, with arrangements for them to challenge factual errors before registration takes place.

As it is proposed that registers should record the facts of past or present contaminative uses of sites rather than actual contamination, it would not be consistent to remove sites from registers after contamination had been treated. Complete decontamination is in any case rare, and there can, in some circumstances, be continuing effects on water or adjacent land.

Financial assistance is available to local authorities in the form of supplementary credit approvals for the costs of investigation of contamination and of any necessary remedial measures where it is not practicable to recover the costs of treatment from those responsible. Local authorities can still bid for approvals for 1992-93.

Both parts of the registers would record only sites subject to contaminative uses which would be listed in regulations. Part B would record those registered sites which had been investigated or treated. The regulations defining the particulars to be included in registers would set out the criteria for inclusion in parts A and B. Guidance to be published on information requirements for registers would recommend a method of cross-referencing between the two parts.

The registers would contain sufficient information to identify each site and its contaminative use or uses. The past or current identity, licensing or authorisation of any particular site user would occur, if at all, only incidentally to the purposes of the register. Licensing authorities might well refer to registers and make inquiries about the status of any current use or user of a site.

I am grateful to the more than 400 organisations and individuals who have responded to our current proposals. We are fully considering the various representations we have received, and will decide in the light of them our next steps in relation to the powers in section 143.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the expected annual consumption of ozone-destroying substances by the buildings evaluated earlier this year as possible new headquarters for his Department; and what quantitative method was used to incorporate the consumption of ozone-destroying chemicals in the evaluation of buildings considered as possible new headquarters for his Department.

Mr. Maclean: Consultants have carried out a preliminary environmental assessment of the buildings in question. That included identification of likely ozone-depleting substances. However, the assessment was not sufficiently detailed to quantify fully the various environmental effects.

Mortgage Payments

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much average new mortgage repayments per month were in *(a)* May 1988 and *(b)* April 1992.

Mr. Baldry: The average new mortgage repayment on a building society loan is estimated as £250·45 per month in the second quarter of 1988 and £346·10 per month in the second quarter of 1992, based on the average advance and average mortgage interest rate in each period and an assumed mortgage length of 25 years.

Motor Vehicles (Pollution)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much *(a)* carbon monoxide, *(b)* nitrogen oxides and *(c)* carbon dioxide pollution from motor vehicles there was in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Maclean: Our most recent estimate of emissions of air pollutants from road transport in 1979 is as follows:

(a) carbon monoxide—3·84 million tonnes;
(b) nitrogen oxide—772 thousand tonnes, and
(c) carbon dioxide—21·2 million tonnes.

The equivalent figures for 1992 are not yet available.

Press Releases

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available to hon. Members on request press releases issued by his Department on the day of release.

Mr. Howard: Copies of press releases issued by my Department are delivered on the day of issue to the press notice desk of the reference division of the House of Commons Library where they are available to hon. Members.

Council Housing (Tendering)

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consult the views and wishes of tenants in implementing compulsory competitive tendering for local authority housing stock.

Mr. Baldry: More than 100 tenants' organisations responded to the Government's consultation paper, "Competing for Quality in Housing". The Housing and Urban Development Bill now before the House provides for effective tenant involvement in the drawing up and monitoring of contracts for the management of local authority housing, and tenant organisations will be consulted on the necessary subordinate legislation in due course.

Waste

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the inconsistencies in the definition of waste by different local authorities and the interpretation of regulations as they relate to the transport of materials classified by some authorities as waste.

Mr. Maclean: Whether or not a substance is waste within the meaning of section 75(2) and (3) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 depends on the facts of each case; and interpretation of the law is a matter for the courts. General guidance on the definition of waste has been given to local authorities in DOE circular 14/92—paragraphs 4 to 18. The Department's guidance draws attention to judgments on this issue by the European Court of Justice and by English courts.

Local Government Boundary Commission

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the recent review by the Local Government Boundary Commission of the Cambridgeshire-Suffolk boundary around Newmarket.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is not possible to separate the costs of an individual review from the total costs of the Local Government Boundary Commission.

Crown Leases

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the enfranchisement of residential long leases held from the Crown.

Sir George Young: The various Crown authorities will, in most cases, agree to the voluntary enfranchisement or extension of long leases, under the same qualifications and terms as will apply under statute—the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 and the Housing and Urban Development Bill if enacted—to leaseholders whose landlord is not the Crown.

Enfranchisement of property which would otherwise qualify will however be refused where the land is inalienable or in certain circumstances specific to the Crown. These circumstances are:

(i) where the property or the area in which it is situated has a long, historic or particular association with the Crown (including parts of the Isles of Scilly and central Dartmoor);

(ii) were the property is within (or intimately connected with) the historic Royal Palaces and Parks (including properties adjacent to Regents Park); or

(iii) where there are special security considerations.

When enfranchisement is refused on these grounds, the Crown will be prepared to negotiate new leases.

Additionally the Crown will be eligible to apply for and operate schemes of estate management, and will be prepared to be bound by arbitration on disputes over the terms of *(a)* enfranchisement, or *(b)* the grant of new leases by analogy with the statutes.

This undertaking supersedes that given by my right hon. Friend the then Minister for Housing on 31 May 1967, at column *42*.

Pit Closures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide increased funding to the National Rivers Authority to cope with the pollution consequences of pit closures.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 30 October 1992]*: The cost of the National Rivers Authority's work relating to the regulation of discharges or overflows from mines is taken into account as necessary in determining the financial needs of the authority from year to year.

Business Rates

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his estimate of the actual total yield from the national non-domestic rate for *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92 and *(c)* the current financial year.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 29 October]*: Estimated yield from non-domestic rates in England:

	£ billion
1990-91	10·7
1991-92	12·0
1992-93	11·6

These estimates include the yield from the City of London's locally determined rate. They take into account the provisions of the Non-Domestic Rate Act 1992 which had the effect of reducing the rates paid by occupiers or owners of properties benefiting from the transitional arrangements. The estimates are on an accruals basis—that is, they represent the aggregate rate liability for each year rather than the cash actually collected during the year—except that adjustments to liability, for instance following appeals, have been attributed to the year in which they occurred rather than to each year for which liability was reduced.

Radioactive Waste (Sewers)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he plans to review definitions for low-level standards of radioactive materials discharged into sewers;

(2) if he has plans to review current arrangements for authorising and monitoring discharges of low-level radioactive waste into sewers;

(3) what action he is taking to monitor potentially dangerous levels of radioactivity, resulting from authorised discharges of low-level, radioactive waste into sewers, accessible to water workers and consumers;

(4) what measures are available to ensure that both water workers and consumers are not exposed to potentially dangerous levels of radioactivity resulting from authorised discharges of low-level radioactive waste into sewers;

(5) if he will improve public access to information dealing with the discharge of low-level radioactive waste into sewers;

(6) what definition he uses for low-level radioactivity and safe levels of radioactive waste, for substances currently discharged into sewerage systems;

(7) what projected long-term environmental impact is expected if current level discharges of low-level, radioactive waste into sewers continue; and how this is monitored;

(8) if he will take steps to ensure regular checks are made on water workers to establish personal contamination levels resulting from the disposal of radioactive materials into sewers.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 28 October 1992]:* Discharges of low-level radioactive waste to the public sewerage system are strictly regulated by means of authorisations issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960—RSA60—by her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—HMIP. Authorisations are issued only after a careful radiological assessment, and impose strict conditions and activity limits which ensure proper protection from such disposals for all members of the public, including sewer workers. I am satisfied that the current arrangements, which are kept under constant review, provide a fully satisfactory regime for regulating radioactive waste disposals and I have no plans to make changes at present. Since 1 January 1991 the public have had the right of access to information on applications and authorisations issued under RSA60. These documents are held at local authority offices and at the three principal HMIP offices in Bedford, Leeds and Bristol.

Results of a research study conducted on behalf of HMIP by the National Radiological Protection board into the exposure of sewer workers associated with radioactive discharges from hospitals was published in June 1991. It found that doses of radiation to those sewer workers with long exposure near to hospital discharge points are approximately one hundredth that of natural background levels.

Further research conducted on behalf of HMIP by St. Bartholomew's medical college into the levels of Iodine 125 in drinking water show that actual radiation exposure to the public is less than one hundredth that of natural background levels. I-125 is a principal component of discharges from hospitals. I am arranging for copies of both of these reports—DOE/HMIP/RR/91/030 and 031—to be placed in the Library of the House. The studies form part of an HMIP-commissioned programme of research into the environmental behaviour of radionuclides. These studies demonstrate that the dose levels are so low that no further precautions need to be taken either by sewer workers or other members of the public. A programme for monitoring radioactivity in public water supplies in England and Wales has operated for many years. Results from this programme are published in the Department's "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", a copy of which is in the Library. Results to date show levels below the World Health Organisation guideline values. This confirms that the water is potable on radiological grounds and thus there is no hazard to the public. Selective monitoring of private water supplies is also undertaken under contract to this Department.

Fish Farming

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to promote the banning of EC funding of fish farming in sensitive wetland habitats during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

A framework for protecting sensitive wetland habitats within the Community is already provided by the EC birds directive—79/409/EEC—and the new EC habitats directive—92/43/EEC. In the United Kingdom, the Fisheries Ministers have a duty under the Sea Fisheries (Wildlife Conservation) Act 1992 to consider nature conservation in the exercise of their functions and to strike a reasonable balance. The Fisheries Departments do not encourage projects in sensitive areas.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the principle of subsidiarity in article 3(b) proposed by the Maastricht treaty can be used retrospectively.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Although as a matter of law, article 3(b) applies prospectively, there is nothing to prevent the application of the principle in that article to a review of existing Community measures. The Birmingham declaration notes that the first results of such a review will be examined at the Edinburgh European Council.

Visas

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when charges for visas for applicants wishing to rejoin their families in the United Kingdom came into operation; and what is the charge per person.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Charges for visas for aliens were introduced in 1825 by the Act relating to the salaries and fees of consular officers. No distinction was made relating to applicants wishing to rejoin their families.

Charges for visas for Commonwealth citizens, including charges for those wishing to join their families in the United Kingdom were introduced on 1 January 1985 by the Consular Fees (Amendment) Order 1986.

Charges for visas for applicants wishing to rejoin their families in the United Kingdom were last revised on 14 January 1991.

Current fees per person are:

	£
(a) Husband, wife, child or other dependant relative	80
(b) Certificate of Entitlement to the right of abode	80
(c) Returning resident	20

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the past three years; for each of the past three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Consultancies are awarded, after a competitive tendering exercise, to the company considered best able to provide value for money in terms of quality of work and price. The information requested is set out in the table.

Year	*Report commissioned*	*Consultants*	*Further consultancy work*
1989	Car pool operations	ASO Management	None
1989	Organisation and work of Personnel Operations Department	Coopers & Lybrand	Michael Armstrong Associates—Assessment
1990	Travel Centre Quality Control Audit	Cleverdon Steer	None
1990	Review of Non-financial Management Information	Coopers & Lybrand	None
1991	Management Information Systems Preliminary Study	JM Consulting	Full study also by JM Consulting
1991	Heavy Baggage Contract	Ernst & Young	None
1992	Introduction of Quality Management Systems	Neville Clarke Ltd.	None
1992	Office Accommodation—Advantages of new buildings over old	Symonds	None
1992	Activities suitable for Market Testing	Coopers & Lybrand	Capita management Consultancy—Market Testing Methodology and Training
1992	Installation of Secure Communications Systems	BT Tallis	None
1992	Long Hours: Attitude Survey	Coopers & Lybrand	Follow-on work by same consultants
1992	Organisation and Implementation of Top and Senior Management Courses	McNeil Robertson	None

Cyprus

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent meeting at the United Nations concerning the Cyprus problem.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Talks on Cyprus reconvened on 26 October in New York, and moved to face to face discussion between President Vassiliou and Mr. Denktash on 28 October. Limited ground has as yet been covered, but both sides appear to be taking a constructive approach. We continue to give full backing to the efforts of the UN Secretary-General.

Western Sahara

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the kingdom of Morocco about the holding of a referendum on the future of western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have taken every opportunity to urge on the Moroccan Government the importance of supporting the United Nations settlement plan for western Sahara and the need to keep to a minimum the delay in holding a referendum on the future of the territory.

Sanctions

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries against which the United Kingdom is applying economic sanctions, indicating in each case the international and national authority for the sanctions, the extent of the sanctions, their duration and the terms under which they would be lifted.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom currently applies economic sanctions against the following countries:

(a) Iraq: Comprehensive economic sanctions, excluding only supplies for medical purposes, foodstuffs and goods for essential humanitarian needs. Imposed under United Nations Security Council resolution—UNSCR—661 of 6 August 1990. Conditions for lifting these sanctions are set out in section C of UNSCR 687.

(b) Libya: Arms embargo, ban on air links and some aviation-related trade. Imposed under UNSCR 748 of 15 April 1992. Lifting of sanctions is contingent on Libyan compliance with UNSCR 731.

(c) Serbia and Montenegro: Comprehensive trade embargo, except food, medicines and humanitarian goods. Imposed under UNSCR 757 of 30 May 1992. Sanctions will be reviewed following Serbian compliance with UNSCR 752.

The schedule list national authority for implementing these resolutions.

United Kingdom legislation implementing United Nations sanctions against Iraq, Libya and Serbia and Montenegro

Legislation was created by the passage of Statutory Instruments through Orders in Council to implement in the United Kingdom the provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 661, 748 and 757.

Iraq

The Iraq and Kuwait (United Nations Sanctions) Order 1990: SI No. 1651 (8 August).

The Export of Goods (Control) (Iraq and Kuwait Sanctions) Order 1990: SI No. 1640 (8 August).

The Iraq and Kuwait (United Nations Sanctions (Amendment) Order 1990: SI No. 1768 (29 August).

The Iraq and Kuwait (United Nations Sanctions) (No. 2) Order 1990: SI No. 1987 (5 October).

Separate legal directions were issued by HM Treasury on 2 and 4 August to freeze certain Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets:

The Control of Gold, Securities, Payments and Credits (Kuwait) Directions 1990: SI No. 1591 (2 August).

The Control of Gold, Securities, Payments and Credits (Republic of Iraq) Directions 1990: SI No. 1616 (4 August).

The Bank of England issued Notices on 7 August:

Emergency Laws (Re-enactments and Appeals) Act 1964: Kuwait.

Emergency Laws (Re-enactments and Appeals) Act 1964: Iraq.

Libya

The Libya (United Nations Prohibition of Flights) Order 1992: SI No. 973.

The Libya (United Nations Sanctions) Order 1992: SI No. 975.

Serbia and Montenegro

The Serbia and Montenegro (United Nations Sanctions) Order 1991: SI No. 1302.

The Serbia and Montenegro (United Nations Prohibition of Flights) Order 1992: SI No. 1304.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *341*, what was the date of the most recent discussions his Department had with the French Government on nuclear testing; and what aspects of nuclear testing were discussed.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Nuclear testing was discussed at a meeting of British and French officials on 9 September. The discussion covered a range of issues, including recent developments in nuclear testing policy and future prospects.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many parties to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty called for the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty at the non-proliferation treaty review conference 1990.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The national positions of NPT parties at the 1990 review conference are set out in part III of the conference's final document, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans his Department has to resume direct negotiations towards a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty before September 1996.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 23 October, at column *407*.

European Community

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what veto powers are currently available to EC member states on matters of national interest under the Luxembourg compromise.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Luxembourg compromise states:

> "Where, in the case of decisions which may be taken by majority vote on a proposal of the Commission, very important interests of one or more partners are at stake, the Members of the Council will endeavour, within a reasonable time, to reach solutions which can be adopted by all the Members of the Council while respecting their mutual interests and those of the Community, in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty".

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointments were made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor makes some 1,800 public appointments, excluding judicial appointments. Full details can be provided only at disproportionate cost but the table shows the public bodies to which he appoints and the number of appointees as at September 1992.

Public appointments

Body	*Number of appointments*
Insolvency Rules Committee	4
County Court Rule Committee	9
Supreme Court Rule Committee	12
Land Registration Rule Committee	6
Family Proceedings Rule Committee	10
Crown Court Rule Committee	8
Advisory Committees on General Commissioners of Income Tax	532
Advisory Committees on JPs in England (excluding the Duchy of Lancaster) and Wales	1,031
Judicial Studies Board	54
Advisory Council on Public Records	11
Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct	17
Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board	6
Legal Aid Advisory Committee	8
Legal Aid Board	12
Council on Tribunals	19
Law Commission	5
Northern Ireland Court Service—Advisory Committees on General Commissioners of Income Tax (NI)	15
Advisory Committees on JPs in Northern Ireland	57
Advisory Committees on Juvenile Court Lay Panel	11
Legal Aid Advisory Committee (NI)	11

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is responsible for two agencies—the Public Record Office and the Land Registry. In the past 12 months the chief Executive of HM Land Registry made one fact-finding visit, to Australia and New Zealand. As a result of his visit the Land Registry has enhanced its information services and is adopting simplified computerised mapping techniques.

Since the launch of the PRO as an agency on 1 April 1992 the chief executive has made three fact-finding visits. On 7 July she attended the Anglo-American conference of historians, which increased the PRO's awareness of the current use of archives by historians interested in Anglo-American records. On 12 August she visited the National Audit Office, which improved the PRO's knowledge of the services the NAO can offer to agencies and of the way in which the NAO will expect agency accounts to be presented. On 2 September she attended a presentation by Her Majesty's Stationery Office intended to inform the PRO of the range and variety of publishing services which HMSO now offers to Government Departments.

Counsel's Fees (Taxation)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the delay between trial and taxation of counsel's fees by central taxing units.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The central taxing teams were established in March 1991 to give a consistent approach to the determination of large claims for legal aid or central funds. Targets were set that 75 per cent. of claims should be determined within three months of becoming ready to tax—that is to say when all related claims have been lodged—and that all claims should be determined within six months of becoming ready to tax. In relation to their own workload, all circuits, except the south eastern, are currently meeting the first of these targets, and all but the south eastern and midland and Oxford are meeting the second. On the south eastern circuit, the backlog of claims is being reduced by the release of claims to other teams and, where appropriate, to determining officers in the courts, for a speedier determination with the aim of bringing all the teams within their targets by January 1993.

House Sales (Defaults)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what recent representations he has received calling for a system to protect buyers and sellers of homes from default once a sale is agreed.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None; the law already allows buyer and seller to enter into a binding contract once its terms have been agreed.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) for those cases of husbands or wives now being heard by the immigration appeals tribunal, how long on average they have had to wait from the appeal being lodged; and how long he expects those applying now have to wait;

(2) for those cases of fiancé(e)s now being heard by the immigration appeals tribunal, how long on average they have had to wait from the appeal being lodged; and how long he expects those applying now have to wait.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Unless the adjudicator gives leave to appeal, there are two stages to an appeal to the immigration appeals tribunal against the adjudicator's determination, leave to appeal and the substantive appeal. The average time for the immigration appeals tribunal to grant leave to appeal is 11½ weeks, and 10 weeks thereafter for the appeal to be heard, if leave is granted. Steps are being taken to shorten these times where possible.

HEALTH

Ultra-violet Radiation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department holds on the effects of increased UV-B exposure in suppressing the immune system; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: UV-B radiation exposure varies greatly from person to person, day to day and year to year. The extent of any immune suppression in humans and the disease implications are as yet poorly understood. A number of centres around the world are studying this phenomenon.

Strelley Health Centre, Nottingham

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what work is currently being undertaken by the nursing development unit at the Strelley health centre, Nottingham; what progress has been made; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Strelley health centre is one of 30 nursing development units receiving development funds made available by the Department to further excellence in nursing practice. The work undertaken by health visitors at Strelley health centre includes accident prevention, women's health and domestic violence through community participation. The work is subject to evaluation and will contribute to the Health of the Nation strategy.

Mobile Oxygen Packs

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will reconsider the practice by which mobile oxygen packs which are fitted with a mask, the latter being unprescribable, results in the whole kit becoming unprescribable; what is the cost of a mobile oxygen pack and refills; and what help is given to patients on a low income to purchase a mobile oxygen pack and refills.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to change the present arrangement whereby a hospital consultant decides whether a patient would benefit from the free provision under the national health service of a portable oxygen set. Financial assistance given under the social security system does not extend to payment for medical care. The small portable cylinder may be refilled from a larger one which GPs may prescribe under the domiciliary oxygen service. There are three elements in the cost of a portable oxygen set. The set is rented at a cost of £1·70 a month and the cylinder contains about £2 worth of oxygen. The cost of delivery varies according to the quantity delivered. Under the domiciliary oxygen service the rental charge for the set with the larger cylinder is £1·94 a month. The oxygen in it costs £6·15. The cost of delivery by a pharmacist to a patient's home varies according to the distance involved.

Dentists

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to resolve the dentists' dispute.

Dr. Mawhinney: The revised scale of fees for general dental practitioners, which took effect on 8 July 1992, is expected to deliver a net income of about £40,000 to the average dentist in 1992-93, as compared with the £35,815 recommended by the dentists' independent pay review body. Dentists' practice expenses have also been increased by 11·6 per cent., to £47,228. This means that in 1992-93 the average dentist will have a gross income of about £88,000. We believe this is fair and reasonable for dentists, patients, other health service professionals, and taxpayers more generally.

For the future, we have asked Sir Kenneth Bloomfield to conduct a fundamental review of the dental remuneration system. The review is being conducted independently of the Government and will identify a number of options for change. Sir Kenneth has been asked to report by the end of 1992. In the meantime, we have asked dentists to think long and hard before taking any action which might jeopardise the interests of their practices or patients.

Patients Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, as part of her quality of service objectives, she will require the publication of the responses of all bodies consulted in the preparation of the patients charter.

Mr. Sackville: No. We did not seek views on the basis that they would be published.

Regional Information Systems Plan

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that Wessex regional health authority takes all necessary steps to recover funds from all companies which undertook work on the regional information systems plan project and which have been criticised by the district auditor; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 28 October at column *733*.

Expenditure

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what moneys have been transferred from hospital asset sales and cuts in spending to primary care over the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Total spending on the non-cash-limited family health services has increased by £2·2 billion, or 11·8 per cent. in real terms, over the five years since 1987-88. Some primary/community care services are also provided by the hospital and community health services, whose spending has increased by £8·8 billion or 20·8 per cent. in real terms over the same period. Proceeds from capital sales are retained within the hospital and community health services, and are used for either hospital or community based services, according to decisions taken locally.

Temazepam

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will change the prescription arrangements for temazepam along the lines currently in force for methadone;

(2) what plans she has to speed up the process of revising the prescription arrangements for temazepam.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

Temazepam is currently controlled under schedule 4 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985. The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs has recently considered the problem of temazepam misuse and has made recommendations by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on measures to be taken to combat its misuse.

We are now considering the council's recommendations.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

London Tourist Board

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the future of the London tourist board.

Mr. Key: The London tourist board is an independent, non-statutory body, and I am therefore not in a position to make a statement on its future. I understand, however, that discussions about a proposed merger of the London tourist board and the recently announced London Forum are currently taking place. Given the common interests which these bodies have, I welcome this.

English Heritage

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consultations English Heritage undertook with its advisory committees and other interested groups in preparing its current plan to dispose of sites of archaeological importance; and what were the results of such consultation.

Mr. Brooke: English Heritage proposes to categorise certain of its buildings, monuments and sites as of regional importance, fully meriting continued protection but more suited to local management. It has not yet been decided how many properties will be so categorised and English Heritage will consult its own advisory committees, both on the general criteria and on a case-by-case basis, before such decisions are taken.

PRIME MINISTER

South Africa (Plutonium)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received from the Government of the Republic of South Africa concerning the transport of plutonium by sea from the proposed thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

The Prime Minister: None.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *358*, if he will take steps to distribute widely throughout the United Kingdom the paper on subsidiarity prepared by the European Commission once it has been submitted to the Council of Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The Commission's paper on subsidiarity will be deposited today in accordance with the usual procedures. There are no current plans for wider distribution.

Political Advisers

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Prime Minister how many political advisers are in post in Her Majesty's Government; in what department they are in post; and what is the total salary bill of such posts.

The Prime Minister: There are currently 30 special—political—advisers to Ministers employed in the civil service. The number in each Department is as follows:

	Number
Cabinet Office (including No. 10)	8
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	1
Ministry of Defence	1
Department of Education	1
Department of Employment	1
Department of the Environment	2
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	2
Department of Health	1
Home Office	2
House of Lords	1
Northern Ireland Office	1
Privy Council Office	1
Scottish Office	2
Department of Social Security	1
Department of Trade and Industry	1
Department of Transport	1
Her Majesty's Treasury	2
Welsh Office	1

The approximate current total salary bill is £1,188,742.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Prime Minister how many staff are employed in his Office; and what was the cost of running his Office, broken down into salaries and wages, notional pension liability, administration costs and the cost of office services in the current year.

The Prime Minister: There is the equivalent of 85·5 staff employed in my office. The cost of running my office in the last financial year was £8,816,949.

The costs break down as follows:

Salaries and wages—£2,236,699.
Notional pension liability—£259,967.
Administration costs—£5,670,868.
Office services—£649,415.

Grant in aid to the Chequers trust is included in the figures. My salary is excluded.

Putting Britain First

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the practical consequences for Government policies of his commitment to put Britain first.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* The Government have always put Britain first in their policies and will continue to do so.

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister when the report from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council into bronchitis and emphysema in metal workers and coal miners will be published; if he will set out the responsibilities of each Government Department in respect of consideration of the issues and recommendations involved; and if he will make a statement on the proposals in relation to the report.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's report will be published in the usual way. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is giving the report the most careful consideration and will make an announcement in due course.

European Union

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister how many authentic copies of the treaty of European union were made available to the media and to members of the public before 9 April.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* Copies of the treaty on European union were made available to members of the public and media on demand from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office between signature on 7 February and the Treaty's publication as a Command Paper, Cm. 1934, on 7 May. About 100 copies were distributed.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister how many authentic copies of the treaty of European union were made available to hon. Members.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* A stock of the text of the treaty of European union printed as Cm. 1934 is kept by the Vote Office and is available on demand by right hon. and hon. Members.

Coal Industry

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters he has received since 15 October concerning the coal industry; how many supported pit closures; how many opposed pit closures; how many telephone calls concerning the coal industry were made to his office; how many callers supported pit closures; and how many opposed pit closures.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* I have received a substantial number of representations about the coal industry.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to take advantage of the provisions of article XIX of GAT to impose restrictions on imports of coal causing serious injury to domestic producers.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* The hon. Member will be aware that the President of the Board of Trade is now reviewing these matters.

Colombian Coal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister when the bilateral investment committee between Her Majesty's Government and Colombia was established; which British Ministers or departmental officials are represented on this committee; and what subjects are being considered by the committee.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* When I visited Colombia in June, I agreed with President Gaviria to set up a trade facilitation group to encourage bilateral trade and investment. The group, which is led by business men and has no Ministerial involvement, held its first meeting on 29 September. One Department of Trade and Industry official, with responsibility for trade relations with Colombia, sits on the committee. The aims of the group are to encourage and suggest ways of increasing bilateral trade and investment across a wide range of sectors.

Economic Advisers Council

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will consider hiving off the economic section of the Treasury and that of the Bank of England to an independent council of economic advisers consisting of nine advisers representative of the different schools of economic thought, to be appointed in consultation with the political parties and the economics profession, to take written and oral evidence on matters relevant to their work, and to issue quarterly and annual reports on the performance and prospects for the British economy.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* I have no such intention. The hon. Member may be unaware that no other major country hives off its economic advice in the way suggested. Certainly in the United States, the Council of Economic Advisers is not a substitute for economic policy advice provided by Government Departments and the Federal Reserve all of which employ their own economists. It is vital that the Treasury and the Bank of England retain the capacity for giving high-quality economic advice.

But the Government have always paid close attention to the views of independent commentators and analysts and will continue to do so. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced yesterday his intention to strengthen the process of outside consultation by establishing a panel of independent forecasters to report to him on the economic prospects.

Colombia

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his meeting on 10 June in Cartagena, Colombia with President Cesar Gaviria.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* I visited Colombia on 9 and 10 June. In my meetings with President Gaviria and his Ministers, we discussed a wide range of matters of mutual interest.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Prime Minister what British assistance has been given or promised for Colombia's exports of coal into the European Community during the British presidency.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* None.

Common Travel Area

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received from the Government of the Republic of Ireland concerning proposals by Her Majesty's Government to require EC nationals, travelling between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom, to carry passports from next January; if the Government of the Republic of Ireland have indicated that they intend to take reciprocal action; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* I have received no such representations. We have made no proposals to amend the common travel area between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Timber

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how timber will be labelled to ensure that it is derived from sustainable sources.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Reliable and effective labelling systems are at an early stage of development. The Overseas Development Administration is financing international work on incentives for sustainable timber production, including the viability of labelling schemes.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to ensure that tropical timber imported into the United Kingdom will be derived from only sustainable sources by the year 2000.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The key to a sustainable timber trade lies in the sustainable management of forests. Our policy is to work for the negotiation and implementation of international forestry agreements to provide a framework for the sustainable management and use of forest resources; to help to identify practical and effective incentives to curb deforestation and promote reafforestation; to encourage and assist with the adoption of national guidelines and best practices in developing countries; to assist countries develop their policies and capacities by financing projects including research, conservation, institution building and sustainable harvesting of forest resources.

Rain Forests

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the Overseas Development Administration's bilateral aid programme specifically deals with combating the adverse effects on tropical rain forests stemming from unsustainable and unplanned cultivation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1991-92 the ODA spent some £18 million, or 2 per cent. of bilateral aid, on forestry projects. Present estimates are that aid for forestry will increase to around £35 million this financial year, about 4 per cent. of bilateral aid. Information on aid specifically related to combating the adverse effects of unsustainable agriculture on tropical rainforests is not held centrally. We also help reduce pressure on rainforests through work in other sectors, such as improving the productivity of tropical agriculture and helping reduce population growth rates.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he considers to be the main agents of tropical rain forest destruction.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The main cause of tropical rain forest destruction is conversion of forest land to agriculture. Others include unsustainably managed timber production, fire, mining, and industrial and infrastructure developments. Pressures from overgrazing by livestock and fuel wood collection are also significant problems in the dry tropical forests.

International Development Association

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when proposals for the 10th replenishment of the International Development Association will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Subject to the successful completion of the present negotiations, the Government would expect to seek parliamentary approval for our contribution to IDA's 10th replenishment early next year.

World Bank (Projects)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are taken to ensure that the full range of potential social and environmental impacts are adequately considered prior to the approval of projects funded by the World bank.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The World bank prepares a paper based on its policy guidelines, which are published, containing a full assessment of any significant social and environmental impact of a planned project well in advance of executive board consideration. This assessment is circulated to members of the board and is available to non-governmental organisations in the country concerned.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy on reporting its views and voting position on World bank projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The proceedings of the World bank board's consideration of projects are confidential, in order not to inhibit full and frank discussion in the board.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Ecu Loan

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current value in sterling of the 10 billion ecu loan and what it was on 14 September.

Mr. Nelson: The Government announced on 3 September their intention to borrow an amount equivalent to 10 billion ecu in foreign currencies. Five billion ecu equivalent of the announced borrowing was drawn down in the revolving credit facility in September, with the remaining 5 billion ecu to be raised subsequently.

The value in sterling at 4 pm on 29 October of 5 billion ecu was £4·06 billion. The value in sterling on 14 September was £3·59 billion. However, the sterling value when the borrowing comes to be repaid will depend on the sterling exchange rate at that time.

Economic Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing for Germany, France and the United Kingdom the increase in gross domestic product less North sea oil and gas, the increase in manufacturing output and the increase in unemployment in the decade 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Nelson: Data for the period 1979-89 for GDP and manufacturing output in France and Germany can be found in the OECD's "National Accounts Volume II." Data for United Kingdom non-oil GDP and for manufacturing output can be found on the Central Statistical Office database. Unemployment figures can be found in the OECD's labour force statistics.

Staffing Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list by grade and number employed, the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and the estimate for 1992-93 for the financial services division.

Mr. Nelson: The financial services division transferred from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Treasury on 7 June 1992. It is now called the securities and investment services group. The figures given in the table are based on average staff in post in 1991-92 and during the first three months of 1992-93. The staff costs include pay and earnings-related national insurance contributions.

	1991-92		*1992-93*	
Grade	*Number (average staff inpost)*	*Cost (actual)* £	*Number (average staff in post)*	*Cost (estimate)* £
Grade 3	1·00	59,822	1·00	60,083
Grade 5	3·00	138,875	3·00	147,873
Grade 7	9·00	309,141	9·50	322,231
Insolvency A	0·75	20,625	—	—
Senior Executive Officer	5·00	123,705	3·50	96,506
Higher Executive Officer	6·25	133,261	8·00	173,184
Executive Officer	3·50	59,208	3·00	51,861
Administrative Officer	4·00	57,340	4·00	54,144
Administrative Assistant	7·25	81,824	7·00	67,571
Senior Personal Secretary	1·00	16,414	1·00	18,334
Personal Secretary	3·00	50,183	3·00	43,125
Typist	1·25	14,117	2·00	22,908
TOTAL	45·00	1,064,514	45·00	1,057,820

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The information is not readily available in the form requested. To produce the data in this format would involve disproportionate time and cost.

Charities (VAT)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's position regarding the possible imposition of value added tax on charities after 1997.

Sir John Cope: Agreement has been reached that the United Kingdom's zero rates, including those specifically designed to benefit charities and charity shops, can be maintained until at least 1997 without prejudice to their future thereafter. Any new agreement will require a unanimous decision by the Council of Ministers. There is, therefore, no question of the United Kingdom being forced to implement unwelcome proposals from 1 January 1997 and we have no plans to alter these provisions.

European Community (Expenditure)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list of public expenditure under all headings, and known income of the United Kingdom, of membership of the Common Market for each year since the year of joining; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The United Kingdom's contributions to and receipts from the European Community budget for the years 1973 to 1991 together with the forecast for 1992 as published in the "Statement on the 1992 Community budget" Cm. 1948, in June are given in the table:

£ million

Year	*Gross contribution after abatement and refunds*	*Public sector receipts*	*Net contribution after abatement refunds and public sector receipts*
1973	181	79	102
1974	179	150	29
1975	342	398	−56
1976	463	296	167
1977	737	368	369
1978	1,348	526	822
1979	1,606	659	947
1980	1,669	963	706
1981	1,481	1,084	397
1982	1,844	1,238	606
1983	2,169	1,522	647
1984	2,676	2,020	656
1985	3,713	1,905	1,808
1986	2,792	2,220	572
1987	4,049	2,328	1,721
1988	3,544	2,182	1,362
1989	4,431	2,116	2,315
1990	4,658	2,183	2,475
1991	3,309	2,765	545
1992	5,489	2,890	2,599

Nuclear Submarines (Refitting)

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what studies have been made by his Department of the cost-effectiveness of rival proposals by the managements of Rosyth and Devonport dockyards for the refitting of Britain's nuclear submarines.

Mr. Portillo: The Ministry of Defence, in consultation with the Treasury and other Government Departments, is considering future requirements for ship refitting and repair. Options under consideration include proposals put forward by each of the royal dockyard management companies. The final decision will take into account all relevant factors, including cost-effectiveness.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many VAT inspection visits are currently planned for the year 1993-94; what was the figure announced in 1991; and what are the reasons for the change.

Sir John Cope: Current plans are for 300,000 VAT control visits in 1993-94, against a figure of 540,000 envisaged in the 1991-92 management plan. The reduction can largely be attributed to the Department's move towards fewer but longer and more thorough visits.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state for the VAT inspection control programme for year 1991-92 *(a)* the number of staff years used, *(b)* the running costs, *(c)* the additional tax discovered and *(d)* the unit cost ratio of cost to revenue.

Sir John Cope: In 1991-92 a total of 5,461 staff years were used on VAT control visiting, and running costs amounted to £126·8 million. A total of £1,464 million was discovered as gross additional liabilities, producing a unit cost—pence per £—of 8·7. Over declarations of £500 million were also identified, giving net additional liability of £964 million producing a unit cost—pence per £—of 13·2.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much on average each VAT inspector raised in additional VAT liability in the last financial year; and what is the average cost of employing a VAT inspector.

Sir John Cope: In 1991-92 each VAT control officer identified on average about £270,000 in gross additional liability and £90,000 in over-declarations made by traders. The average running cost involved in employing each officer was around £23,000.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff years are planned for VAT control visiting for the year 1993-94.

Sir John Cope: Current plans are for 5,562 staff years for VAT control visiting in 1993-94.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total cost to public funds of the publication of the annual reports of HM Customs and Excise executive units.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* HM Customs and Excise estimate that the total cost of printing and distributing the 1991-92 reports of the 30 executive units was £45,800.

Cohesion Fund

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much assistance the United Kingdom will qualify for under the EC's proposed cohesion fund through having a gross national product which is less than 90 per cent. of the EC average.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* The cohesion fund envisaged in the Maastricht treaty will be a structural fund; and the method of calculating relative wealth for these funds is to use purchasing power parities. The United Kingdom would not qualify for any assistance from the cohesion fund on that basis.

MV Maureen

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to receive a reply from French customs regarding their treatment of the vessel MV Maureen owned by Mike and Penny Rowley; and how long after receiving the French reply he would expect to publish a full report on the inquiries by British Customs and Excise.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* HM Customs and Excise have now received a reply from the French authorities. I will be writing to my hon. Friend very shortly.

Gross National Product

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the United Kingdom's gross national product was the European average gross national product each year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* Figures in respect of gross domestic product per head of the population at current prices and current purchasing power parities with respect to the Community are published by Eurostat in table R.2 on page 103 of its publication "National Accounts ESA aggregates 1970-1990"—theme 2 series C. Copies of this publication are available in the House of Commons Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC Agriculture Budget

Mr. Richards: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what proportion of the United Kingdom's EC agricultural budget is spent on administration;

(2) what proportion of the total EC agriculture budget is spent on administration.

Mr. Curry: The administration costs of providing support under the common agricultural policy are the responsibility of the member states and are not funded from the EC budget.

Abattoirs

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the closure of abattoirs.

Mr. Soames: Since the relevant EC directive 91/497/EEC was adopted in July last year, my right hon. Friend the Minister and I have received some 120 letters about its potential impact on British abattoirs.

The question of closure of abattoirs in the south-west was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) in the Adjournment debate on 21 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *538*.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact of the new EC regulations on existing small abattoirs; what action he will take to minimise the effects of such regulations; and if he will monitor how the regulations are being adopted, implemented and supervised by each EC country.

Mr. Soames: The Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations, published on 10 September, extend to the domestic market the rules on the production and hygiene of meat which have existed for intra-Community trade since 1964. There is nothing in the regulations that is not in the EC directive or the existing Great Britain legislation and there are many areas where we have interpreted the directive as liberally as possible to minimise the compliance burden.

In addition, we successfully negotiated for extra time to be made available after 1992 for slaughterhouses which are committed to achieving the new structural standards and for less onerous requirements for low throughput premises.

The abattoir industry has been rationalising steadily during the last 20 years. Slaughterhouse numbers have fallen from 1,890 in 1972 to some 600 now. It is clear that the trend towards fewer but larger and more efficient slaughterhouses would continue irrespective of the new legislation.

Each member state is required to implement the EC directive by 1 January 1993. The Commission has a team of inspectors who visit all member states to check compliance. If there is substantive evidence that another member state is failing to apply the rules correctly, I am ready to take these issues up with the Governments concerned and, when necessary, the Commission.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to incorporate his oral undertaking of 14 July, *Official Report*, column 1027, concerning the circumstances in which days at sea limitations will be proposed to Parliament, into the Sea Fish Conservation Bill.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by the Parliamentary Secretary to my Department in another place on 26 October:

> "I intend to introduce an amendment to the Bill at a later stage which will require the Government to make an affirmative resolution order each time they intend to make overall reductions in days at sea allocations."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 October 1992; Vol. 539, c. 914.]

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what advice his Department has given to fish farmers on the potential impact of ozone depletion on fish stocks in United Kingdom waters; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will estimate the effect on crop production in the United Kingdom of levels of ozone depletion expected under current United Kingdom proposals for phase-out dates of ozone-depleting chemicals; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what assessment his Ministry has made of which crops commonly grown in the United Kingdom are most sensitive to UV-B radiation; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what advice his Department has given to farmers on the potential impact of ozone depletion on *(a)* animal health and *(b)* crops; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what research is being carried out, or is planned by his Department, on the effects of ozone depletion on *(a)* animal health and *(b)* crop yield; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what Ministry recording schemes are in existence, or are planned, for conditions in farmed fish and farm animals which are associated with UV-B; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department is very conscious of the potential relevance to global and United Kingdom agricultural production of an increase in the level of UV-B radiation. It is not possible to make sensible estimates of the effects of an increase, however, as the research base on UV-B and plants and natural ecosystems is far from well-developed. To help develop our understanding the Government partially funded an international meeting of specialists at Lancaster university earlier in the year on "stratospheric ozone depletion and UV-B effects on biota". In addition, building on work undertaken by the Department of the Environment, this Department is carefully considering the possibility of further research specifically into the effects of UV-B radiations on crops and on eggs and larvae of commercially important fish species. On the basis of current knowledge, there is no need to issue specific advice to farmers and fish farmers but we will keep the matter under review.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of *(a)* red meat animals and *(b)* poultry which are electrically stunned in slaughterhouses are stunned with currents intended to induce cardiac arrest at stunning.

Mr. Gummer: The information is not available.

Market Inspections

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many market visits were made by local veterinary inspectors in each year since 1985.

Mr. Gummer: Statistics are available for the last five years. The number of visits made were:

	Number
1987	3,745
1988	4,421
1989	3,616
1990	4,548
1991	4,186

NORTHERN IRELAND

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Sir Patrick Mayhew The following are the names of all public appointments I have made since becoming Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The period of each appointment is also shown.

In making public appointments the prime consideration is the appointees' ability or potential to contribute to the work of the particular body to which they are appointed. Details relating to the remuneration each currently receives are readily available in "Public Bodies and Public Appointments: A Handbook for Women's Organisations", copies of which are in the library.

Appointments and re-appointments to public bodies

Code	*Name*	*Public body name*	*Category*	*Position*	*Date of appointment*	*Date of expiry*
Department of Economic Development						
58	Professor D. V. McCaughan	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Chairman	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
19	Professor F. C. Monds	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Member	1 May 1992	30 April 1994
640	Mr. F. S. Graham	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Member	1 May 1992	30 April 1994
1198	Mr. P. H. McKie	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Deputy Chairman	1 May 1992	30 April 1994
2216	Professor E. K. Beatty	Industrial Resarch and Technology Board	A	Member	1 May 1992	30 April 1994
2389	Mr. J. McCusker	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Member	1 May 1992	30 April 1995
2981	Mrs. J. E. Ruddock	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Member	1 May 1992	30 April 1995
3685	Mr. J. J. Collins	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Member	1 May 1992	30 April 1995
4334	Mrs. G. M. Gracey	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Member	1 May 1992	30 April 1994
4603	Dr. W. T. Little	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Member	1 May 1992	30 April 1995
4604	Mr. K. T. G. Atkins	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Member	1 May 1992	30 April 1995
4605	Mr. W. H. Morris	Industrial Research and Technology Board	A	Member	1 May 1992	30 April 1995
4634	Mr. S. Quinn	Local Enterprise Development Unit	A	Non-Executive Director	25 June 1992	31 August 1993
2085	Dr. W. G. H. Quigley	Fair Employment Commission	A	Member	1 July 1992	30 June 1995
2553	Mr. J. P. M. Donaghy	Fair Employment Commission	A	Member	1 July 1992	30 June 1995
3672	Mr. J. O'Hara	Fair Employment Commission	A	Member	1 July 1992	30 June 1995
4213	Dr. D. Kennedy	Equal Opportunities Commission	A	Member	1 July 1992	30 June 1995
2228	Mr. R. L. Hurchinson	Local Enterprise Development Unit	A	Non-Executive Director	10 July 1992	31 August 1993
2981	Mrs. J. E. Ruddock	Local Enterprise Development Unit	A	Non-Executive Director	10 July 1992	31 August 1995
1271	Mr. W. Devlin	Local Enterprise Development Unit	A	Non-Executive Director	1 September 1992	31 August 1993
1360	Mrs. J. M. Eve	Equal Opportunities Commission	A	Member	1 September 1992	30 June 1995
1408	Mrs. J. R. Smyth	Equal Opportunities Commission	A	Chairman	1 September 1992	30 June 1995
1815	Mr. P. H. McWilliams	Local Enterprise Development Unit	A	Chairman	1 September 1992	31 August 1995
2081	Mr. R. G. Cooper	Fair Employment Commission	A	Chairman	1 September 1992	31 August 1995
2147	Mr. R. W. R. McNulty	Industrial Development Board	A	Member	1 September 1992	31 August 1995
2597	Mr. T. Carlin	Industrial Development Board	A	Member	1 September 1992	31 August 1995
3721	Mr. R. Alridge	Industrial Development Board	A	Member	1 September 1992	31 August 1995
3775	Dr. M. V. Moloney	Industrial Development Board	A	Member	1 September 1992	31 August 1995
4704	Mr. J. G. Lyttle	Labour Relations Agency	A	Member	1 October 1992	30 September 1995

Code	*Name*	*Public body name*	*Category*	*Position*	*Date of appointment*	*Date of expiry*
Department of Finance and Personnel						
3085	Mr. J. H. Stanley	Lay Observer under the Solicitors (NI) Order 1976	A	Member	1 May 1992	28 February 1994
Department of Health and Social Services						
246	Mr. A. J. Gibson	Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital H&SS Trust	A	Non-Executive Member	1 April 1992	31 March 1996
1119	Mr. J. Carson	Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital H&SS Trust	A	Non-Executive Member	1 April 1992	31 March 1996
1815	Mr. P. H. McWilliams	Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital H&SS Trust	A	Non-Executive Member	1 April 1992	31 March 1996
2085	Dr. W. G. H. Quigley	Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital H&SS Trust	A	Chairman	1 April 1992	31 March 1996
4408	Sister M. Turley	Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital H&SS Trust	A	Non-Executive Member	1 April 1992	31 March 1996
4528	Dr. G. A. Baird	Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital H&SS Trust	A	Non-Executive Member	1 April 1992	31 March 1996
3490	Mr. H. E. Pierce	Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland	A	Chairman	1 May 1992	30 April 1994
985	Professor R. W. Stout	Eastern Health and Social Services Board	A	Non-Executive Member	1 October 1992	31 March 1995
1369	Mrs. D. Dunlop	Eastern Health and Social Services Council	A	Member	14 October 1992	31 May 1993
2210	Rev. E. Smyth	Eastern Health and Social Services Council	A	Member	14 October 1992	31 May 1993
Department of the Environment (NI)						
2977	Ms. J. O'Dempsey	Planning Appeals Commission	A	P/T Commissioner	1 May 1992	30 April 1995
901	Professor P. J. Newbould	Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside	A	Chairman	18 May 1992	17 May 1995
1642	Mr. R. J. Hanna	Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside	A	Deputy Chairman	18 May 1992	17 May 1995
2276	Mr. L. D. Hasson	NI Railways Ltd	A	Non-Executive Director	1 June 1992	31 May 1995
416	Mrs. M Spence	Laganside Corporation	A	Member	14 June 1992	13 June 1995
705	Duke of J. H. Abercorn	Laganside Corporation	A	Chairman	14 June 1992	13 June 1995
2096	Dr. B. Feeney	Laganside Corporation	A	Member	14 June 1992	13 June 1995
2732	Mr. F. Cobain	Laganside Corporation	A	Member	14 June 1992	13 June 1995
2918	Mr. R. N. M. Empey	Laganside Corporation	A	Member	14 June 1992	13 June 1995
3237	Mr. G. R. Irwin	Laganside Corporation	A	Member	14 June 1992	13 June 1995
3563	Mr. J. J. Fitzpatrick	Laganside Corporation	A	Member	14 June 1992	13 June 1995
4635	Mr. J. Jaworski	Laganside Corporation	A	Member	14 June 1992	13 June 1995
4636	Mr. E. Airey	Laganside Corporation	A	Member	14 June 1992	13 June 1995
137	Ms. H. E. Roulston	Ulsterbus Ltd/Citybus Ltd/Flexibus	A	Non-Executive Director	1 July 1992	30 June 1995
473	Mr. J. L. O'Hagan	NI Railways Ltd	A	Non-Executive Director	1 July 1992	30 June 1995
756	Mr. R. S. McCulloch	NI Airports Ltd	A	Chairman	1 July 1992	30 June 1995
952	Mrs. M. M. Craig	NI Airports Ltd	A	Member	1 July 1992	30 June 1995
4531	Mr. J. W. Rainey	NI Airports Ltd	A	Executive Director	1 August 1992	31 July 1995
4647	Mr. D. Price	NI Railways Ltd	A	Executive Director	1 August 1992	31 July 1995
4665	Mrs. L. M. L. Blakiston Houston	Laganside Corporation	A	Member	10 August 1992	13 June 1995
1380	Mr. A. Keery	NI Transport Holding Company	A	Member	1 October 1992	30 September 1995
3534	Mr. J. H. Armstrong	Warrenpoint Harbour Authority	A	Chairman	1 October 1992	30 September 1995
3236	Mr. A. F. D. Crawley	Planning Appeals Commission	A	Member	6 October 1992	30 September 1995
4037	Mr. W. J. Mitchell	Planning Appals Commission	A	P/T Commissioner	6 October 1992	30 September 1995
Northern Ireland Office						
145	Mr. R. C. Hill	Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights	A	Chairman	1 July 1992	30 June 1995
4534	Mrs. J. S. Corr	Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights	A	Member	17 July 1992	16 July 1994
4682	Professor S. Lee	Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights	A	Member	1 September 1992	31 August 1994
506	Mrs. M. B. Clark-Glass	Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights	A	Member	1 October 1992	30 September 1994
1408	Mrs. J. R. Smyth	Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights	A	Member	1 October 1992	30 September 1994
2325	Mrs. J. I. Harbison	Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights	A	Member	1 October 1992	30 September 1994
2968	Mr. R. T. Mullan	Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights	A	Member	1 October 1992	30 September 1994

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in each month since June.

Mr. Hanley: As at 26 October the information is as follows:

Month	*Number*
June	19
July	25
August	25
September	27
October	31

There are approximately 1·5 million cattle in Northern Ireland and a total of 542 confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy have been reported to 26 October 1992.

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. Mates: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the following agencies under their respective chief executives.

Training and Employment Agency—Mr. J. Crozier
Rate Collection Agency—Mr. D. Gallagher
Social Security Agency—Mr. A. Wylie
Ordnance Survey Agency—Mr. M. Brand
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency—Mr. J. Watson
Compensation Agency—Mr. J. Robinson

I have asked them to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. S. Crozier to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

You asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to list the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

As Chief Executive of the Training and Employment Agency (Northern Ireland) (T&EA), I made two fact finding visits in the last twelve months, one to Brussels and one to Germany.

The Brussels visit was to meet senior officials of DG XVI, DG V and the Task Force, Human Resources. The visit provided an update on the Commission's strategic thinking on training and employment which will assist the T&EA to match best practice elsewhere in the European Community (EC) and to take maximum advantage of EC programmes. Potential for the secondment of T&EA staff to the Commission was also identified.

The aim of the German visit was to examine employment prospects and training opportunities for Northern Ireland people in Germany. Links were established with the Bundesanstalt fur Arbeit (Federal Labour Office) and contacts were made with German firms offering the prospect of advanced apprenticeship training.

Letter from D. W. Gallagher to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

As I am responsible for the Northern Ireland Rate Collection Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to reply to some Parliamentary Questions recently put down by you. These related to papers published by the Agency during the last 12 months and any fact-finding visits undertaken by myself during the same period.

As you may know, the Rate Collection Agency was established on 1 April 1992. During the last 12 months I have issued the Agency's 1992/93 Business Plan. Our 1991/92 Annual Report will be published shortly.

I would also advise that I have not undertaken any fact finding visits over the same period.

I hope this information answers your questions but please let me know if I can be of any further help.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

Your recent Parliamentary Question asking for a list of fact finding visits made in the past 12 months by the Chief Executive of each Executive Agency and the findings resulting from each visit has been passed to me as Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency for reply.

In summary, I have undertaken 19 fact finding visits during the past 12 months, all of which were to Agency locations. I have enclosed a table setting out the date, location and purpose of my visits.

The visits to Social Security Offices and Benefit Branches gave me the opportunity to meet local management and staff and obtain their views on a wide range of issues such as resourcing, accommodation and communication. These visits have been extremely useful when developing high level plans for the Agency.

I hope that this is helpful.

Date of visit	*Location*	*Purpose*
29 October 1991	Paid Order Unit, Lisahally, Londonderry	To attend official Opening of POU and meet management and staff
14 November 1991	Carrickfergus SSO	To meet management and staff
22 November 1991	Strabane SSO	To meet management and staff
28 November 1991	Pensions Branch, Castle Buildings	To meet management and staff
5 December 1991	Lisburn SSO	To meet management and staff
15 January 1992	Bangor SSO	To meet management and staff
21 January 1992	Portadown SSO	To meet management and staff
29 January 1992	Newtownards SSO	To meet management and staff
4 February 1992	Holywood Road SSO	To meet management and staff
6 February 1992	ROSIT, York House	To meet management and staff
13 March 1992	Newtownabbey SSO	To meet management and staff

Date of visit	*Location*	*Purpose*
20 March 1992	Larne SSO	To meet management and staff
16 April 1992	Lisnagelvin SSO	To meet management and staff
16 April 1992	Foyle SSO	To meet management and staff
2 June 1992	Armagh SSO	To meet management and staff
16 June 1992	CBB, Castle Court	To meet management and staff
18 June 1992	Knockbreda SSO	To meet management and staff
14 September 1992	Belfast Benefits Centre	To meet management and staff
8 October 1992	Antrim SSO	To meet management and staff

Letter from J. F. Codd to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

You have asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the Chief Executive of each Executive Agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. M. J. D. Brand was appointed Chief Executive and Director of Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland on 1 April 1992. Since that date he has not undertaken any fact finding visits.

Letter from J. B. Watson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I am responding to your recent Parliamentary Question about fact finding visits made by Agency Chief Executives over the past 12 months.

The Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency was established on 1 April 1992. Since then I have been on two fact finding visits to the Vehicle Inspectorate Agency, Bristol and the Driving Standards Agency, Nottingham. Both of these Agencies are involved in similar work to my own Agency and the visits allowed me to obtain information on a range of operational, financial and personnel issues.

The visits were valuable as they established useful contacts, informed debate and have assisted with subsequent policy formulation.

Letter from J. Robinson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question about fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by Chief Executives of Northern Ireland executive agencies. The Secretary of State has asked me to provide the information in respect of the Compensation Agency.

I have not made any fact finding visits since this Agency was established on 1 April 1992.

Students Unions

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply of 20 October, *Official Report*, column *273*, how much of the payments of £1,427,900 in the academic year 1991-92 was allocated to the students' union at each university and college of education in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

	£
Queens University, Belfast	664,000
University of Ulster	686,000
Stranmillis College	43,900
St. Mary's College	34,000

DEFENCE

Bosnia

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what investigation he has made of the means by which 755 bombs manufactured by Hunting Engineering Ltd., Bedfordshire came to be used by the warring factions in Bosnia; and what information he has on other United Kingdom-built armaments being used in that conflict.

Mr. Aitken: The BL755 bombs were exported legitimately by Hunting Engineering Ltd. to a number of countries between 1977 and 1985. Until the outbreak of the current conflict, when an embargo was placed on such exports, individual export licence applications for Yugoslavia were scrutinised carefully and approved or rejected on a case-by-case basis.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees, and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to "Public Bodies 1991", issued by the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service in December 1991; pages 10 to 13 list Ministry of Defence appointments. Relevant information is also in "Public Appointments: A Handbook for Women's Organisations"; pages 31 to 37, published by the Women's National Commission. Copies of these publications are available from the Library.

Ultra-Violet Radiation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures have been taken to warn and protect military personnel serving in areas with high levels of harmful ultra-violet radiation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All service personnel serving in areas of high levels of harmful ultra-violet radiation and excessive sunlight receive health education briefing and appropriate protective equipment such as eye protectors, screening cream and climatic clothing.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recommendation has been made by the Navy Board in relation to the best location for refitting of nuclear submarines.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our practice to disclose any recommendations which the Navy Board may make in confidence to Ministers.

Search and Rescue

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research his Department has carried out into predicted rescue times in the North sea the effect on his plans to transfer the helicopter search-and-rescue unit from RAF Coltishall to RAF Wattisham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There was no requirement for such research, as the new basing structure for the RAF search-and-rescue (SAR) helicopter force took into account the established civil SAR criteria.

Army Housing

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army personnel currently returning from Germany to be deployed in Northern Ireland are on waiting lists for married quarters; and how many families or spouses are being accommodated in hostels in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 39 Army personnel from Germany who are on waiting lists for married quarters in Northern Ireland. A total of 28 Army families are in hostel accommodation in the United Kingdom.

RAF Brawdy

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of operations flown by B flight, 202 Squadron RAF Brawdy in each of the last five years; and how many operations in each year were in response to a military incident.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The table details the total number of call-outs—civil and military—of B flight 202 Squadron over the past five years and the number of these call-outs that were to military incidents. The figures in brackets show the number of call-outs which involved the rescue of people, including incidents such as the transfer of sick or injured people from ship to hospital.

Year	*Total Call-outs*	*Military Call-outs*
1987	134 (52)	17 (2)
1988	154 (69)	13 (4)
1989	148 (65)	5 (0)
1990	172 (72)	9 (3)
1991	162 (69)	7 (3)
[1]1992	110 (35)	4 (1)

[1] To end August.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the operating costs of B flight 202 Squadron based at RAF Brawdy for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 and the estimated costs for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The operating costs requested are:

	£ million
1990-91	2·32
1991-92	2·48
1992-93	[1]2·58
1993-94	[1]2·67

[1] Estimated.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will publish the risk analysis study carried out by his Department into the need to respond to civilian emergencies before the decision on ending search-and-rescue operations from RAF Brawdy;

(2) if he will publish the risk analysis study prepared for his Department of the need to respond to civilian emergencies before the decision on ending the search-and-rescue operations at RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There was no requirement for such a study, since the new basing structure for the RAF search-and-rescue helicopter force took into account the established civil search-and-rescue criteria.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions Her Majesty's Government had with the Irish Government concerning the withdrawal of search-and-rescue operations from RAF Brawdy in April 1994.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The British embassy in Dublin notified the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs on 21 October of the change in search-and-rescue cover.

Sea King Helicopters

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the length of time a search and rescue Sea King takes to travel 40 nautical miles in usual conditions of *(a)* calm, *(b)* a 10 knot headwind, *(c)* a 20 knot headwind, *(d)* a 30 knot headwind, *(e)* a 40 knot headwind and *(f)* a 50 knot headwind.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Assuming an aircraft air speed of 120 knots, and excluding standby times, the information requested is:

Condition	*Ground speed knots*	*Time minutes*
Calm	120	20·0
10 knot headwind	110	21·8
20 knot headwind	100	24·0
30 knot headwind	90	26·7
40 knot headwind	80	30·0
50 knot headwind	70	34·3

Army Recruits (Ill-treatment)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on alleged incidents of ill-treatment of Army recruits at Whittington barracks and Sennybridge training camp.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The commanding officer initiated an investigation by the special investigations branch of the Royal Military police as soon as the allegations came to light. Its report has now been submitted to the commanding officer. I would not wish to prejudice the outcome of any disciplinary action which might be taken by commenting further at this stage.

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, column *403*, how his Department will determine whether or not another country has tested nuclear weapons after 1996; and for what reasons the United Kingdom will resume nuclear testing if another country tests nuclear weapons after 1996.

Mr. Aitken: Since the issue arises from United States legislation regarding testing in the United States, it will be for the United States authorities to make any determination concerning testing by another country after 1996. Our position on a resumption of testing in that event would be decided in the light of circumstances at the time.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, column *403*, on alternative technologies what is his Department's assessment as to the ability of alternative technologies to ensure the safety of the United Kingdom's nuclear warheads after 1996.

Mr. Aitken We believe that underground testing remains the best means of ensuring the safety and credibility of nuclear weapons. Alternative techniques are not at present an adequate substitute. It is too early to assess how effective they may have become after 1996.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, column *403*, if he will provide details of the numbers and types of alternative technologies for proving nuclear warheads that his Department has been involved in working on; and what additional financial resources will be provided for such work in the future;

(2) what alternatives to nuclear testing exist as means of developing new warheads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: There is a range of technologies which might assist the proving and developing of nuclear warheads in the absence of nuclear tests. These include computer modelling and various forms of simulation using lasers and hydrodynamics. We already make extensive use of them, to keep nuclear testing to a minimum; the question of resources for their development will be considered as part of the normal process of determining the forward defence programme.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United Kingdom is prohibited from conducting an underground nuclear test in Nevada before July 1993 under the terms of the United States energy appropriation legislation.

Mr. Aitken: The legislation makes no provision for a United Kingdom nuclear test before 1 July 1993 and it is not practicable for the United Kingdom to test while the United States Government are themselves unable to do so.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Charters

34. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will ensure that charter standards are regularly reviewed and improved if necessary.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. The citizens charter is a programme of continuous improvement. As targets are set, and met, we aim to improve on them over time. Charters will be reviewed and improved year-by-year. Our White Paper later this month will set out the future development of the charter programme.

Research and Development

37. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on Government spending on research and development in the coming year.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Government spending on research and development in 1992-93 is £5,587 million. The figure for 1993-94 will be announced in the autumn statement.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of gross domestic product the United Kingdom Government spends on civil research and development; and what are the comparable figures for France and Germany.

Mr. Robert Jackson: In 1990 the United Kingdom Government spent 0·51 per cent. of GDP on civil R and D. The corresponding figures for France and Germany were 0·85 per cent. and 0·9 per cent. respectively. The figures for USA and Japan were 0·44 per cent. and 0·43 per cent.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the price of the Maastricht treaty published by HMSO; what is the price of the English text published in Luxembourg for the European Community on sale in HMSO shops; what is the reason for the difference in price; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The English language version of the treaty on European union published by the office for official publications of the European Communities is priced at 9 ecu. HMSO, which is the appointed sales agent in Britain for publications of the European Community, has translated this into a selling price of £6·50, using a conversion table provided by the European Community.

HMSO has also published the treaty on European union, including the protocols and final act with declaration, as Cm. 1934. This publication has a cover price of £13·30, determined by reference to a pricing scale applied to all monochrome Command Papers. The pricing scale ensures consistency in the prices of items of similar size and appearance, regardless of their relative popularity.

Publishing Restrictions

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will publish a complete list of statutory restrictions which he has identified as preventing the publication of information known to the Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: I hope to announce conclusions of the review of specific statutory restrictions on the disclosure of information early in the new year.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Waldegrave: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the chief executives of the Central Office of Information, the Civil Service College, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, the Occupational Health Service and the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency. I have asked them to write to the hon. Member direct.

Letter from Mike Devereau to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

You recently tabled a Parliamentary Question to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in connection with papers published by the Chief Executive of each Executive Agency. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has asked me to reply direct to you with regard to the Central Office of Information.

The only paper I have published in the past year is COI's Annual Report and Accounts 1991-92, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Letter from Marianne Neville-Rolfe to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

You asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he would list for the last twelve months the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each agency for which he is responsible. I attach a list of the publications which have been issued by the Civil Service College since October 1991.

Civil Service College publications since October 1991

Prospectus 1992-1993
Training for Trainers and Training Managers
Equality of Opportunity Training
Equality of Opportunity Training (Private Sector)
Training in Purchasing and Supply
IPM Professional Education Scheme
Systems and Project Management
R and D Management
Policy Programme for Managers
Senior Finance Training
Training in Personnel Management
Training for Auditors
European Community and International Relations
Senior Training
Management Development Programmes
Fast Stream Training
Training for Lawyers
Training in Market Testing
Personnel Management Training
Node Programmes
Report and Accounts 1991-1992

Letter from Paul Freeman to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I am responding, in respect of HMSO, to your question to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on papers published by the executive agencies for which he is responsible.

HMSO normally publishes around 9,000 titles per year in its capacity as Government Publisher. I enclose a copy of our booklet "Getting HMSO Books", which explains the various means of keeping track of HMSO publications.

I assume, however, that your question is directed towards publications which relate to HMSO's own activities as an Executive Agency. These would be the HMSO Trading Fund Accounts 1991 and HMSO Review 1991, and I am pleased to enclose complimentary copies.

Letter from Dr. George Sorrie to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

As you know I have been asked to respond to your question to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about papers published by Chief Executives of Executive Agencies. In my capacity as Director of the Civil Service Occupational Health Service I have published no papers in the last 12 months.

Letter from Michael D. Geddes to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has asked me to reply for Recruitment and Assessment Services to your Question asking him to list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Chief Executive of each executive Agency for which he is responsible.

The information for RAS is as follows:

Annual Report 1991-92.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she expects the Health and Safety Executive to complete its review of procedure of preserving Crown notices for infringement of health and safety legislation by public bodies; and when she expects the Health and Safety Commission to present its report.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive hopes to present the findings of its review of the crown notice procedure to the Health and Safety Commission before the end of the year. Depending on its views of the findings, the HSC may make recommendations to Ministers in the new year.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list all of the reports her Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to her Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available except at disproportionate cost.

Jobseekers Charter

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the implementation of the jobseekers charter.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms. Joyce Quin, dated 2 November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about implementation of the Jobseeker's Charter. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The Jobseeker's Charter was launched in December 1991. The main elements are now in place and are an integral part of the day to day work of all 1,350 ES local offices across Great Britain. They are:

details of ES services displayed in each local office;

national targets for service delivery published each year;
local standards for the level of service to clients displayed in all local offices;
the name of the local and area managers displayed in each local office, and everyone wearing name badges;
comprehensive information on the services provided by the ES set out in a series of leaflets;
national annual customer satisfaction surveys supplemented by customer surveys at local level;
new easy-to-use complaints procedure.

All my local offices now have set their own standards of service (against national minimums I have set). These include waiting times (within 10 minutes), how quickly the telephone is answered (within 30 seconds), paying the right money on time (normally within 3 working days of signing); and the numbers of people they aim to place into jobs.

We bring the Charter to the attention of all new clients and copies of it are available for people to keep.

We are constantly seeking improvements in the service we give to our clients. For example, large print, braille and minority language versions of the Jobseeker's Charter leaflets are now available. We are also extending Jobseeker Charter principles to our external service providers (eg contractors running Jobclubs and Job Review Workshops for us). A new clause requiring contractors to adhere to Jobseeker's Charter principles is being included in all new contracts. My local people are meeting all their contractors to explain what is needed and to ensure that contractors implement Charter standards.

Individual offices are piloting local customer satisfaction surveys. They will use the results to improve the services they provide locally. We plan to carry out local surveys annually and to make public key results.

The complaints and suggestions procedure mentioned earlier is explained in a booklet called "Help us to get it right . . . and how to complain". This includes a target that we will respond to complaints within 5 working days.

I enclose copies of the suggestions and complaints leaflet and also of the leaflet "Jobseeker's Charter" which you may be interested to see. They are displayed in every Employment Service local office.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she is taking to monitor the progress of the jobseekers charter.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Jimmy Wray, dated 2 November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about monitoring the progress of the Jobseeker's Charter. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The Jobseeker's Charter was launched in December 1991. All my local offices now have set their own standards of service (against national minimums I have set). These include waiting times (within 10 mins), how quickly the telephone is answered (within 30 secs), paying the right money on time (normally withing 3 working days of signing); and the number of people they aim to place into jobs.

Local managers already monitor their performance against their own standards and we are developing ways in which we can monitor these results nationally.

The Employment Service (ES) also has national targets for key areas of performance set by the Secretary of State each year. These are published in the ES Annual Performance Agreement and ES performance against these is published in the ES Annual Report.

The complaints and suggestions procedure mentioned earlier is explained in a booklet called "Help us to get it right . . . and how to complain". This includes a target for responding to complaints within 5 working days. Complaints and suggestions are monitored centrally on a quarterly basis.

The 1991 survey showed high levels of satisfaction with our offices—from 79 per cent. satisfaction with Jobcentres Services to 87 per cent. with benefit services in new integrated offices combining the service of Jobcentres and Unemployment Benefit Offices. I have agreed with the Secretary of State a target of achieving an increase of 3 per cent. in the level of customer satisfaction in each type of ES office.

Individual offices are piloting local customer satisfaction surveys. They will use the results to improve the services they provide locally. We plan to carry out local surveys annually and to keep results.

We are also extending Jobseeker's Charter principles to encourage our external service providers (eg contractors running Jobclubs and Job Review Workshops for us) to operate to Charter standards. A new clause requiring contractors to adhere to Jobseeker's Charter principles is being included in all new contracts. My local people are meeting all their contractors to explain what is needed and to ensure that contractors implement Charter standards.

I am responsible to the Secretary of State for the progress on the Jobseekers Charter. The Secretary of State meets the Prime Minister every six months to discuss progress on the Jobseeker's Charter and Employment Service officials meet members of the Employment Department and the Citizen's Charter Unit regularly to discuss progress.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Offshore Installations (Standby Vessels)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 9 July, *Official Report*, column *318*, if she will make a statement on the monitoring undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive since the end of June of the presence of adequate numbers of emergency standby vessels for offshore installations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I made clear to the hon. Member in my answer of 9 July 1992, at column *318*, that it is the responsibility of each individual operator to ensure that there is adequate standby vessel cover available at all times to provide the necessary safeguards.

Since June I have taken further action to remind industry of this responsibility. I issued a press statement on 6 August reminding operators that they must plan ahead to ensure that by the end of the year all their installations are supported by vessels which comply fully with the code on the assessment of the suitability of standby vessels attending offshore installations.

The Health and Safety Executive has made it clear that there can be no slippage in implementation, and dispensations will not be granted. I fully support this.

Pit Closures

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what date her Department became aware that British Coal proposed to give less than the statutory 90-day notice of redundancy to miners affected by the current round of proposed pit closures.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department received first notifications of the proposed redundancies from British

Coal on 15 October 1992. British Coal subsequently withdrew these notifications and has now submitted new ones.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her Department's estimate of the number of women in the travel-to-work areas affected by the proposed pit closures; and what estimate she has made of the proportion who are employed by county or district local authorities.

Mr. McLoughlin: The table shows the number of women, aged 16 years and over, resident in each of the travel-to-work areas affected by the proposed pit closures. The data are taken from the 1981 census of population and is the latest information available. Information relating to the numbers employed by local authorities is not available in the form requested.

Travel-to-work area	*Total females aged 16+*
Alfreton and Ashfield	53,528
Barnsley	78,999
Chesterfield	68,869
Doncaster	101,609
Llanelli	42,524
Mansfield	61,755
Merthyr and Rhymney	63,106
Nottingham	282,727
Retford	19,033
Sheffield	248,953
Shotton, Flint and Rhyl	77,647
South Tyneside	65,225
Stoke	185,402
Sunderland	170,783
Wakefield and Dewsbury	103,692
Wigan and St. Helens	190,788

Source: OPCS, 1981 Census of Population.

Wages Councils

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what information she has on the number of women covered by wages councils who are married, living with a partner, single or widowed respectively;

(2) how many of the women covered by wages councils are the principal source of family income.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many establishments covered by wages councils are located in the travel-to-work areas directly affected by the pit closure programme.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Opencast Coal

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information her Department has on links between asthma and opencast coal mining; and what role her Department is playing in the current review of the coal industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive, which is concerned with the health and safety effects of work activity on both employees and others, has no information that establishes a link between asthma and opencast coal mining. The Health and Safety Commission is always prepared to advise on health and safety matters, but it has no direct role in the current review of the coal industry which is a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Renewable Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he plans to publish the study on renewable energy commissioned by his predecessor in 1991.

Mr. Eggar: I anticipate that the report of the Renewable Energy advisory group will be submitted to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade in the near future. It will be published soon thereafter.

Animal Experiments

Ms. Lynne: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement outlining his Department's and the Council of Ministers' response to proposals from the European Parliament and Commission to end cosmetic tests on animals.

Mr. Leigh: The Government's policy in the negotiations on the proposed sixth Council amendment to the cosmetics directive is wherever possible to eliminate animal testing and if this does not prove possible to keep animal testing to a minimum consistent with human safety. In recognition of the progress made in developing skin and eye irritancy tests, the United Kingdom has called on the European Community to set 1998 as a target date for the replacement of animal tests in those areas subject to there being validated alternatives. We will continue to press for a reduction in animal testing and we hope that during our presidency member states will agree to the phasing out of testing on animals when they can be replaced with suitably validated non-animal alternatives.

Hospital Radio

Mr. Amess: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 16 July, *Official Report,* column 989, when he will announce his plans for frequencies for hospital radio.

Mr. Leigh: As the Radio Authority informed the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations on 24 September, the members of the authority have decided that, in the light of the results of the previous experiment and before any further steps are taken, a detailed assessment should be made of the wider implications of freely radiating transmission for hospital and student radio upon spectrum availability. It is for the Radio Authority to determine how best to use the frequencies available for independent broadcasting, determining in particular the priorities to be accorded to permanent stations, short-term restricted services, and longer term restricted services, like hospital and student radio.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all of the reports that his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Power Generation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assumptions have been made as to the cost of generating electricity by nuclear power and coal respectively; and if he will publish for each year since 1962 the average cost of electricity produced by such stations compared with the average cost of base-load coal-fired stations.

Mr. Eggar: The comparable capital and full fuel costs per kilowatt hour of power stations using different fuels depend significantly upon the contractual terms of fuel purchase, and the contractual terms under which the power station is constructed and operated. These are commercial matters for the companies concerned. Figures for the average cost of generating electricity by nuclear power and coal for each year since 1962 are therefore not available. Nuclear Electric has published the operating costs of its stations since 1989-90 in its annual report.

Pit Closures

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy that all Her Majesty's Government's evidence and material to be presented to his inquiry relating to the colliery closures should also be available to the Trade and Industry Select Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement on this point that my right hon. Friend made in the House on 26 October.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether a full cost benefit analysis was made of the implications of the closure of coal mines as announced in his statement on 21 October.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 30 October 1992]*: As my right hon. Friend, the President of the Board of Trade, indicated on 21 October, we considered a wide range of issues in reaching our conclusions.

Energy Research

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of Her Majesty's Government's energy research budget in 1989 was spent on *(a)* coal technology and *(b)* energy efficiency.

Mr. Eggar: The percentage of Her Majesty's Government energy research budget that was spent on coal technology in 1989-90 was 1 per cent. The equivalent figure for energy efficiency was 4·7 per cent.

Energy efficiency expenditure now falls within the remit of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Institution of Electrical Engineers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how often he has met representatives of the Institution of Electrical Engineers; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Sainsbury: To date, my right hon. Friend has had no meetings with representatives of the Institution of Electrical Engineers. Officials, including those from the new industry sector division, are in contact with the IEE on a number of industrial issues.

Electricity

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the value of work undertaken overseas by companies in the electricity industry for the latest convenient period.

Mr. Eggar: This is a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Coalfield Communities

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade over what time scale the £165 million package he announced to assist coalfield communities will be allocated; what part of this sum is in addition to existing departmental spending plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The employment package of up to £75 million announced by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Employment, will be spread over this financial year and the next. The £5 million coalfield areas fund will be spent over the same period. The English Estates £85 million programme of premises and sites provision will be spread over three or four years. These programmes will provide additional assistance for the areas affected.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how the citizens charter will apply to the mining community.

Mr. Eggar: The citizens charter will apply to the mining community as individual members of the public who are entitled to receive high-quality public services.

Press Notices

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to make available to hon. Members on request press notices issued by his Department on the day of release.

Mr. Eggar: My Department's press notices, along with those of other Departments, are already available to hon. Members on the day of release, through the Palace of Westminster's computerised parliamentary on-line information system—POLIS—which subscribes to the Central Office of Information's electronic news distribution system and receives all press notices released in this way within minutes of their origination. The POLIS system is available to all hon. Members either through the Library or through hon. Member's own computers. In addition, the Library receives paper copies of all press releases distributed by the Central Office of Information on the day of release.

Emergency Vessels

Dr. Godman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names of all emergency or standby vessels which have been ordered in each of the last three years for service in the United Kingdom's offshore oil and gas industry from shipyards located in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: One new-build emergency or stand-by vessel has been ordered for service in the United Kingdom offshore oil and gas industry in the last three years. The order was placed this year by Seaboard Marine of Aberdeen, with the Yorkshire Dry Dock Company. The vessel is due for delivery in December 1993 and is intended for a long-term charter with Amerada Hess on the Scott field. It has not yet been formally named.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidance is given by his Department to the chairmen of nationalised industries about contact between employees and their local Members of Parliament about matters of national and local importance.

Mr. Eggar: My Department offers no advice to the chairmen of the nationalised industries for which it is responsible as to contact between their employees and Members of Parliament. Members of the boards of these industries are advised that they should abstain from controversial political activity.

Silverhill Colliery

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning the number of employees, the tonnage of coal mined, and the profit or loss made at the Silverhill colliery in the financial years made in 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992; and what was the average cost per gigajoule of this fuel in each of those years.

Mr. Eggar: These are matters for British Coal.

Opencast Mining

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about the need to ensure that opencast coal is included in the current review of coal and energy policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend, the President of the Board of Trade, announced the terms of the review in the House on 26 October. So far, no representations on the inclusion in the review of open cast coal mining have been received.

Emergency Call Review Group

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the members of the OFTEL 999 emergency call review group.

Mr. Leigh: The following organisations were represented on the independent emergency call review group established by OFTEL:

Regional Ambulance Officers Group
Fire Services Inspectorate
Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association
Association of Chief Police Officers
Policy Authority for Northern Ireland
Office of the Chief Coastguard
Department of Health
Department of Trade and Industry
OFTEL
Home Office
Scottish Office
Northern Ireland Office
BT
Mercury Communications Ltd
Racal-Vodafone Ltd
Telecom Securicor Cellular Radio Ltd
Kingston Communications (Hull) Ltd
The Cable Television Authority
Phonepoint Ltd

Post Office Privatisation

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place a copy of the Kleinwort Benson report on Post Office privatisation feasibility in the Library.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* Any reports produced by the Government's advisers on the Post Office are internal Government documents. I do not intend, therefore, to place such documents in the Library.

Reductions and Placement

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the reports by Touche Ross and March Consulting Group respectively on reductions and replacement, as commissioned by his Department.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* My Department commissioned the report by Touche Ross on the use of CFCs and 1, 1, 1, Tri-chloroethane as solvents. The report by March Consulting Group on the use of CFCs in the refrigeration sector was commissioned by the Department of the Environment. Both reports are primarily intended to inform decisions on the timetable for phasing-out ozone-depleting substances. These decisions will be taken, by agreement between EC member states, in the context of the review of the Montreal protocol later this year.

Business Consultancy Development Initiatives

Mr. McLeish: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give *(a)* the total expenditure on business consultancy development initiatives for each of the standard regions and Great Britain and for each of the years 1989-90 to 1991-92 inclusive and *(b)* the total expenditure for business consultancy development initiatives in each of the assisted areas in Scotland for the years 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* Total payments on enterprise initiative consultancy projects for each DTI region for each of the years 1989-90 to 1991-92 are shown in the table. A breakdown of expenditure in assisted areas in Scotland is not available.

Expenditure on the CI's by region 1989-90 to 1991-92

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
North East	1,709	2,287	3,119
North West	6,192	7,002	6,905
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,987	4,723	3,969

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
West Midlands	4,343	4,963	6,912
East Midlands	2,136	2,654	3,694
South West	2,491	2,981	3,795
East	1,922	2,316	3,227
South East	6,905	7,751	11,157
Scotland	3,631	3,137	4,248
Wales	2,278	2,418	3,108
Total	35,594	40,232	52,134

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Eggar: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the chief executives of the 10 agencies for which my Department is responsible. I have therefore asked Mr. Mike Hoddinott, Accounts Services Agency; Mr. David Durham, Companies House; Mr. Peter Joyce, Insolvency Service; Dr. Richard Worswick, Laboratory of the Government Chemist; Mr. William Edgar, National Engineering Laboratory; Dr. Peter Clapham, National Physical Laboratory; Dr. Seton Bennett, National Weights and Measures Laboratory; Mr. Paul Hartnack, Patent Office; Mr. John Michell, Radiocommunications Agency; and Dr. Doug Cormack, Warren Spring Laboratory, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mike Hoddinott to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992:

Your recent Parliamentary Question addressed to the President of the Board of Trade asked for the titles of papers published by DTI agencies. I have been asked to reply in respect of Accounts Services Agency for which I am Chief Executive.

The only paper published by ASA over the last 12 months was the Annual Report and Accounts for 1991-92 issued in August.

Letter from David Durham to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

You recently put down a Parliamentary Question to the President of the Board of Trade asking him to list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by each agency chief executive. Following the answer given by Mr. Eggar, I am replying in respect of Companies House.

As you may imagine, Companies House publishes a great variety of forms and notes for guidance for the use of companies and individuals. There are in addition regular newsheets circulated to our customers, and other publicity, on developments in our services. These are in order to help companies and others understand and meet the obligations all limited companies have to place certain documents on the public record. I have assumed that your question is not addressed at such publications, though I would be happy to list them should you so wish.

Apart from these, the only document which I believe falls within the scope of your question is as follows:

Annual Report and Accounts for 1991-92.

Letter from Peter Joyce to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

1. I am replying at Mr. Eggar's request to your recent Parliamentary Question in which you asked the President of the Board of Trade to list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Chief Executive of each executive agency.

2. In the last 12 months the following documents have been published by the Insolvency Service:

A Guide to Bankruptcy
Insolvency General Annual Report 1990
Insolvency Service Executive Agency Annual Report 1990-91
Accounts 1990-91
Insolvency General Annual Report 1991
Insolvency Service Executive Agency Annual Report 1991-92
Directory of Authorised Insolvency Practitioners 1992

Letter from R. D. Worswick to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I am writing to you in reply to your PQ asking the President of the Board of Trade for the titles of papers published within the last 12 months by the Chief Executives of the Department's Agencies.

Within the last 12 months I have had published the papers listed below:

(i) "Quality Assurance in the European Community", Presented to a Meeting of the American Laboratory Managers Association on 24 October 1991
(ii) "The Laboratory of the Government Chemist: Past and Future"
Opening lecture at an International Conference on Analytical Chemistry (SAC 92), 20-26 September 1992

I hope this is useful.

Letter from W. Edgar to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992:

I would refer to your Parliamentary Question tabled on 21 October to the President of the Board of Trade in which you asked if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Chief Executive of each Executive Agency for which he is responsible.

As Chief Executive of NEL I attach a listing of the publications issued in 1991 together with a partial listing for 1992 to date, I trust that you will find this information to be satisfactory for your purposes.

A list of the documents has been placed in the Library.

Letter from Dr. P. B. Clapham to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I am writing in response to your Parliamentary Question addressed to the President of the Board of Trade requesting titles of papers published by Agency Chief Executives. I have been asked to respond regarding my own Agency, the National Physical Laboratory (NPL).

NPL has recently published its Annual Report and Accounts for 1991-92 and copies were laid before the Houses of Parliament on 24 September 1992. In addition, the Laboratory has had published a large number of scientific papers in the technical press, various pamphlets describing NPL's measurement services, and also our "House Journal", NPL News. Finally, I have recently had published a paper entitled, "Measurement—for what it's Worth" discussing the value of NPL's measurement work to the United Kingdom economy. Most of these publications are freely available from the Laboratory's Information Services, and I should be glad to arrange for copies to be sent to you if you would like to indicate your particular interests.

Letter from Seton Bennett to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I have been asked by the President of the Board of Trade to let you have details of papers I have published during the last twelve months.

In my capacity as Chief Executive of the National Weights and Measures Laboratory I have published the Agency's Corporate Plan in March 1992 and its 1991-92 Annual Report in July. NWML also publishes a number of technical documents and type approval certificates.

Letter from P. R. S. Hartnack to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I am writing in response to your Parliamentary Question number 180 of 21 October 1992 about titles of papers published in the last year.

2. I have published no papers on a personal basis, but in seeking to stimulate interest in intellectual property matters I have made a number of speeches to a variety of audiences. By way of example, I enclose a copy of a speech I made last week at a conference on global technology transfer, which was printed as one of the conference papers.

3. More generally, details of patent applications, and of applications for the registration of trade marks and designs are published by the Patent Office as part of the statutory process. My Annual Report as Comptroller General is also published, and copies are laid in the library of the House of Commons, as are copies of the Patent Office's approved Corporate Plan.

4. Finally I should mention that we publish a large number of pamphlets, monographs, and other literature, including videos and self-education packages, aimed at informing the public on different aspects of intellectual property. If you would like a complete set of this material please let me know and I will arrange for it to be sent to you direct, or placed in the library of the House of Commons.

A copy of the speech has been placed in the Library.

Letter from M. J. Michell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

You have recently tabled two Parliamentary Questions to the President of the Board of Trade, concerning papers published and fact finding visits by the Chief Executives of DTI Agencies. The President has asked me to write to you on these matters in relation to the Radiocommunications Agency.

I have not myself published any papers since this Agency was established in 1990. However the Agency as such has published a large number of technical papers, reports and so forth. I am not sure this kind of publication is what you had in mind in your Question but I have enclosed details of publications over the past 12 months should these be of interest. I am also enclosing a copy of the Agency's latest annual report.

In the last twelve months I have not made any fact finding visits as such. During the course of my work I have visited a number of United Kingdom companies to discuss matters of business, as well as visiting different Agency establishments. I have made one overseas visit to Australia and New Zealand, to discuss with the authorities there certain radical changes in radio spectrum management policy they have introduced or are in course of introducing, in order that I may better advise Ministers on future policy in this country. As you may know, the Government has announced its intention of issuing a consultative document on future radio spectrum management in due course.

I hope this is helpful.

A list of the documents has been placed in the Library.

Letter from D. Cormack, chief executive of the Warren Spring Laboratory, to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992:

In response to your question to the President of the Board of Trade, I list below the papers I have had published during the period in question.

Effluent Treatment: Technologies for Decontaminating Industrial Waste Waters

Paper given at Financial Times conference 'The European Water Industry', 10-11 March 1992.

The Management of Acute Risks: Oil Spill Contingency Planning and Response

Co-author of chapter in the book 'North Sea Oil and the Environment', published by Elsevier Applied Science, 1992.

Scientific and Technical Aspects of Land Based Sources of Marine Pollution

Paper in the Journal 'Marine Policy', December 1991, in section entitled 'Land Based Sources of Marine Pollution: Marine Issues for the Earth Summit'.

I also enclose lists of this Agency's publications for the period in question. This list does not of course, include those publications with a Commercial-in-Confidence designation.

A list of the documents has been placed in the Library.

Plessey-Siemens Pensioners

Mr. Gapes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from Plessey-Siemens pensioners on changes in benefits from GEC; and what response he has made.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

We have received some 40 or 50 letters from, or on behalf of, Plessey pensioners. In response, we have explained that arrangements for splitting the Plessey fund have been submitted to the High Court for approval and that, in the meantime, all former Plessey pensioners have received increases amounting to 31 per cent. over the past 16 months. We have also explained that the withdrawal of a free private health care plan is a matter for the company as employer, rather than for the pension scheme.

SCOTLAND

Water

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the water supply zones in each region where one or more samples exceeded 10 micrograms of lead per litre of water in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The table lists zones where results from regulatory sampling in 1991 indicate that one or more samples exceeded 10 micrograms of lead per litre of water. More than 98 per cent. of these samples met the regulation standard of 50 micrograms per litre.

Region and zone
Borders
  Acreknowe
  Bonchester
  Broughton
  Earnscleugh
  Innerleithen
  Philiphaugh
  Stow
  Tweedsmuir
  Walkerburn

Central
  Callander
  Crianlarich
  Kilsyth, Croy, Banton, Twechar, Queenzieburn
  West Stirlingshire

Dumfries and Galloway
  Auchneel
  Black Esk South
  Creetown
  Kettleton/Kettleton Borehole
  Killylour/Terregles Borehole
  Langholm
  Moffat
  Newton Stewart
  Sanquhar
  Winterhope

Fife
Auchterderran
Buckhaven
Cleish
Cowdenbeath
Dunfermline
Dumferline South
East Neuk
Falkland
Glenrothes North
Glenrothes South
Kinross
Kirkcaldy
Newburgh
North East Fife
North Fife
St. Andrews/Pipelands
Tayport

Grampian
Aboyne
Airyhall
Auchengoul
Auchleven-Everton
Ballater
Blackburn Spring
Bluehill (including Kincardine/Deeside)
Brideswell
Cairnie-Riggins
Clatt
Clerkyhill
Collieston (1)
Collieston (2)
Crathie
Dinnet
Drummuir
Easterton
Fortie
Fraserburgh/Hillhead
Glendye
Hatton of Cruden
Kennethmont
Kintore
Largue
Lossiemouth (Low Level)
Mannofield South
Marypark
Montgarrie-Whiteside
Morriston/Woodlands
Muir Fowlis
Muiralehouse
Newbigging (Inverurie)
New Pitsligo-Turlundie
Oyne/Old Rayne
Oyne Springs
Pineshaw (Port Elphinstone)
Ryhnie
Rothes-Drumbain
Sandhaven
Strathdon
Tarland
Tarland-Raw
Traves
Tomnavoulin
Turriff
Turriff Distribution

Highland
Balmacara
Beauly Firth
Brora
Caithness Regional
Dores
Easter Ross and Black Isle
Easter Ross (River Glass)
Fort Willian-Claggan
Foyers
Invergarry
Inverness/Balmore
Inverness/Oldtown
Kentallen
Kingussie
Kinlochleven
Laggan Bridge
Nairn
Spey Valley (Loch Einich)

Lothian
Alnwickhill Joppa
Alnwickhill Leith
Alnwickhill Newington
Alnwickhill Portobello
Belstane
Chalkieside
Dechmont
Dechmont Law
East Craigs
Fairmilehead Direct
Fairmilehead Gilmerton
Firrhill Mid
Firrhill North
Firrhill South
Firrhill West
Fountainhall
Garleton
Harburnhead
Harlaw/Marchbank
Hillend
Humbie
Kinleith
Latch
Lawhead
Pateshill Direct
Pateshill District
Pateshill Longridge
Preston
Roseberry East
Roseberry Gourlaw
Roseberry West
Stobshiel
Torduff
Traprain
Waterston
West Mains

Strathclyde
Allanton and Shotts
Ardeer
Arrochar/Tarbet/Kilcreggan
Auchenlongford
Barrhead/Auchenback
Bearsden/Milngavie/Hillfoot/Kessington/Drumchapel
Biggar
Brodick
Cairndow
Cardross
Catacol
Darvel Valley
Douglas and Lesmahagow
Furnace/Minard
Glasgow-Cardonald/Hillington/Mosspark/Penilee
Glasgow-Carntyne/Springboig/Shettleston
Glasgow-Cockmuir
Glasgow-Cranhill/Easterhouse/Lethamhill/Ruchazie
Glasgow-Crossyloof/Pollock/Pollockshields/Nitshill
Glasgow-Dennistoun/Haghill/Possilpark/Ruchill
Glasgow-Drumchapel/Knightswood/Yoker
Glasgow-Hutchesontown/Rutherglen
Glasgow-Kelvinside/Maryhill
Glasgow-Langside/Newlands
Glenbuck
Howwood/Johnstone/Kilbarchan
Kilberry
Kilchattan Bay
Kilmaurs
Lanarkshire (South East)
Larkhall and Hamilton
Leven Valley
Motherwell (North)
Muirkirk

Pirnmill
Rankinston
Renfrewshire (South)
Strachur
Tiree

Tayside
Aberfeldy
Ballinluig
Balnaguard
Bridge of Cally
Clatto East
Clatto North
Dunkeld Region
Grandtully
Kenmore
Kinloch Rannoch
Perth
Pitlochry
Turret

Orkney

Note:—**Although Orkney zones met the prescribed standard in the Regulations, the data presented are indeterminate in terms of whether 10 micrograms per litre was exceeded. No results, however, exceeded 20 micrograms per litre.**

Shetland
Mid Yell
Skerries

Western Isles
Achmore
Balallan
Islivig
Leurbost
Northton
Sollas
Tarbert/Scalpay

Mr. Simon Hughes: **To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total value of grants paid by each district council in Scotland for replacement of lead water supply pipes in each financial year since 1988-89 and for the current financial year to date; and if he will make a statement.**

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: **The table gives figures, for each full year since 1988-89, of grants approved for the replacement of lead plumbing only. Plumbing replacement is, however, often included in other works of repair and improvement; the cost of this cannot be identified separately. No full information is yet available for any part of the current financial year.**

Private sector improvements—Amount of grant approved for lead plumbing work only[1]

District	*Amount of grant approved in financial year £000* 1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
SCOTLAND	**2,508**	**2,896**	**2,820**	**1,957**
Borders				
Berwickshire	—	—	—	—
Ettrick and Lauderdale	—	—	—	—
Roxburgh	—	—	—	—
Tweeddale	—	—	—	—
Central				
Clackmannan	**23**	**19**	**9**	**16**
Falkirk	**4**	**5**	**11**	**18**
Stirling	**5**	**2**	**24**	**25**
Dumfries and Galloway				
Annandale and Eskdale	**3**	**1**	**4**	**2**
Nithsdale	**3**	**5**	**8**	**7**
Stewartry	**1**	**2**	**3**	**7**
Wigtown	**5**	**3**	**5**	**8**
Fife				
Dunfermline	**2**	**8**	**11**	**6**
Kirkcaldy	**37**	**93**	**76**	**23**
North-east Fife	—	**2**	**3**	**2**
Grampian				
Aberdeen	**239**	**219**	**207**	**156**
Banff and Buchan	**11**	**6**	**4**	**4**
Gordon	**10**	**18**	**18**	**7**
Kincardine and Deeside	**4**	**8**	**21**	**12**
Moray	**3**	**2**	**7**	**23**
Highland				
Badenoch and Strathspey	**6**	**5**	**8**	**1**
Caithness	—	**4**	**5**	**5**
Inverness	**5**	**8**	**3**	**4**
Lochaber	**1**	—	—	—
Nairn	—	—	—	—
Ross and Cromarty	**8**	**12**	**5**	**4**
Skye and Lochalsh	—	—	—	—
Sutherland	—	**1**	—	—
Lothian				
East Lothian	**67**	**37**	**109**	**90**
Edinburgh	**746**	**949**	**1,116**	**209**
Midlothian	**14**	**17**	**22**	**41**
West Lothian	**30**	**41**	**4**	**18**

District	*Amount of grant approved in financial year £000*			
	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Strathclyde				
Argyll and Bute	39	49	112	90
Bearsden and Milngavie	43	60	128	245
Clydebank	1	3	3	4
Clydesdale	4	4	5	9
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1	—	—	7
Cumnock and Doon Valley	4	6	4	6
Cunninghame	29	30	38	32
Dumbarton	13	17	14	22
East Kilbride	4	—	6	13
Eastwood	98	45	79	1
Glasgow	669	666	36	184
Hamilton	4	4	1	2
Inverclyde	35	18	48	74
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	16	15	34	45
Kyle and Carrick	76	65	50	70
Monklands	21	39	64	39
Motherwell	5	3	3	7
Renfrew	83	173	253	133
Strathkelvin	51	66	127	115
Tayside				
Angus	2	7	3	1
Dundee	—	2	—	6
Perth and Kinross	74	50	126	161
Islands Councils				
Orkney Islands	7	3	3	2
Shetland Islands	—	—	—	—
Western Isles	—	—	—	1

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[1] **Amount of grant approved where the repair is solely for the replacement of lead plumbing. Grants for repairs/improvements where part is for lead plumbing work has been excluded.**

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the new rules announced by the Prime Minister about the use of the private sector for public sector projects will allow the private sector to invest in local authority controlled water services.

Mr. Lang: As indicated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, we are keen that the public and private sectors should work closely together to invest in Britain's future. As announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gollie) on 8 July 1992, *Official Report,* columns 266-67. I appointed consultants to advise me on alternative forms of organisation for water and sewerage services in Scotland including ways in which the private sector might contribute enterprise and investment to this vital public service. I intend to publish a consultation paper shortly.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for what reasons the brief given to consultants Quayle Munro to inquire into the Scottish water industry has not been published; if he will make it his policy for the completed report from the consultants to be published; and if he will publish the list of consultants asked to tender for the consultancy contract covering the future of the water industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* The consultants' brief concerned advice sought by the Government under conditions of commercial confidentiality for the purpose of informing policy. As such, it is not appropriate for publication. The same constraints apply to the consultants' report itself. That report, however, will form the preparation of the consultation paper which will be published shortly and which will set out a range of options for the future structure of the water and sewerage services in Scotland. The consultation paper and not the consultants' report will be the appropriate document to serve as a basis for public discussion and comment.

The list of firms invited to tender for the consultancy was as follows:

- Barclays de Zoete Wedd
- British Linen Bank
- Coopers and Lybrand
- County NatWest
- Ernst and Young
- Kleinwort Benson
- National Economic Research Associates
- Price Waterhouse
- Quayle Munro
- Schroders

Labour Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretaru of State for Scotland how many people were employed in manufacturing in Scotland in 1979; and how many there are at the present time.

Mr. Stewart: In June 1979, there were an estimated 604,000 employees employed in manufacturing in Scotland. In June 1992, the latest date for which information is available, this figure was 368,000. Both of these figures are taken from the civilian work force in employment estimates complied by the Employment Department.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what *(a)* percentage and *(b)* numbers of

employees in manufacturing in Scotland were in (i) home-owned firms and (ii) overseas-owned firms in 1979; and what are the percentages at the present time.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is given in the table. The latest year for which such information is available is 1990.

Percentage and number of employees[1] in home-owned and overseas-owned manufacturing plants in Scotland, 1979 and 1990

	Home-owned plants	*Overseas-owned plants*
1979		
Percentage of all employees	80·8	19·2
Number of employees	455,100	108,100
1990		
Percentage of all employees	75·5	24·3
Number of employees	264,000	85,800

Source: The Scottish Register of Employment.

[1] The Scottish Register of Employment only holds information for manufacturing units with 11 or more employees.

Gripparod, Glengarnock

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what monitoring his Department has carried out of Gripparod plc's closure of Carpet Systems in Glengarnock.

Mr. Stewart: None.

River Purification Boards

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the resources provided for each of the river purification boards in each year since 1979, expressed in both cash terms and at current prices; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The river purification boards are financed by precept on the regional councils within their areas and through income from cost-recovery charging schemes introduced this year.

The table gives current and capital expenditure.

Current Expenditure (£'000) (Cash)

	River Purification Board						
Year	*Clyde*	*Forth*	*Highland*	*North East*	*Solway*	*Tay*	*Tweed*
1979-80	821	723	210	361	146	185	109
1980-81	1,036	881	288	444	189	225	133
1981-82	1,095	1,051	309	500	227	256	151
1982-83	1,311	1,183	331	546	251	286	156
1983-84	1,313	1,237	362	595	275	316	181
1984-85	1,285	1,168	399	665	338	329	199
1985-86	1,381	1,401	423	700	347	377	215
1986-87	1,566	1,462	437	754	358	490	236
1987-88	1,703	1,575	464	808	389	682	275
1988-89	1,843	1,893	654	1,159	501	774	580
1989-90	2,124	1,668	544	905	432	622	313
1990-91	2,575	2,227	821	1,186	617	887	448
1991-92	2,945	2,405	968	1,298	702	1,133	512

Source: (1) 1979-80 to 1988-89: First Policy Review Report of RPBs
(2) 1989-90 to 1991-92: Information form RPBs

Current Expenditure (£000) (1991 prices)

	River Purification Board						
	Clyde	*Forth*	*Highland*	*North East*	*Solway*	*Tay*	*Tweed*
1979-80	2,012	1,772	515	885	358	454	267
1980-81	2,086	1,774	580	894	381	453	268
1981-82	1,968	1,889	555	898	408	460	271
1982-83	2,153	1,943	544	897	412	470	256
1983-84	2,073	1,953	572	940	434	[illegible]	286
1984-85	1,929	1,754	599	998	508	494	299
1985-86	1,939	1,967	594	983	487	529	302
1986-87	2,134	1,992	595	1,028	488	668	322
1987-88	2,227	2,059	607	1,056	509	891	359
1988-89	2,319	2,098	684	1,138	507	782	394
1989-90	2,473	2,204	761	1,350	583	901	442
1990-91	2,740	2,369	874	1,261	656	944	477
1991-92	2,945	2,405	968	1,298	702	1,133	512

Note: Adjusted by reference to RPI.

Capital Expenditure (£000) (Cash)

	River Purification Board						
	Clyde	*Forth*	*Highland*	*North East*	*Solway*	*Tay*	*Tweed*
1979-80	16	51	31	—	32	—	2
1980-81	—	—	15	51	82	6	—
1981-82	—	—	21	—	67	8	2
1982-83	15	—	59	—	57	23	11
1983-84	—	—	8	47	145	19	13
1984-85	—	71	21	34	48	29	11

	River Purification Board						
	Clyde	*Forth*	*Highland*	*North East*	*Solway*	*Tay*	*Tweed*
1985-86	92	25	49	1	33	25	32
1986-87	42	—	40	5	36	156	29
1987-88	35	—	116	—	24	272	27
1988-89	163	130	163	245	48	81	66
1989-90	167	95	62	156	64	49	50
1990-91	95	24	65	44	99	101	39
1991-92	148	164	82	15	58	86	42

Source:

(1) 1979-80 to 1988-89: First Policy Review Report of RPBs.

(2) 1989-90 to 1991-92: information from RPBs.

Capital Expenditure (£000) (1991 prices)

	River Purification Board						
	Clyde	*Forth*	*Highland*	*North East*	*Solway*	*Tay*	*Tweed*
1979-80	39	125	76	—	78	—	5
1980-81	—	—	30	103	165	12	—
1981-82	—	—	38	—	120	14	4
1982-83	25	—	97	—	94	38	18
1983-84	—	—	13	71	228	30	21
1984-85	—	107	32	51	72	44	17
1985-86	129	35	69	1	46	35	45
1986-87	57	—	55	7	49	213	40
1987-88	46	—	152	—	31	356	35
1988-89	205	164	205	308	60	102	83
1989-90	195	111	72	182	75	57	58
1990-91	101	26	69	47	105	107	41
1991-92	148	164	82	15	58	86	42

Note: Adjusted by reference to RPI.

Unemployment

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans his Department has for reducing the number of unemployed persons in *(a)* rural areas of Scotland, *(b)* mainland highland communities and *(c)* island communities.

Mr. Stewart: The main instruments for promoting the full range of the Government's training, employment and economic development initiatives in Scotland are Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and their associated networks of local enterprise companies. The Government have provided the Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise networks with a combined budget this year of some £540 million. In addition, the networks have at their disposal their own resources and European Community funding. All of this is available to encourage economic development and to help people secure employment.

Each of the communities in the highlands and islands benefits from a local enterprise company which is able to tailor its activities to the needs of the local economy; and, outwith the Highlands and Islands, local enterprise companies are also able to plan better than in the past for the distinctive needs of rural communities, even where the area for which they are responsible is not predominantly rural.

Youth Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the best information he has about the number of people who were participating in youth training in Scotland in each month since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is shown in the table, which is based on returns from Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise as at 29 October 1992.

Number of people participating in Youth Training in Scotland

	Number
November 1991	37,222
December 1991	37,094
January 1992	38,780
February 1992	38,451
March 1992	38,072
April 1992	36,603
May 1992	35,241
June 1992	36,143
July 1992	35,596
August 1992	35,772
September 1992	35,846

Prisoners

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column 287, which person will have the authority to cancel the supervision condition in a former prisoner's licence under the terms of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under clause 12(3) of the Bill, it is the Secretary of State who has authority to cancel the supervision conditions in a former prisoner's licence. He must, however, consult the board before doing so in the case of a long-term prisoner; and may only do so in respect of a discretionary life prisoner in accordance with the recommendations of the board.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many men are serving life sentences in Scottish prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at Thursday 29 October 1992, there were 451 males, including both adults and young offenders, serving life sentences in Scottish prisons.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of prisoners serving life sentences were released on licence in each of the past five years; and if he will give the numbers in percentages.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of life sentence prisoners releases on licence and as percentages of the total life sentence prisoner population are as follows:

	Released	*Percentage*
1987	21	5·2
1988	12	2·7
1989	34	7·8
1990	29	6·7
1991	29	6·6

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women imprisoned in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at 23 October 1992, the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women imprisoned in Scotland, including those held on remand was:

	Men	*Women*
Adults	4,058	134
Young Offenders	1,128	19
Total Population	5,186	153

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners serving life sentences, released on licence from Scottish prisons, are recalled back into prison; and if he will give that number as a percentage of those released.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers are given for the period 1987 to 1991.

	Recalls	*Released*	*Percentage*
1987	5	32	15·6
1988	8	39	20·5
1989	8	39	16·1
1990	4	33	12·1
1991	5	40	12·5

Stobhill Hospital

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement regarding the future of Stobhill hospital as a provider of acute services.

Mr. Stewart: I am aware that Greater Glasgow is reviewing the pattern of acute services which can best meet the needs of its population in the future. Any resulting proposal for the closure of hospitals or for major changes in the existing pattern of services would have to be referred to the Secretary of State. No such proposals are currently before Ministers.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies who were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies who submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* The information sought is set out in the table.

Project	*Description*	*Companies invited to tender*	*Unsolicited bids*	*Contract awarded to*	*Contract value (excluding VAT)*	*Contract length (years)*
					£	
Historic Scotland	Financial Accounting System	17	0	McKeown software	433,000	5
Directorate of Administrative Services	Directory production and enquiry system	5	0	Axiom Business Computers	25,000	5

Note: Both contracts included the supply of hardware and software.

Mr. John Gallagher

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will announce his decision of the request for a fatal accident inquiry by the parents of John Gallagher, who died in Lennox Castle hospital on 23 May 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate informs me that a fatal accident inquiry into the circumstances of the death of John Gallagher is to be held on 7 December 1992 in Glasgow sheriff court.

Regional Enterprise Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total expenditure on regional enterprise grants in each of the assisted areas in Scotland from 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Gross expenditure on regional enterprise grants in Scotland 1989-90 to 1991-92

Travel-to-work area[1]	*Expenditure £000*
Alloa	—
Arbroath	89·7
Bathgate	517·2
Cumnock and Sanquhar	75·3
Dumbarton	161·5
Dundee	454·0
Dunfermline	41·9
Glasgow	3,855·1
Greenock	65·7
Irvine	326·5
Kilmarnock	229·8
Kirkcaldy	25·0
Lanarkshire	1,077·2

[1] Only eligible travel-to-work areas are shown. In the period covered by the table, regional enterprise grants were available only in development areas and, since December 1990, the parts of intermediate areas within the Fife RENAVAL area.

TRANSPORT

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list, for the past 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible;

(2) if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Responsibility for the subject of these questions has been delegated to the chief executives of each of my Department's executive agencies. I have asked each of the chief executives to arrange for a reply to be given. The reply from the chief executive of the Transport Research Laboratory contains a list of tables, that are being placed in the Library.

Letter from J. Wootton, chief executive of the Transport Research Laboratory to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

I am replying to your two recent Written Questions to the Secretary of State for Transport.

I list below titles of papers published by me.

The Better Use of Road Space
 17th International Study Week on Traffic Engineering and Safety—Warsaw, September 1992

Transport for People—Some research topics
 PTRC XXth Summer Annual Meeting, University of Manchester, September 1992

United Kingdom Contribution to research in road transport informatics
 IHT Presidential Conference, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, September 1992

Transport in Europe—Demand, energy and environment
 Institute of Energy: Energy, Transport and the Environment Conference, London, November 1992

IVHS—An international perspective
 Australian Road Research Board Conference, Perth, November 1992

With reference to titles of papers published by the whole of TRL, please see the attached list.

In answer to your Question regarding fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the Chief Executive these are as follows:

	Number
Companies	13
Research laboratories	22
Professional bodies	21

Detailed findings resulting from each visit would cost too much in staff time to prepare. However, the Laboratory has been thoroughly reorganised to become customer focussed as the result of feedback from outside bodies. These visits also produce a major input to the studies on business opportunities.

Letter from Ron Oliver to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

Please find attached information in response to your questions concerning:

(i) List of publications produced by the Vehicle Inspectorate over the past 12 months;

(ii) Fact-finding visits paid by the Chief Executive from November 1991 to October 1992.

I trust that these will be of interest to you

Publications—Vehicle Inspectorate 12 Months to October 1992

	£
Manuals	
New since 1 October 1991	
MOT Inspection Manual—Cars and Light Commercial Vehicles	15·95
MOT Inspection Manual—Private Bus Testing (Class 5)	18·00
MOT Testing Guide	3·50
A Guide to ADR[1]	12·00
A Guide to TIR[1]	22·00
On-Going	
HGV Inspection Manual	8·75
HGV Amplification Notes[1]	18·00
PSV Inspection Manual	8·00
PSV Amplification Notes[1]	15·00
Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness (HGV/PSV)	3·00
MOT Inspection Manual—Motor cycles	3·75
MOT Vehicle Testing Regulations 1981	5·30
MOT Inspection Check Lists (pad of 100)[1]	4·75
Vehicle Safety Recalls Response Rate Bulletin[1]	15·00
How Safe is Your Car?	4·95
How Safe is Your Motor cycle?	4·95
Information Leaflets—all free of charge	
Will Your Car Pass the MOT Test?—new items late 1991	
Tread Carefully—Improve your Grip on the Road—new tread depth	
Do your Headlamps Point the Right Way?—new regulations	
Code of Practice on Vehicle Safety Defects—January 1992	
The Work of the Vehicle Inspectorate	
Metered Diesel Smoke Testing	
MOT Publications order form	
Changes in the MOT Test—with effect from 1 January 1993 (October 1992)	
Do you want to be an MOT Tester? (October 1992)	

[1] Published by the Vehicle Inspectorate; others produced by Vehicle Inspectorate but published by HMSO. The Business Plan and Annual Report and Accounts of the Vehicle Inspectorate are printed by HMSO and published by the Vehicle Inspectorate.

Visits—Mr. R. J. Oliver
1 October 1991 to 30 October 1992

Date	
1991	
13 November	Meeting with Traffic Commissioner—Cardiff Feedback on customer needs/satisfication
20 November	Meeting with Mr. Parle (VI non-Executive Director)/Swindon Identification of business options
2 December	Meeting with management consultant—Bristol Scope for consultancy advice on financial systems
1992	
8 April	Meeting with KPMG—London Options for development of an Information Systems Strategy
22 April	Visit to Traffic Commissioner—Manchester Feedback on customer needs/satisfaction
27 April	Meeting with IPMS Union—London Possible Union reaction to draft Management proposals
5 August	Meeting with Mr. Parle, Mr. Grimsey and Mr. Fuhr—dinner Experience of handling major change
6 August	Meeting with Freight Transport Association and Road Haulage Association Consultation on proposed fee structures/increases
25 August	Visit to Traffic Commissioner—Eastbourne Feedback on customer needs/satisfaction
14 September	Visit to Traffic Commissioner—Bristol Feedback on customer needs/satisfaction
8 October	Sainsbury, Basingstoke—operational system in the private sector Management information system development
13 October	Meeting with David Parl—Essex Water Exchange of information on the process of management of change.

Letter from Derek Harvey, chief executive of the Vehicle Certification Agency to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

I have been asked by Mr. Kenneth Carlisle to write to you directly in response to two Parliamentary Questions.

In PQ 883/92/93 you asked for the titles of papers published over the last 12 months by the Chief Executives of each agency in the Department of Transport. During that period I have published (via the House of Commons library) the following titles:

1. 1990-91 VCA Annual Report (February 1992).
2. 1992-93 VCA Business Plan (March 1992).
3. 1991-92 VCA Annual Report (September 1992).
4. New Car Fuel Consumption (July 1992).

Other documents circulated to most VCA customers, but not "published" in any wider sense were:

1. "How to complain" (leaflet October 1992).
2. Information notice—vehicle type approval legislation (February 1992, May 1992, July 1992).
3. Guide to EC Whole Vehicle Type Approval (June 1992).

In PQ 898/92/93 you asked about the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the Chief Executive of each agency in the Department of Transport.

During that period I have made the following fact finding visits.

To	*Purpose*	*Findings*
MIRA, Nuneaton	To establish position of MIRA in relation to VCA's customers based in USA.	Clearer lines of communications established to mutually assist MIRA and VCA.
TUV, Munich	To establish methods of working of German vehicle test organisations.	Similar approach found to VCA, leading to establishment of working relationship.
Nissan, Cranfield	To establish Nissan's type approval requirements over coming 2–3 years.	Strong programme with VCA drawn up.
INTA, Madrid	To establish working methods of Spanish and other authorities as regards forthcoming European Type Approval.	Some common working practices identified as well as others requiring more discussion.
SMMT, London	To establish SMMT's view on the certification of quality systems in the automotive industry.	Determined need for greater commonality of United Kingdom and European practices.
Saab, Marlow	To establish Saab's ideas on application of ISO 9000 in automotive industry.	Determined need for greater commonality of United Kingdom and European practices.
Volvo Trucks, Irvine	To establish Volvo's needs for type approval and quality system certification and their view on long term systems for vehicle certification.	Outline programmed framed. Some common ideas agreed for longer term.
Rover, Warwickshire	To establish Rover's type approval needs.	Outline programme agreed. Future co-operative training programmes identified.
COI, London	To determine whether a common Executive Agencies' marketing network could be set up.	Probably not for VCA.
Towers Perrin, London	Investigation of computer aided jobs evaluation techniques.	Possible future application even to small group like VCA.

I should be pleased to provide further information if that would be helpful.

Letter from Stephen Curtis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to Parliamentary Questions you have tabled about papers published and fact finding visits made by Chief Executives within the last 12 months.

PQ883

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency has published its annual Business Plan and Annual Report and Accounts. Each of these include financial and non financial objectives and targets and the Agency's performance against these targets.

In the summer of 1991 we issued the first in a series of publications called DVL TODAY. The publication is issued half yearly and is designed to introduce and explain the work of this organisation to its many and varied customers and to invite suggestions for improving the service. The most recent edition was used to launch our customer service guides.

The Agency has also published a number of consultation papers.

PQ898

DVLA has done much to improve the delivery of services to its customers. I keep in touch with our customers in a variety of ways. In the last year, this has included visits to the AA, Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders and the Retail Motor Industry Federation.

More widely, I have visited my counterparts in Dublin and Germany to discuss European developments on driver licensing and vehicle licensing and registration. And on 23 October last year I visited the Rijksdienst voor het Wedverkeer, Veendam, Holland in order to sign an agreement with the Dutch registration authorities to set up an exchange of vehicle registration information with DVLA.

Letter from C. M. Woodman, chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency, to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

As you know, the Secretary of State has asked individual Chief Executives to reply to the Parliamentary Questions you have tabled for written answer about the Department's Executive Agencies.

PO 898/92/93

In the past 12 months I have undertaken six fact-finding visits. These are detailed below:

Date	*Event*	*Results*
4 November 1991	Meeting of Commission Internationale des Examens de Conduite Automobile (CIECA) secretariat in Brussels	Arrange details of CIECA Congress meeting for April 1992
22 January 1992	Lex Motoring Symposium in London	Discuss the latest Lex research about drivers
27-30 April 1992	CIECA Congress meeting in York	Discuss developments in driver testing with European driver testing organisations
23 July 1992	Eurosafe Conference in London (organised by the London Boroughs road safety officers)	Give talk and participate in discussion on developments in driver testing
14 September 1992	Driving Instructor Association Annual Conference in Solihull	Discuss the recently issued Theory Testing Consultation Paper
12 October 1992	CIECA secretariat meeting in Paris	Discuss plans for next Congress

PO 883/92/93

DSA have produced seven papers and publications in the last 12 months. These include two book in our "Driving Skill" series and two public consultation papers. These are listed below:

Title	*Date*
Retesting Disqualified Drivers—Consultation Paper	October 1991
Theory Testing for Learner Drivers—Consultation Paper	August 1992
The Driving Manual ISBN 0 11 551054 0	May 1992
The Motorcycling Manual (2nd Edition) ISBN 0 11 550974 7	September 1992
Customer Survey—Summary of Findings	April 1992
Business Plan 1992-93	June 1992
Annual Report and Accounts 1991-92	September 1992

Letter from David Evans to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

The DVOIT has been an Executive Agency in its own right since April of this year. Formerly, it was the IT arm of the Driver and Vehicles Licensing Agency. I have been in post since March.

Since that time, I have not published any papers. Whilst I have not been on any formal fact finding visits I have visited all of DVOIT's Customers, some potential Customers and also potential business partners.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions or correspondence the Minister has had with Eurotunnel regarding the use of ozone-depleting substances in the operation of the channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions or correspondence he has had with Eurotunnel regarding the use of HCFCs in the air conditioning system in the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: The binational intergovernmental commission—IGC—and safety authority—SA—were established under the treaty of Canterbury to supervise the construction and operation of the tunnel on behalf of the United Kingdom and French Governments.

The IGC decided in December 1989—*Official Report*, 19 December 1989, col *195*, that Eurotunnel could continue to develop its shuttle system on the basis of non-segregation of drivers and passengers of cars and coaches from their vehicles during transit through the tunnel. Among the conditions attached to that decision was one requiring that a fire extinction system using halon 1301 or other agent with the same extinguishing capacity should be available either when passengers had been evacuated or as a last resort when the lives of passengers were endangered in spite of the use of other means of extinction provided for in the decision. The SA's paper "Non-segregation of drivers and passengers from their vehicles" which reviews the factors on which the SA based its advice to the IGC is available from the Library of the House.

In the response—Cm 1853, March 1992—to the report of the Home Affairs Committee on fire safety and policing of the channel tunnel, it is made plain that it is important that Eurotunnel continue to work on alternatives to halon 1301 for use in the tunnel. If however, nearer the time of phase out of halons, no suitable replacement has been found, the Government stated that they would consult the French Government with a view to persuading the international community that the tunnel should be included in the list of possible essential uses for which extra production of halons may be allowed.

In the case of the sealed tunnel cooling system, Eurotunnel proposes to use HCFC 22 which has a low ozone-depleting potential and low toxicity whilst being effective for the purpose. The use of this material, too, has been approved by the IGC. Eurotunnel has been required to design the cooling system to accept without great modification, the possible replacement of HCFC 22 by more ozone-friendly fluids which become available.

Nuclear Fuel Transportation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representation will be made by his Department to the International Maritime Organisation in its review of current international safety standards on the carriage of irradiated nuclear fuel in December; and if his Department will be represented at the meeting.

Mr. Norris: The Department supports the present provisions for the carriage of irradiated nuclear fuel in the international maritime dangerous goods code and has also taken part in the development of additional requirements in the proposed International Maritime Organisation code for the safe carriage of irradiated nuclear fuel. It will take full part in the joint discussions at the IMO/International Atomic Energy Agency meeting in December and will be represented by specialists in this field.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Rail Freight Privatisation

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for the publication of the results of consultation with private sector freight operators undertaken by Mercer Management Consultants as part of their study into rail freight privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: Most discussions with private sector rail freight customers or operators are undertaken by officials of the Department of Transport; and the results fed into Mercer's work. To ensure frankness, all discussions are held on a commercial-in-confidence basis.

M6

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when work on the Witton viaduct of the M6 motorway will be completed; when it was originally planned to be completed; and if compensation will be made to those businesses of the Brookvale trading estate, Moor lane, Birmingham, which have been adversely affected during the work.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Work beneath the Witton viaduct was completed on 18 October 1992. The contract completion date was 14 June 1992. A significant part of the delay was caused by the need for extra work beyond that originally expected.

There are no statutory rights to compensation for business loss due to disruption from road works, provided these are carried out in a proper manner and access is maintained.

Halon Fire Extinguishers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to ensure that the requirements for halon fire extinguishing systems in aircraft cockpits will be met from existing stocks or recovered materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Halons are in use on aircraft in portable fire extinguishers and in fixed systems for engine and cargo compartment fire protection. Halons possess remarkably good fire fighting properties but their production will be phased out because of their effect on the ozone layer. Although replacements are being developed, none is likely to be suitable as a straightforward substitute.

The Government are in consultation with the Civil Aviation Authority and the aviation industry, investigating the possibility of setting up a scheme for the banking and recycling of existing halon stocks. Any such scheme would apply to halon users in other industries.

Ports

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve integrated road and rail links to ports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The planning of railway intermodal freight services to ports is a matter for British Rail.

Light Dues

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will abolish light dues;

(2) if he will apply the user pays principle to light dues; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the EC about light dues; and what steps he will take to apply single market principles to light dues.

Mr. Norris: The Government have no plans to abolish the system of light dues. But they have drawn the European Commission's attention to the differing practices among member states for funding maritime navigational aids, and has urged the extension of the "user pays" principle throughout the European Community. Within the United Kingdom system, recent reforms have extended light dues to certain previously non-paying users.

Emergency Vessels

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answers of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *451*, if he will update the figures given on numbers of emergency standby vessels found to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory, or which are still being assessed, under the revised code.

Mr. Norris: Eighty-five standby vessels, representing 49 per cent. of the current fleet, have been assessed and comply with the revised code. A further 41 vessels are at various stages of assessment.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the names of all emergency or standby vessels currently certificated engaged in the off-shore oil and gas industries, the year of build and the date of the last survey of each vessel.

Mr. Norris: The number of vessels certificated for use in the United Kingdom standby vessel industry is at present 162.

The table lists these vessels, including the year of build and the date of the last survey.

Shipname	*Year of build*	*Date of last survey*
Aberdonian	1977	1 June 1992
Alexandra Tide	1974	20 December 1991
Andrew Viking	1990	3 September 1992
Atlantic Defender	1980	2 December 1991
Atlantic Guardian	1979	1 September 1992
Black Isle	1973	13 October 1992
Black Watch	1977	20 March 1992
Blue Flame 1	1976	5 March 1992
Britannia Challenger	1964	16 April 1992
Britannia Champion	1980	20 May 1992
Britannia Chieftain	1973	19 June 1992
Britannia Cobra	1978	20 April 1992
Britannia Conquest	1974	17 July 1992
Britannia Crusader	1976	16 September 1992
Britannia Endeavour	1975	29 September 1992
Britannia Fury	1972	14 October 1992
Britannia Gazelle	1978	29 April 1992
Britannia Harvester	1972	16 September 1992
Britannia Knight	1976	15 April 1992
Britannia Monarch	1973	26 August 1992
Britannia Venturer	1965	1 July 1992
Britannia Vison	1978	10 July 1992
Britannia Warrior	1973	19 February 1992
Cam Civet	1960	4 February 1992
Cam Defender	1983	30 October 1991
Cam Guardian	1970	28 July 1992
Cam Protector	1983	20 December 1991
Cam Puma	1966	30 April 1992
Cam Ranger	1983	28 July 1992
Cam Retriever	1972	25 November 1991
Cam Seeker	1967	8 May 1992
Cam Sentinel	1982	7 October 1992
Cam Supporter	1983	26 May 1992
Cam Valiant	1939	12 February 1992
Cam Vanguard	1955	12 August 1992
Cam Vedette	1970	14 January 1992
Cam Venturer	1973	5 August 1992
Cam Viceroy	1958	8 January 1992
Cam Victor	1969	8 May 1992
Cam Vigilant	1957	19 February 1992
Cam Viking	1972	14 October 1992
Cam Viper	1966	1 April 1992
Cam Viscount	1971	18 August 1992
Cam Vulcan	1958	14 February 1992
Cam Zebra	1960	21 April 1992
Chudleigh	1962	27 February 1992
Dawn Blazer	1965	2 September 1992
Dawn Patrol	1970	8 May 1992
Dawn Shore	1967	29 April 1992
Dawn Sky	1967	8 October 1992
Dawn Warbler	1966	1 July 1992
Dea Supporter	1970	27 December 1991
Evans Tide	1974	18 June 1992
Far Baronet	1986	9 July 1992
Far Earl	1986	18 September 1992
Far Searcher	1986	10 December 1991
Far Seeker	1986	20 December 1991
Far Sovereign	1982	18 March 1992
Far Stream	1982	29 April 1992
Grampian Chieftain	1976	7 May 1992
Grampian City	1976	22 November 1991
Grampian Concord	1961	11 June 1992
Grampian Dawn	1962	29 April 1992
Grampian Dee	1975	2 October 1992
Grampian Eagle	1975	16 April 1992
Grampian Endeavour	1966	7 April 1992
Grampian Fame	1975	30 June 1992
Grampian Forest	1962	1 May 1992
Grampian Freedom	1957	18 August 1992
Grampian Hunter	1967	27 May 1992
Grampian Haven	1981	21 May 1992
Grampian Highlander	1976	12 June 1992
Grampian Monarch	1968	2 September 1992
Grampian Orcades	1991	14 August 1992
Grampian Osprey	1937	19 May 1992
Grampian Otter	1983	7 July 1992
Grampian Pioneer	1981	14 September 1992
Grampian Protector	1983	14 January 1992
Grampian Quest	1959	1 May 1992
Grampian Rose	1949	14 January 1992
Grampian Sabre	1975	10 April 1992
Grampian Shield	1974	4 June 1992
Grampian Sprite	1983	22 May 1992
Grampian Venture	1982	23 April 1992
Grampian Warrior	1977	14 January 1992
Grampian Wood	1976	17 March 1992
Hatherleigh	1961	1 July 1992
Kronbas	1975	1 May 1992
Maersk Mariner	1986	21 February 1992
Maersk Pacer	1991	3 June 1992
Maersk Provider	1991	23 March 1992
Maersk Rover	1982	25 September 1992
Magdelan Sea	1977	29 July 1992
Normand Skipper	1975	30 December 1991
Nova	1969	29 April 1992
Putford Acasta	1972	5 March 1992
Putford Achates	1976	30 April 1992
Putford Ajax	1976	9 September 1992
Putford Athena	1975	23 September 1992
Putford Guardian	1967	20 March 1992
Putford Osprey	1960	1 July 1992
Putford Petrel	1961	26 March 1992
Putford Skua	1967	9 September 1992
Putford Snipe	1969	3 January 1992
Putford Teal	1969	24 June 1992
Putford Tern	1967	19 August 1992
Safe Carrier	1968	21 May 1992
Safe Protector	1974	10 April 1992
Safe Transporter	1971	16 March 1992
Safe Truck	1976	16 October 1992
Scott Protector	1974	20 July 1992
Sea Sapphire	1973	3 April 1992
Seaboard Capella	1968	14 August 1992
Seaboard Castor	1947	24 April 1992
Seaboard Illustrious	1966	24 April 1992
Seaboard Implacable	1964	12 August 1992
Seaboard Integrity	1968	13 August 1992
Seaboard Intrepid	1968	11 August 1992
Seaboard Sapphire	1980	6 April 1992
Seaboard Sceptre	1981	27 August 1992
Seaboard Scout	1975	4 August 1992
Seaboard Sentry	1979	30 September 1992
Seaboard Skua	1972	30 March 1992
Seaboard Snipe	1972	26 June 1992
Seaboard Sovereign	1979	7 July 1992
Seaboard Support	1979	18 March 1992
Seaboard Supreme	1981	29 July 1992
Seaboard Swallow	1972	2 March 1992
Seaboard Swan	1971	30 April 1992
Seaboard Swift	1972	1 July 1992
Shetland Service	1973	2 September 1992
St. Elizabeth	1962	5 October 1992
St. Kitts	1964	20 December 1991
St. Louis	1962	25 August 1992
St. Patrick	1975	9 October 1992
St. Paul	1961	17 January 1992
St. Phillip	1975	23 September 1992
Tempest	1977	9 March 1992
Toisa Conqueror	1976	7 November 1991
Toisa Lynx	1983	1 October 1992
Toisa Petrel	1983	2 September 1992
Toisa Plover	1979	28 February 1992
Toisa Sentinel	1982	12 March 1992
Toisa Teal	1981	1 May 1992
Toisa Tiger	1983	6 July 1992
Toisa Widgeon	1981	10 December 1991
Umberleigh	1960	22 July 1992

Shipname	*Year of build*	*Date of last survey*
Vosca Diamond	1979	13 February 1992
Vosca Emerald	1980	7 May 1992
Vosca Garnet	1975	3 September 1992
Vosca Hurricane	1975	21 August 1992
Vosca Sapphire	1977	27 July 1992
Vosca Storm	1975	9 October 1992
Vosca Tempest	1974	29 September 1992
Vosca Topaz	1978	23 October 1992
Vosca Tornado	1974	16 September 1992
Vosca Typhoon	1976	2 October 1992
Vosca Zircon	1976	7 August 1992
Viking Fighter	1986	9 December 1991
Winkleigh	1961	29 March 1992
Woodleigh	1960	9 October 1992

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost to his Department of the Bristow's search and rescue helicopter based at *(a)* Sumburgh, *(b)* Stornoway and *(c)* Lee-on-Solent for the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and the tender price for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Norris: The information is as follows:

Year	*Sumburgh £'000*	*Stornoway £'000*	*Solent £'000*
1990-91	1,874	1,934	1,943
1991-92	1,860	1,999	1,868
1992-93[1]	1,968	2,250	2,035
1993-94[1]	2,079	2,434	2,363

[1] Forecast.

Helicopters

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the members and the organisations they represent of the helicopter coverage group.

Mr. Norris: The numbers of the United Kingdom civil rescue helicopter coverage working group, who all signed the report on 28 October 1986, were as follows:

Capt. P. K. C. Harris CBE MNI RN (Retd)
Chairman, Chief Coastguard

Lt Cdr H. J. Neill RN (Retd)
Chief Operations Officer HM Coastguard

Mr. B. d'Oliveira OBE
Department of Transport, Civil Aviation Safety Adviser

Cdr D. B. Cairns RD MNI RN (Retd)
Chief of Operations Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Mr. M. Haworth
MOD Sec (NATO/UK) Commitments

Wing Cdr I. H. R. Robins MBE MRAeS MBIM RAF
Wing Commander HELS/SAR HQ Strike Command

Cdr D. Scott RN
MOD Directorate of Naval Warfare

Mr. M. J. Woodhead
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Fisheries Inspectorate

Mr. J. Tarvit
Deputy Chief Inspector of Fisheries
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Scotland)

Mr. W. Hay
President Scottish Fishermen's Federation

Mr. D. R. Brooks
SEC UK Committee, DTp

Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions he has had with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution about siting fast afloat boats at Tenby, Angle, St. Justinians and Fishguard by April 1994; and if he will make a statement on their response;

(2) what discussions he has had with the board of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution over the withdrawal of search and rescue operations from RAF Brawdy in April 1994.

Mr. Norris: As a significant provider of dedicated United Kingdom search and rescue—SAT—assets, the RNLI was consulted by my Department on the implications for civil SAR consequent upon the Ministry of Defence future provision of military helicopters, including the withdrawal of such facilities from RAF Brawdy. The decision of the location of their vessels is for them, but the RNLI said that priority would be given to an early allocation in South Wales during 1994 of its new fast afloat boat—FAB. Firm decisions are expected during the first part of 1993 following normal RNLI internal consultation processes and the initiation of procurement procedures.

The RNLI informs us that fast afloat lifeboats will only be stationed at a location where they can be supported. Tenby, Angle and St. Davids (St. Justinians) are slip-launch facilities and the RNLI has no intention of stationing FABs at these stations.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mobility Allowance

7. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received mobility allowance in 1979; and how many now receive it.

Miss Widdecombe: In 1979, a total of 95,000 people received mobility allowance; by 1992 this figure had risen to 600,000—a more than sixfold increase. The introduction of disability living allowance will extend help with mobility costs even further.

Retirement Pension

8. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to means test the basic state retirement pension; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: None.

Severe Disability Premium

9. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will amend the income support regulations to extend entitlement to the severe disability premium to claimants living with non-dependants.

Mr. Burt: Some people living with non-dependants already have entitlement to the severe disability premium, but I have no plans to extend the premium to everyone who lives with non-dependants.

Fraud

10. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress his Department has made to reduce the level of fraudulent claims for social security benefits.

Mr. Burt: We have stepped up the fight against fraud and abuse by introducing a number of organisational changes. More are planned. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set a target of £460 million savings in this area for this year.

Social Fund

13. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes his Department is considering to the operation of the social fund.

26. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the operation of the social fund.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to publish a detailed response to the recent report from York university social policy research unit on the social fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I am carefully examining the various reports about the social fund. No decisions have been made about any changes in the future operation of the fund. As I told the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) earlier, I am announcing today increases in social fund budgets for every district.

18. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to the introduction of an appeals procedure for those refused help from the social fund; and what was his conclusion.

Mr. Scott: Social fund maternity, funeral and cold weather payments already have an appeal procedure. For discretionary social fund payments, I believe that the existing specialised review procedure provides an effective and independent means of redress.

I am pleased to say that both the Social Security Advisory Committee and independent research from the Policy Studies Institute support my view.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the impact on charitable organisations of the operation of the social fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Evidence from the recent report by the university of York's social policy research unit suggests that few people approach charities as an alternative to the social fund.

In many other European Community countries the schemes for one-off payments are organised at a regional or local level, and greater emphasis is often placed on help from charities and voluntary organisations.

Attendance Allowance

14. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning the delay in the payment of attendance allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: We have received many letters about claims to attendance allowance. The chief executive of the Benefits Agency wrote to all hon. Members on 19 October setting out the positive steps which the agency has taken to accelerate the processing of claims to attendance allowance and disability living allowance.

Pensioners (Income Support)

15. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many old-age pensioners are currently in receipt of income support.

Miss Widdecombe: There are 1·4 million people over pension age claiming income support and our increases last month in income support for pensioners, at an additional cost of £300 million, will no doubt have benefited yet more.

Benefits System (Computerisation)

16. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has of improvements in the service offered by the social security offices as a result of a computerisation of the benefits system.

Mr. Burt: The first stage of a major programme to bring computers to the Department's local offices was completed in July 1991.

This has led to significant improvements in the service provided to the public. The time taken to process income support and retirement pension claims is much reduced and many routine activities such as benefits uprating and Christmas bonus payments are now automated.

These improvements have been achieved without additional cost to the taxpayer.

Low-income Families

17. **Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of low-income families which faced marginal reduction rates in excess of 100 per cent. in 1978-79 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: In 1985, a total of 70,000 families had deduction rates of over 100 per cent. These are the earliest figures available. As a result of the social security reforms, almost no families have marginal deduction rates of over 100 per cent. in 1992-93.

Disability Benefits

19. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the payment of disability benefits.

Mr. Scott: Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, wrote to hon. Members on 19 October setting out the positive steps which the Benefits Agency is taking to accelerate the processing of claims to disability living allowance and attendance allowance; he is confident that work outstanding will soon be at normal levels.

Benefits

20. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the amount of money currently spent on social security benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: Our plans show that total expenditure on benefits in 1992-93 will be over £71 billion.

Family Credit

21. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much family credit increased in April 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: As well as increasing family credit rates by 7 per cent., the other changes we introduced in April 1992 made the benefit available to more people. By July 1992, an extra 75,000 families were receiving family credit compared with July 1991.

Pensioners

22. **Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the level of Government pensioner provision for those over 80 years and for disabled pensioners.

Miss Widdecombe: Older and disabled pensioners have gained considerably from benefit increases. Since the 1988 reforms this group alone has received £360 million per year over and above normal upratings. This demonstrates our commitment to help those pensioners most in need.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what fresh initiatives he proposes to introduce to safeguard the means of older people who lack a private income or personal pension other than the state pension and benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: Premiums for pensioners receiving income-related benefits were increased last month. Since 1989, these pensioners have received nearly £700 million a year above the normal uprating. We remain committed to safeguarding their interests.

Social Security Policy

23. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement outlining major new announcements on Government social security policy announced since the end of July.

Mr. Scott: On 7 August, we announced measures to crack down on unemployed people, including new age travellers, who claim benefit but make no real effort to find work.

In addition, on 17 September we published a consultation paper on the law and practice of occupational pensions schemes.

Pregnant Women (Benefits)

24. **Mr. Godsiff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will meet the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss his views about women who deliberately become pregnant to gain benefit advantages.

Mr. Burt: Ministers meet representatives of the Equal Opportunities Commission as necessary to discuss issues of mutual concern. I am, of course, willing to receive representations from the commission concerning issues which come within my ministerial responsibilities. My officials are also in regular touch with the commission.

Care Homes

25. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the numbers of income support claimants in private care or nursing homes whose personal resources, including income support, do not meet the fees they are expected to pay.

Mr. Burt: The number of residents in all voluntary and private homes whose total income support does not meet the fees is about 92,000. Separate estimates for private and voluntary homes are not available.

Information is not available on how many of these have disregarded benefits, income or capital with which to meet any shortfalls.

Pensioners (Central Heating)

27. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioner households had central heating in 1979 and in 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: The percentage of pensioner households with central heating in 1979 was 43 per cent., increasing to 74 per cent. in 1990.

Pit Closures

28. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to increase the social fund budget in areas affected by mining closures.

Mr. Scott: Social fund budget allocations are based on income support caseloads. Changes in the number of unemployed people claiming income support in individual districts will influence their future allocations. In this way allocations respond to local circumstances overall rather than to changes in any single industry.

Appointments

Mr Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for a large number of public appointments. The information requested for each of these could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, information is available from the Cabinet Office publications "Public Bodies" and "Public Appointments: A Handbook for Women's Organisations", copies of which are in the Library.

Unemployment Benefit

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the training bonus paid to an unemployed person participating in employment training at the completion of their course is taken into account when examining a subsequent claim for income support from that person; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Any payment not exceeding £200 received as a training bonus is disregarded. The whole of any bonus payment in excess of this amount is treated as capital but would only affect entitlement to benefit if the total capital held is more than £3,000.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of income support is the ceiling set by the Community Charges (Deductions from Income Support) (No. 2) Regulations 1990—SI 1990, No. 545—for deductions ordered by courts for arrears of poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The regulations provide for an amount to be deducted equal to 5 per cent. of the income support personal allowance for a single claimant aged 25 years or more, currently £2·15 per week, or, in the case of a court order made against a couple, 5 per cent. of the income support personal allowance for a couple where both members are aged 18 years or over, currently £3·35 per week. It is not possible to say what proportion of an individual's income support these amounts represent, as entitlement varies from case to case.

Correspondence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements have been made since the letter of 6 October from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Lord Henley, to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford to provide a better service for correspondence on operational issues.

Mr. Burt: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms. Joan Ruddock, dated 30 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what arrangements have been made since the letter from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Lord Henley, in connection with a constituency case, to provide a better service for correspondence on operational matters.

In relation to Disability Living Allowance (DLA), the matter you raised in your earlier correspondence, we have received over four thousand enquiries from MPs about the progress of their constituents' claims and consequently we have not been able to respond as quickly as we would have liked. We have targeted considerable extra resources into this area and are pursuing the clearance of outstanding written enquiries as quickly as possible.

As I explained in my letter of 6 July and 19 October to all MPs, I appreciate that you will have constituents who are seriously concerned about the progress of their claim to DLA. To facilitate your enquiries on their behalf the telephone hotline remains available for MPs who have very urgent enquiries and this service will be maintained until at least the end of the year.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list by month for the past 12 months the number of unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds in the Doncaster area who received financial support due to non-availability of places on a training scheme;

(2) if he will list by month for the past 12 months how many unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds in the Doncaster area received income support under the severe hardship provision.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if he will list by month for the last 12 months the number of unemployed 16 and 17 year olds in the Doncaster area who received financial support due to non-availability of places on a training scheme and those who received Income Support under the severe hardship provision.

I have detailed below the total number of applications under the severe hardship provisions and the number in which payment was awarded. Unemployed 16 and 17 year olds who receive payment due to non-availability of places on a training scheme form the same group of customers.

Details of the total number of claims to severe hardship payments do not equate with the number of customers. This is because the statistics cover the number of applications, rather than the number of individuals who have claimed. Some customers may have made more than one application.

	Total applications	*Successful applications*
1991		
October	36	26
November	41	30
December	28	22
1992		
January	54	39
February	43	37
March	43	27
April	56	38
May	48	29
June	48	40
July	39	31
August	42	30
September	53	39

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Local Office, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each local office in the Doncaster area benefits agency how many staff, full-time equivalent, were employed for each quarter in 1991 and *(a)* income support, *(b)* contributions, *(c)* direct payments, *(d)* social fund, *(e)* fraud, *(f)* child support and *(g)* total, respectively; and what is the position for the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: The resourcing of offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many staff, full time equivalent, were employed by the Benefits Agency's Doncaster District for each quarter in 1991; and what is the position for the latest available date.

The number of staff employed in the Doncaster District for each quarter in 1991; and at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which information is available, are attached at Annexes A to E.

The staffing figures have been broken down as far as possible. For operational reasons it is not possible to identify separately staff on Income Support, Social Fund and Contributary Benefits within each site.

I should explain that Mexborough Office, which was previously included in the Doncaster District, is now part of the Rotherham District. The staffing levels of that office have therefore been excluded from the attached Annexes.

Information about staffing levels in the Contributions Agency and Child Support Unit has been provided by their respective Chief Executives, Miss Ann Chant and Ms. Ros Hepplewhite.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

The information has been placed in the Library.

Pensioners' Incomes

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the average pensioner's income comes from occupational pensions, savings and earnings.

Miss Widdecombe: The latest information held on pensioners' income shows that 74 per cent. of pensioners have income from savings, 57 per cent. have occupational pensions and 9 per cent. have earnings from work.

Note: Based on pensioner units ie single pensioners at or over state pension age and married couples where the husband is at or above state pension age.

Source: 1988 Family Expenditure Survey.

Mirror Group

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action is currently being considered by his Department as a result of the unlawful removal of pension funds of the Mirror Group Newspapers plc; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) on 27 October at columns *643-46*.

Social Security Expenditure

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of total Government expenditure he estimates the social security budget will represent in this current financial year; and what were the figures for the previous three years.

Mr. Scott: Total social security spending as a proportion of general Government expenditure is given in the table.

	Per cent.
1989-90	26·57
1990-91	27·38
1991-92	28·97
1992-93	29·14

Note—1991-92 based on figures for estimated outturn 1992-93 based on planned expenditure.

Cold Weather Payments

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next intends to review the level and operation of cold weather payments.

Mr. Scott: Very significant improvements to the cold weather payments scheme were introduced last winter, including the automatic payment of eligible people without the need to make a claim. The scheme is kept under regular review, and some further refinements in individual areas' links with weather stations are planned for introduction this winter.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the employers' financial responsibility will be for maternity pay under the EC directive on the protection at work of pregnant women.

Mr. Scott: We are considering the directive's implications for maternity benefits and will make an announcement in due course.

Income Statistics

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the increase in real average income before and after housing costs, for each of the decile groups, in the upper half of the population between 1979 and 1988-9.

Mr. Burt: Real increases in the income beteen 1979 and 1988-89 combined for the decile groups in the upper half of the income distribution are given in the table. These figures relate to the United Kingdom and are based on income equivalised for household size and composition.

Percentage changes in real income by decile group 1979 to 1988-89

Decile group	*Income before housing costs*	*Income after housing costs*
Sixth	22	24
Seventh	25	27
Eighth	28	30
Ninth	35	37
Tenth (top)	44	46

Unemployment

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the level of benefit payment expenditure to unemployed people for each year since 1979-80, and the average benefit entitlement per claimant annually.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 28 October 1992]:* Expenditure on benefits to unemployed people since 1979-80 is shown in the table. The average benefit payment per claimant is not available. Unemployed people may receive all, one or any combination of unemployment benefit, income support, housing benefit, community charge benefit or a loan from the social fund. So the actual number of claimants who receive benefits for unemployment is not known.

	Annual expenditure £ million
1979-80	1,470
1980-81	2,530
1981-82	4,022
1982-83	5,011
1983-84	5,701
1984-85	6,139
1985-86	6,963
1986-87	7,398
1987-88	6,647
1988-89	5,235
1989-90	4,309
1990-91	5,036
1991-92	7,362

Note: Benefits for unemployed people include Unemployment Benefit, the principal income-related benefits and payments from the Social Fund to unemployed people and their families. The table does not include child benefit, one parent benefit, maternity benefits, widows' benefits or any of the disability benefits to which unemployed people may also be entitled.

Communications

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make it his policy that communications from the North Fylde central office of the DSS shall provide *(a)* the date of the communication, *(b)* the name of the official responsible, *(c)* the telephone and extension number of that official and *(d)* a clear statement of the current position of the application.

Mr. Scott: Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, has replied to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 29 October 1992:

As chief executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking whether it would become policy that communications from the Fylde Benefits and War Pensions Directorate of the DSS (North Fylde Central Office prior to April 1991) would provide *(a)* the date of the communication, *(b)* the name of the official responsible, *(c)* the telephone and extension number of the official and *(d)* a clear statement of the current position on the application.

I can confirm that it is the policy of all branches of the Fylde Benefits and War Pensions Directorate to provide the date of the communication together with the name, telephone and extension number of the official concerned on correspondence issued to customers, although where the outcome of a claim is notified via a computer system, it is not currently possible to include the name of an official nor a telephone extension.

For Disability Living Allowance, we have set up a Central Enquiry Service for the handling of telephone calls from customers. The use of extension numbers for customers contacting this service is not generally appropriate since the overwhelming majority of calls are answered without further referral. Staff on this service routinely give their name when answering the telephone.

Statements on the current position of an application for a benefit or pension administered at Fylde Benefits and War Pensions Directorate are also provided where appropriate.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 3 November 1992

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Jackson: Thirty-four, including 13 at the Civil Service college.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of civil servants in the Lord Chancellor's Department whose work is related wholly or mainly to the European Community is one.

Immigration Appeal Tribunal

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many adjudicators have been appointed to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal in the last 10 years; and how many are *(a)* women and *(b)* from the ethnic minorities.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The ethnic origin of the judiciary and of applicants for judicial posts was not recorded prior to the autumn of 1991 and the formal records in respect of ethnic origin are, therefore, incomplete.

Of the three full-time members of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal, one is a member of the ethnic minorities; she is a woman, Of the 33 part-time members, six are known to be members of the ethnic minorities and 12 are women.

Of the 17 full-time immigration adjudicators, two are known to be from the ethnic minorities; none are women. Of the 81 part-time immigration adjudicators, four are known to be from the ethnic minorities and 18 are women.

I will write to the hon. Member about the numbers in fact appointed in the last 10 years.

Magistrates, Leicestershire

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates are currently appointed to the *(a)* Leicester City Bench and *(b)* Leicestershire County Bench; in each case, how many are (i) women and (ii) from the ethnic minorities; and what is the stated political affiliation in numbers.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of magistrates currently assigned to the Leicester City Bench is 277, of the total 127 are females and 27 are from the ethnic minorities. The most recent information available shows the political balance to be Conservative 134, Labour 43, Liberal Democrat 30, Green party 2 and Independent/not known 68.

The number of magistrates currently assigned to the Leicestershire County Bench is 189. Of the total 79 are females and five are from the ethnic minorities. The most recent information available shows the political balance to be Conservative 105, Labour 39, Liberal Democrat 35, Independent/not known 10.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Directory Inquiries

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he will make a statement on the reasons for the decision to switch to Mercury Communications for telephone directory inquiries initiated from the House and its out-buildings; when this decision was taken; and by whom the decision was made.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: In May 1992 the House of Commons Commission agreed to the upgrading of the Palace of Westminster message taking and inquiry bureau and the installation of new, up-to-date software on the telephone exchange. This work was completed in April 1992.

More recently, least-cost routing software has been installed and a number of outgoing Mercury lines have been connected to the exchange. This means that all telephone calls are now automatically switched to the cheapest route by way of either the Government trunk network, British Telecom or Mercury Communications, or by a combination of these agencies' routes. This cost-effective routing system applies to all types of outgoing calls including those to the respective directory inquiry services.

The estimated savings in a full financial year from these measures are likely to exceed 20 per cent. of the 1990-91 telephone call expenditure.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Members' Handbook

Mr. Bennett: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what steps are being taken *(a)* to keep the Members' handbook up to date and *(b)* to revise it to improve its readability.

Mr. Beith: The loose-leaf make-up of the Members' handbook allows for the issue of replacement pages whenever necessary. In normal circumstances, amendments will be circulated periodically, but special arrangements will be made for changes of importance. A detailed examination of the handbook will take place each summer recess, beginning in 1993, when its format and style will be considered.

DEFENCE

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit."

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to my Department's executive agencies under their framework documents. I have therefore asked each chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from Dr. P. J. Mason to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

I am responding on behalf of the Chief Executive of the Met Office (who is on business abroad) to your question, "to ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

The Answer is:

The Chief Executive of the Met Office has made over 50 visits since his appointment in January 1992. These include the following:

The World Meteorological Organisation (Geneva)
Various National Met Services (China, France, Norway . . .)
The European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting
Conference of Directors of Western European National Met Services
Natural Environment Research Council
National Radiological Protection Board (Didcot)
Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory
Mullard Space Laboratory
British Aerospace (Bristol)
National Physical Laboratory
Robert Hooke Institute (Oxford)
The Naval Hydrographer
Royal Air Force Cranwell
Royal Air Force Headquarters Strike Command
Various Met Office Weather Centres
Institute of Professional Managers and Specialists

It is not practicable to list the findings resulting from each individual visit but the aim has been for the Chief Executive to familiarise himself with the work of other related centres and to foster activities of mutual benefit.

Letter from John Chisholm to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

In today's (2 November 1992) written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed you that, as Chief Executive of the Defence Research Agency, I would be replying directly to your question concerning fact-finding visits made by Agency Chief Executives.

My colleague Roger Warren wrote to you in July describing my fact finding visits to that date. Since then I have continued to visit on a regular basis the DRA's widely scattered sites in order to meet my staff and to discuss business issues with the relevant managers. I have also continued to be involved in finding out how my major customers in the Ministry of Defence and other Government Departments view the performance of the DRA; establishing a beneficial relationship with customers and collaborators in industry; and discussing mutual problems and concerns with other Agency Chief Executives.

I have, as you know, visited the US and France within the last twelve months to explain the role of the DRA and my vision for its future.

As Dr. Warren said in his letter it would not be practicable and would involve a disproportionate amount of effort to list individual findings from each visit; moreover many of the visits covered matters which are confidential to senior management or are commercially sensitive.

I hope that you find this helpful.

Letter from Lt. Col. G. H. Wilson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

I refer to your parliamentary question, received by me at 1224 hours on Thursday 29th October, which asked the Secretary of State for Defence to list the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

The Duke of York's Royal Military School was established as an Executive Agency of the MOD on 1st April 1992. The current headmaster and chief executive is Lt. Col. G. H. Wilson who is now in the seventh week of his first term. Records indicate that his predecessor, as a chief executive from 1st April 1992, made 2 visits which could be described as fact finding. One was a "Next Steps" Agency Conference on 19 May in the Westminster Conference Centre and the second was to the Equal Opportunities Commission in Manchester on 8th June 1992.

The current headmaster and chief executive has made one trip to the Equal Opportunities Commission, in connection with the change of the school's intake policy to include girls from September 1994. The visit has enabled the current headmaster to frame a Transitional Exemption Order from the Sex Discrimination Act and to understand better the requirements of that Act. This will improve the school's plans for co-education.

It is necessary for a headmaster to attend a selection of conferences, meetings and INSET provided by LEAs or professional bodies in order to remain fully conversant with educational developments. These are not included in this return nor are the necessary liaison visits to other schools.

Letter from Julian Hankinson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

I have been asked to write to you in answer to your Parliamentary Question. As an Executive Agency, Queen Victoria School is an MOD boarding school for Scottish Servicemen's Sons, and no fact finding visits have been carried out by the Headmaster/Chief Executive since the School became an Agency on 1 April 1992.

The Headmaster/Chief Executive has attended In-Service educational Conferences etc provided by national and local educational agencies.

I trust this answer supplies the information you require. Any further information can be supplied if you wish it.

Letter from Rear Admiral J. A. L. Myres, to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

You recently asked the Secretary of State for Defence to list the fact finding visits made in the last twelve months by the Chief Executive of each Executive Agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit. The Minister has asked me, as Chief Executive, to reply in respect of the Hydrographic Office Defence Support Agency.

In June of this year I visited the Maritime Hydrographic Directorate of Romania, at the invitation of the Romanian Government. I have just returned from a visit to the Department of Navigation and Oceanography of the Russian Federation, returning a visit made to the United Kingdom by the Russian Hydrographer in October 1991. Both of my visits to the national hydrographic authorities of former Eastern bloc countries have resulted in the release of hydrographic information which was previously unobtainable and which will assist in the safety of international shipping.

As Chief Executive of the Hydrographic Office I represent the United Kingdom in a number of international fora. In May of this year I attended the most important of these, the XIVth International Hydrographic Conference in Monaco. This provided the opportunity to keep in touch with developments throughout the international hydrographic community and ensure that UK remains at the forefront of this activity, which is central to safety of life and property at sea.

I hope this information is helpful.

Letter from L. S. Mitchelson, chief executive of Service Children's Schools (North-West Europe) to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence in which you asked him to list the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the Chief Executive of each Executive Agency for which he is responsible and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

You do not define exactly what you mean by a fact finding visit but for the purpose of this reply I am assuming that you are seeking information about visits outside the normal run of duties for the purpose of obtaining background information which might inform in a general way the Chief Executive's running of an Agency. I also assume you would wish to exclude normal consultative machinery which feeds to the Chief Executive information regarding the circumstances in which an agency is working or the way in which its services appear to be being received.

Within this definition of a fact finding visit there have been no occasions in the last 12 months when I have undertaken such visits.

If you require further information or feel I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Letter from Air Vice-Marshal D. R. French to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency—Fact Finding Visits of the Chief Executive

In response to the Parliamentary Question 7237F-E42 seeking a list of the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the Chief Executive, please accept our response at Annex A.

Annex A

Maintenance Group DSA Chief Executive's fact finding visits during the last 12 months

1. The Chief Executive of the Maintenance Group DSA is also the Air Officer Commanding Maintenance Units within RAF Support Command. Thus the Chief Executive has military responsibilities additional to those as an agency executive.

2. The "findings code" against each visit is:

a. *Code 1.* That Maintenance Group DSA Key Management Targets are being met.

b. *Code 2.* That targets specified in the Maintenance Group Management Plan are being met.

c. *Code 3.* Annual Formal Inspection ensuring that the operational standard of the RAF Stations concerned are being maintained.

d. *Code 4.* Visits associated with the development of the Maintenance Group DSA's capabilities, structures and relationships with the MOD, or other agencies, including the Group's customers. The findings provide a means of improving the Group's development and service given to the customer.

e. *Code 5.* Visits concerning the Ministerial Market Testing Initiative—the findings being advice and policy direction.

f. *Code 6.* Information to enhance the communication engineering and signals operations capabilities of the Maintenance Group.

Date	*Visit*	*Findings*
6 November 1991	Robinson College, Cambridge University, Energy Management Seminar	1, 2
26 November 1991	RAF Chilmark	2
28 November 1991	RAF Lindholme, 840 Signals Unit, Tornado Radar Repair Squadron (RAF Scampton)	2
9 December 1991	Chief of Air Staff's Conference of Station Commanders, RAF Bracknell	4
17 December 1991	Heads of Engineering Authority Meeting, Ministry of Defence	4
16 January 1992	NEC Birmingham, Aerotech 92 Exhibition	4
24 January 1992	St. Athan Visit with Secretary of State for Defence	4
5 February 1992	Defence Support Agency Meeting, Feltham	4
20-21 February 1992	Agency Chief Executives Meeting, Harrogate	4
10 March 1992	Meeting with Air Member for Supply and Organisation/BAe	4
12-13 March 1992	Siemens Nixdorf Visit, Hanover	4
19 March 1992	RAF Stanbridge, Logistic Establishment	4
23 March 1992	RAF Carlisle Visit	1, 2
24 March 1992	Meeting with Chief of Logistic Support (Royal Air Force)	4
25 March 1992	RAF Swanton Morley	2
26 March 1992	RAF Oakhanger	1, 2
9 April 1992	RAF Abingdon	3
29 April 1992	RAF St. Athan (including OMB Visit)	1, 2, 4

Date	*Visit*	*Findings*
7 May 1992	RAF Chilmark	3
8 May 1992	Fairey Hydraulics Open Day	4
12 May 1992	RAF Swanton Morley	3
14 May 1992	RAF Stafford	3
21 May 1992	RAF Oakhanger	3
26 May 1992	RAF Digby	3
28 May 1992	RAF Sealand	3
29 May 1992	Meeting with Controller of Aircraft and Deputy Controller of Aircraft	4
3 June 1992	Customer Advisory Committee Meeting, Ministry of Defence	4
16 June 1992	Meeting with Air Member for Supply and Organisation, Ministry of Defence	5
19-26 June 1992	United States Air Force Communications Visit	6
14 July 1992	RAF North Luffenham	3
20 July 1992	Royal Air Force Signals Engineering Establishment, RAF Henlow	1, 2, 4
6 August 1992	RAF Brampton (AO Maint. Host), Defence Support Agency Chief Executives Conference	4
10 September 1992	RAF Carlisle	3
17 September 1992	RAF Quedgeley	3
18 September 1992	Meeting with Chief of Logistic Support	5
23 September 1992	Meeting with Air Member for Supply and Organisation and Chief of Logistic Support	4
24 September 1992	Royal Air Force Signals Engineering Establishment, RAF Henlow	3
25 September 1992	Electronic Warfare Avionics Division	3
14 October 1992	Chief of Air Staff's Conference of Station Commanders, RAF Bracknell	4
15 October 1992	Chief of Logistic Support Quality Meeting, Ministry of Defence	4
22 October 1992	RAF Radio Introduction Unit	2

Letter from M. J. Dymond to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

You asked the Secretary of State for Defence to list the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the Chief Executives of MOD executive agencies. As Chief Executive of the Defence Accounts Agency I have made frequent visits to all parts of my organisation for management purposes.

Letter from Dr. Graham Pearson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State to ask if he would list for the last twelve months, the fact finding visits the Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment has made, what his findings were from each visit, has been passed to me for reply.

2. Please refer to my previous letter of 10 July in which I said:

> "As you know, the role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out research to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical and biological weapons may be used against them so that they can maintain their operational effectiveness. In the course of any year, I make many visits on which I invariably obtain a better insight into some facet or another related to our mission.
>
> It would be impracticable and would involve a disproportionate amount of effort to list all my fact finding visits. As the precise effectiveness of our protective measures is classified information, many if not all of my memoranda and reports following visits I have made are classified or bear a confidentiality marking.
>
> However, if there is a particular aspect on which you would like additional information, please feel free to write directly to me and I will do my best to provide the information that you seek."

Letter from Major General R. Wood, Director General of Military Survey to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

In reply to your Parliamentary Question number 7237F, which I received today, I have made no visits during the last twelve months which were aimed specifically at fact-finding.

Letter from Captain D. E. Symonds to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

In response to your Parliamentary question to the Secretary of State for Defence concerning fact finding visits made by the Chief Executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible, the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation has been a Defence Support Agency since 1 April 1992 and during that time the Chief Executive has not made any fact finding visits.

Letter from Paul Altobell, chief executive of the Defence Analytical Services Agency, to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

Minister of State (DP) suggested that I write to you about my fact finding visits made in the past twelve months.

I have in fact made no fact finding visits of any substance outside MoD or Government Statistical areas. On the other hand I have had many meetings with my main customers in the Department and with the Central Statistical Office.

The main findings of these meetings were that structural and strategic changes were needed in my organisation to meet the needs of customers. These changes are now in the process of being implemented.

Letter from Dr. D. Leadbetter to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

The Defence Operational Analysis Centre was formed as a Defence Support Agency on 1st July 1992 remains in the line management chain within the Ministry of Defence and is, therefore not an executive agency. A majority of the agency's customers are within the Department; so it is able to use the full facilities of the Department to gather data, information and assumptions essential to the efficient and effective conduct of its studies. These collaborative investigations with colleagues in the Department, United Kingdom industry and defence partners have been particularly important in this short period of agency status in contributing to studies currently considering United Kingdom force structure options and the use of simulators for Service training and military exercises.

Letter from Brigadier M. A. Browne to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

Further to your question, raised in the House on 26 October, to the Secretary of State for Defence concerning fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by Chief Executives of Defence Agencies and the findings resulting from each visit, I have been asked to respond as Chief Executive of the Defence Postal and Courier Services—Defence Support Agency.

This DSA was formed on 1 July 1992 and during these initial few months while plans have been laid for such visits in my capacity as Chief Executive I have been unable to fit them into my programme.

I am sure that you will appreciate that time has been of a premium during this 3 month period when my organisation has undergone such a fundamental change.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) which defence standards require the use of ozone-destroying substances; what steps have been taken to reduce and eliminate the specification of ozone-destroying substances from the defence standards; and if he will make a statement;

(2) in which defence-related fire fighting applications the use of halons is considered essential by his Department; what proportion of his Department's total stock of halons these uses represent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Defence White Papers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the date on which the defence White Paper was published in each year since 1962.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since 1962, the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" has been published on the following dates:

20 February 1962[1]
20 February 1963[1]
13 February 1964[1]
23 February 1965
22 February 1966
16 February 1967
22 February 1968
20 February 1969
19 February 1970
17 February 1971
16 February 1972
21 February 1973
19 March 1975
17 March 1976
28 February 1977
20 February 1978
22 February 1979
2 April 1980
15 April 1981
22 June 1982
6 July 1983
14 May 1984
1 May 1985
12 May 1986
6 May 1987
17 May 1988
2 May 1989
2 April 1990
9 July 1991
7 July 1992

No "Statement on the Defence Estimates" was published in 1974.

[1] Entitled "Statement on Defence".

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Aitken: There are no civil servants in my Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Nuclear Material

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make it his policy to publish the official report of the types of nuclear material imported from the USA under the 1959 amendment to the 1958 Anglo-American co-operation agreement on atomic energy matters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Nuclear Warheads

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions his Department had with the United States Department of Energy prior to the release of ABC document LXXXI-596, concerning United States knowledge of United Kingdom nuclear warhead development up to 1958.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence was made fully aware of plans to declassify this document prior to its release.

ENVIRONMENT

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Howard: The papers published by my executive agencies are the responsibility of their chief executives. I have asked Mr. Roger Courtney to arrange for a reply to be given for the Building Research Establishment; Professor David Rhind for the Ordnance Survey; Mr. Stephen Crow for the Planning Inspectorate; Mr. Marcus Buck for the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre; and Mr. Roger Powell for the Buying Agency.

Letter from Roger Courtney to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

The Secretary of State has asked me to respond to your question on papers that I have published within the last twelve months.

I have presented two papers at conferences in the past twelve months:

'Technical Information to the Construction Industry: The Oxygen of Research' (International Building Information Congress, Stuttgart, October 1991)

'Buildings and the Environment' (Keynote Address: CIB 92 World Building Congress, May 1992)

which have yet to appear in print.

During the course of a year, BRE staff publish many papers in scientific, technical and professional journals and the Establishment produces many publications crystallising the results of its work in advice to industry. These are listed in the enclosed copy of the BRE Annual Review.

Letter from David Rhind to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about papers published by Chief Executives.

Since taking up the Chief Executive post at Ordnance Survey in January this year I have published the following papers:

The information infrastructure of Geographical Information Systems. *Proceedings 5th International Symposium on Spatial Data Handling, 1-19, International Geographical Union.*

Geographical Information Systems and topographic mapping. *Proceedings First Australian Conference on Mapping and Charting, Australian Institute of Cartographers.*

Ordnance Survey and the historical record of the British Landscape. *Paper given to the 'Future History of our Landscape' meeting in the Royal Society, October 16th 1992.*

Reinventing the map. *Geographical Magazine, November 1992, pp 30-32.*

Geographical data as a commodity. *GIS Europe, Vol. 1, No. 8, October 1992, pp 24-26.*

I shall be pleased to provide further details if required.

Letter from Stephen Crow to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

In reply to your Parliamentary Questions, I am asked on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Environment to list both the titles of papers published by the Planning Inspectorate since it became an agency and the fact finding visits made by myself in the last 12 months; and to indicate the findings resulting from those visits. The Planning Inspectorate became an Executive Agency only on 1 April this year, and so a full 12 months have not yet elapsed.

The only Inspectorate paper published since 1 April is entitled "Good Practice at Planning Inquiries". It was published on 7 September 1992 as an Annex to Department of the Environment Circular 24/92 (Welsh Office Circular 44/92).

Since April I have made one fact finding visit, to Edinburgh and nearby, where I was shown some interesting examples of urban regeneration, and where I was able to discuss, with my opposite numbers in Scotland and Ireland, matters of mutual concern. The visit and meeting resulted in useful comparison of professional and managerial practice.

Letter from Marcus Buck to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I am responding to your question regarding the titles of papers published by Agency Chief Executives in the Department of the Environment.

During the last twelve months The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre has published two documents—its updated Framework Document in January and the Annual Report 1991-2 in June.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Letter from Roger H. Powell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

I have been asked to reply direct to your parliamentary question regarding papers published by myself since taking office.

The only published document to date has been TBA's Annual Report for 1991.

Coal

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy on the appropriate level of national coal stocks; and if he will now review the procedure for planning applications for opencast mines.

Mr. Baldry: The review announced on 21 October by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will look at the level of coal stocks, both at the pithead and the power stations and whether plans to run them down are sensibly phased.

With regard to the procedure for planning application for opencast mines, I announced on 15 July that the guidelines contained in MPG3 will be revised. My Department expects to bring forward a draft for public consultation next year following the review of the Government's energy policy.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the Government's policy on the relief of hardship for business ratepayers;

(2) what is the Government's policy regarding the current operation of section 49 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 gives local authorities discretion to grant hardship relief of up to 100 per cent., where it is reasonable for them to do so having regard to the interests of their community charge payers. Where they grant such relief, 75 per cent. of the cost is met by the non-domestic rates pool and only 25 per cent. locally. Alternatively, under regulations, authorities may enter into an agreement with a ratepayer to defer liability and take an interest in his property to secure payment, or they can spread a ratepayer's annual liability over 12 instalments instead of 10. These are decisions which are best made locally. We have drawn authorities' attention to the existence of their section 49 powers and issued advice on their use.

Rented Housing

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new homes were built for rent in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not collect information about houses built to rent. However most housebuilding by housing associations, local authorities, new towns and Government Departments will be for rent. Figures for housebuilding completions by these bodies are published in the annual and quarterly publication "Housing and Construction Statistics". Figures for England in 1979 appear in table 6.1(a) of the 1979-1989 annual edition. Latest figures for 1989 appear in table 6.1(a) of the 1981-1991 edition. A copy of both publications is in the Library.

Home Insulation Scheme

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the budget for the home insulation scheme was in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Baldry: Total expenditure by local authorities in England on the home insulation scheme, as reported to the Department, for the years 1979 and 1989 is shown in table 7.7 of the publication "Housing and Construction Statistics 1979-1989". A copy of this publication is in the Library.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to exclude charities and voluntary organisations from the uniform business rate.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. The needs of charities have long been recognised in reliefs from taxes. In England and Wales they enjoy 80 per cent. mandatory rate relief on all property occupied for charitable purposes. It can be topped up to 100 per cent. at charging authorities' discretion. Non-profit-making bodies in England and Wales are eligible for relief of up to 100 per cent. at charging authorities' discretion. The discretion permits authorities to reflect the benefit derived by charge payers who bear part of the cost of the relief.

Public Sector Tenants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to establish a mobility discount scheme to enable public and social housing tenants to change to other forms of tenure.

Mr. Baldry: Section 129 of the Housing Act 1988 empowers local authorities to give grants to their tenants to help them obtain other accommodation by buying or leasing a home or by extending an existing property. Housing associations that are registered with the Housing Corporation may give similar grants to their tenants under the corporation's tenants incentive scheme.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Howard: I will write to the hon. Member, as the information requested will take a little time to assemble.

Pit Closures

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) for each of the 31 coal mines listed for closure, what are the sums he has set aside to increase grant aid to each of the local authorities affected by the resulting loss of rates revenue;

(2) if he will publish a table to show for the 10 coal pits listed for immediate closure and the 21 pits to be closed in the longer term the sums paid by each pit in rates in each of the last two years, and the current year, indicating the councils to which the rates were paid in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on the rates paid by each of the pits in question is not held centrally.

Any change to a local authority's rate income during the course of a financial year will not affect the amount of its revenue support grant. Authorities are able to avoid the cash flow consequences of any significant unplanned loss by recalculating their contributions to the national non-domestic rates pool.

Tenants Charter

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to monitor the progress of the tenants charter.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* The tenants charter set out the individual legal rights of secure tenants. The council tenants charter, published earlier this year, is a framework for action by tenants and landlords and gives more information about the standards council tenants can expect. Local authorities are required to send annual reports about their housing management performance to their tenants. My Department receives a copy of each authority's report.

Constituency Boundaries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the reports published by the Local Government Boundary Commission regarding the boundaries of the Epping Forest parliamentary constituency, including the dates of publication of first and further draft proposals, the date by which comments were to be received and the date of publication of final reports; and if he will send a copy of each report to the hon. Member for Doncaster.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Boundary Commission deals with local authority boundaries, not parliamentary boundaries. But the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England takes account of county and London borough boundaries.

Reports of the Local Government Boundary Commission relating to county and London borough boundaries affecting Epping Forest are listed in the table. I have sent copies of the reports to the hon. Member.

Table showing local government boundary commission reports affecting Epping Forest

Name of report	*Date of draft proposals*	*Closing date for comments*	*Date of further proposals*	*Closing date for comments*	*Date of final report*
Essex/Hertfordshire	15 April 1988 & 13 November 1989	Not known	None	—	15 February 1991
Redbridge/Epping Forest	31 May 1989	26 July 1989	14 December 1990	15 February 1991	12 May 1992
Waltham Forest/Epping Forest	19 September 1988	14 November 1988	None	—	28 February 1992

Timber Imports

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will restrict imports of illegally harvested timber; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for St. Helen's, North (Mr. Evans) on 20 May, *Official Report*, column 157.

EDUCATION

Teachers Pensions Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list *(a)* by grade the number employed, *(b)* the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and *(c)* the estimate for 1992-93, for the Teachers Pensions Agency.

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for staff numbers and costs has been delegated to the Teachers Pensions Agency under its chief executive Mrs. Denyse Metcalfe. I have asked her to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Denyse Metcalfe to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

The Secretary of State for Education has asked me to supply a detailed answer to the recent question you tabled about the staffing levels and costs of the Teachers' Pensions Agency.

The Agency was not established until 1 April 1992. The estimate of numbers to be employed during the year 1992-93 is as follows:

Grade	*Estimated numbers (full-time equivalent)*
Grade 5	1·0
Grade 7	4·0
SEO	4·7
HEO	19·0
EO	43·4
AO	142·6
AA	71·9
SGB1	2·0
SGB2	17·0
Personal Secretary	1·0
	306·6

The estimated staffing cost for 1992-93 is £3·725 million. I have copied this reply to Mr. Forth.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Forman: Eight.

Exhibition, Upper Waiting Hall

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the London Institute to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Forman: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 23 November until Friday 27 November 1992.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost of the publicity brochures on grant-maintained status that have been sent to all chairs of school government management committees.

Mr. Forth: Publicity brochures on GM status have not been sent to all chairmen of school government management committees. My right hon. Friend recently wrote to the headteacher and chairman of governors of all maintained schools about GM status in the light of responses to the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity: a new framework for schools". That letter invited them to request an information pack if they so wished.

Schools (Complaints)

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent reports and representations he has received on the effectiveness of the parents charter in helping parents who want to complain about their child's school; and what plans he has for a simple and accessible complaints system for schools.

Mr. Forth: Parents' complaints about schools are best dealt with locally as far as possible, and many schools and local education authorities provide advice to parents on complaints procedures.

The Government are committed to safeguarding and keeping under review parents' channels of complaint and rights to redress if they are dissatisfied. The Department is currently giving detailed consideration to the report of the National Consumer Council "When things go wrong at school", which we welcome as a contribution to that process of review.

School Meals

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will reintroduce nutritional standards for school meals.

Mr. Forth: It is for those who provide school meals to determine the nutritional balance of the meals on offer.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the estates in Wales which have been granted relief from inheritance tax on condition that public access is allowed to the land in question in each year from 1984 to the present time.

Mr. Dorrell: The heritage advisory agencies, including the Countryside Council for Wales, can supply information about public access to heritage land including conditionally exempt land. To protect taxpayers' confidentiality, the conditionally exempt land cannot be distinguished.

Electricity Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost to public funds of electricity privatisation.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy on 31 January 1992, at column *723*, and by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland on 31 January 1992, at column *722*. The costs for the privatisation of the Northern Ireland electricity industry will be announced in due course.

Brookvale Trading Estate

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement setting out the reasons why the Inland Revenue valuation office in Birmingham has refused the claim for alteration to the rating list by businesses at the Brookvale trading estate in respect of the effect of overdue work on a motorway repair contract.

Mr. Dorrell: The claim for alteration to the rating list by businesses at the Brookvale trading estate is still under consideration.

The valuation officer, Birmingham has explained to the ratepayers that he is prepared to discuss the position with them and he is currently carrying out further investigations before doing so.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to study the German system of mortgage tax relief for first-time buyers of homes as an alternative to mortgage interest relief at source.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government have received a number of suggestions recently involving increased mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers, all of which are considered carefully.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to grant mortgage holders the right to capitalise mortgage interest relief at source tax benefit as a means of reducing mortgage debts.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to do so.

Maxwell Pension Trust

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether companies' contributions to the Maxwell Pension Trust are treated by the Inland Revenue as tax allowable.

Mr. Dorrell: The general rule when calculating the trading profits of a company is that a deduction is allowed for expenses incurred wholly and exclusively for business purposes. Whether a company's contributions to the Maxwell Pension Trust satisfy this test will depend on the particular facts of each case.

Friendly Societies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in setting up the Friendly Societies Commission under the Friendly Societies Act 1992.

Mr. Dorrell: The Treasury has appointed five commissioners, one full time and four part time, to the Friendly Societies Commission, one more than the minimum required by the Friendly Societies Act 1992. The new commission was formally constituted on 1 October 1992.

Royal Family

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to extend taxation of income to members of the royal family who are currently excluded.

Mr. Lamont: I have no plans to do so.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the change in the yield of corporation tax as a result of the reduction in interest rates from 15 per cent. to 10 per cent.; and what further increase would result from a reduction in interest rates to 6 per cent.

Mr. Dorrell: The yield of corporation tax depends on all forms of company income and on reliefs and allowances, each of which may be affected directly or indirectly by interest rates and by a range of other factors. I regret therefore that it is not possible to answer the question put by the hon. Member.

Customs and Excise (Transfer)

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his most up-to-date assessment of local job opportunities which will arise when the Customs and Excise department moves from London to Liverpool.

Sir John Cope: The new Customs and Excise office at Queen's dock will have room for 1,800 staff. Of these some 300 posts have already been relocated to Liverpool from the south-east. Some 800 further posts will be relocated from Southend to Liverpool from August 1993 to January 1995. The other 700 posts represent existing posts in Liverpool and extra posts created by the migration of work from other parts of the country. Some of these posts will be filled by Customs and Excise staff transferring to Liverpool and others by staff currently employed elsewhere within the Liverpool area.

It is therefore not possible at this stage to give precise figures.

Self-regulatory Organisations

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had on the effectiveness of the self-regulatory organisations set up under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Dorrell: On 9 July this year, following publication of both the summary of conclusions and findings of the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation's review of its regulation of Maxwell companies and the Securities and Investments Board's own assessment, the Chancellor of the Exchequer asked Andrew Large, the SIB's new chairman, to conduct his own review of how the SIB carries out its regulatory responsibilities.

The detailed terms of reference for the review are:

To review how SIB carries out its regulatory responsibilities under the Financial Services Act, with particular reference to the way it exercises oversight of the recognised bodies for which it is responsible, to ensure that they meet their obligations on a continuing basis.

The review will take full account of SIB's assessment of its own monitoring of IMRO in the Maxwell affair, and any consequent action taken by SIB and IMRO to improve their performance, as well as the general need to strengthen the implementation in practice of regulatory standards.

The review is concentrating on identifying action that might be taken by the SIB and the bodies recognised under the Financial Services Act to improve regulatory performance, including deterring and detecting fraud.

The chairman of the SIB has formed a small team, independent of the SIB, to conduct the review. The review team will be consulting widely. The chairman will submit his report to the Chancellor by the end of March 1993.

After consideration of the chairman's report, the Chancellor will report to the House.

Windsor Great Park

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations the Crown Estate undertook before felling began last week of the 17th century avenue of trees in Windsor great park.

Mr. Lamont: I understand that the Crown Estate Commissioners decided earlier in the year, after consultations with English Nature, to proceed with the clear-felling and removal of the avenue of mainly old and decaying lime trees bordering Queen Anne's Ride and their replacement by 1,000 oak saplings over the next four years. Work on the south end of the avenue has started and it will be replanted during the winter months. The commissioners and English Nature are fully aware of the importance of the great park as a habitat for many rare and endangered species of beetles and fungi, mainly associated with old oak trees. Only a few oak trees will be felled in the restoration of the avenue and more that 6,000 old oak trees will remain in the park as a home for invertebrates. Agreement was therefore reached to proceed with the restoration of Queen Anne's Ride as an historic and visually valuable landscape feature for the benefit of future generations to come.

Business Expansion Scheme Lettings

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give figures for the void rate in business expansion scheme lettings *(a)* as a figure and *(b)* as a percentage of all business expansion scheme lettings for each year since 1989.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: I regret that this information is not available.

Sub-contractors (Payments)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the exceptions allowed in his policy of insisting on prompt payment to sub-contractors by main contractors employed by Government Departments.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 30 October 1992]*: There are to be no exceptions. If the hon. Member wishes to raise a particular case, I hope that he will contact me.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of sub-contractors are covered by his new condition of prompt payment of debts owed to them by contractors engaged on government contracts.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 30 October 1992]*: This condition is to apply to all sub-contractors.

Wages

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many minutes it took an average wage earner to earn the price of 20 cigarettes *(a)* 10 and *(b)* 20 years ago; and how many it takes today.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: The lengths of time necessary to work to pay for a selection of goods and services are published annually in "Social Trends". Copies are available in the House of Commons Library.

European Central Bank

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to propose amendments to articles 38.1 and 38.2, of the Maastricht treaty protocol on the statute of the European system of central banks and of the European central bank, to give parliaments access to information held in the ECB.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: My right hon. Friend has no plans to propose such amendments.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans Her Majesty's Government have to propose an amendment to the Maastricht treaty protocol on the statute of the European system of central banks and of the European central bank, chapter III, article 7, on the independence of the ECB, to ensure member state parliamentary oversight of the ECB decision-making bodies.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: My right hon. Friend has no plans to propose such an amendment.

Fuels

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the trade balance with the other members of the EC in fuels for Britain in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: The trade surplus with the EEC in fuels was £9·2 billion in 1985 and £3·2 billion in 1990.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Probation and Bail Hostels

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sites have been identified for new probation and bail hostels; and if he will list the probation committee area in which these sites fall.

Mr. Jack: The following six probation areas have selected their sites and now have planning permission and Home Office approval for the establishment of new bail or probation and bail hostels:

Area	*Type*
Cheshire	Bail
Humberside	Bail
Inner London[1]	Bail
Merseyside	Bail
Surrey	Probation/Bail
West Yorkshire	(1) Probation/Bail (2) Bail

[1] Hostel being developed by voluntary managing committee.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional probation and bail hostel places are planned for each of the next three years.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: The approved hostel expansion programme which began in 1988-89 has delivered an additional 805 places in bail and probation/bail hostels. The 1992 Home Office annual report indicated that resources would be provided for an additional 400 places by 1995. However, the precise time scale on which these places will become available will depend on the ability of individual probation areas to complete their plans for hostel construction or redevelopment and management.

Probation Staff

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional probation staff his Department intends to recruit for each of the next three financial years.

Mr. Jack: The plans set out in the 1992 Home Office annual report provide for increases in probation staff as follows:

Year	*Number*
1992-93	560
1993-94	398
1994-95	376

The 1993 report will set out updated plans for the period to 1995-96.

Dangerous Dogs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of recorded attacks, per month and by region, by *(a)* dangerous dogs as defined by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and *(b)* all dogs since the implementation of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available.

Murderers

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals convicted for murder and sentenced to life imprisonment have been released and thereafter convicted for a further murder since 1965.

Mr. Jack: During the period 1965 to 1991, five persons in England and Wales were convicted of murder and received a life sentence, were released on life licence and were then convicted of a second murder. In addition, one person was convicted of murder in England and Wales, released, and was then convicted of a second murder in Scotland.

Police Forces Inquiry

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the report of the committee of inquiry into the conditions of service in the police forces of the United Kingdom; and if it is his intention to publish the document.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has asked the inquiry to report to him by the end of May 1993. He expects the report to be published.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give his reasons for the decision not to appoint to the committee of inquiry into the conditions of service of the police forces of the United Kingdom a suitably qualified person with experience and knowledge of Scottish police forces.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has considered it important for the inquiry to be conducted by a fully independent team with appropriate expertise in a number of disciplines. The inquiry is, however, working very closely with the police service.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the cost incurred so far by the committee of inquiry into the conditions of service in the police forces of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The estimated cost of the inquiry for the financial year 1992-93 is £720,000. For the financial year 1993-94 the estimated cost is £300,000.

Crown Immunity

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals he has to remove the Crown immunity to prosecution in the national health service with respect to fire legislation;

(2) what policy considerations underlie the continuation of Crown immunity for the national health service with respect to fire legislation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: National Health Service premises are already subject to the provisions of the Fire Precautions Act 1971. The Crown immunity which they formerly enjoyed was removed on 1 April 1991 by section 60 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Leave to Remain Status

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what equivalent categories exist in each of the EC countries to the exceptional leave to remain status in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Exceptional leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom outside the immigration rules is granted where there is no provision within the immigration rules to grant an application but in all the circumstances it would not be reasonable to refuse it. In the case of applicants for asylum, most EC states have provision for the granting of B status of "de facto" refugee status to applicants who do not fall within the terms of the United Nations refugees convention but have other humanitarian reasons to be allowed to remain.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) during the year 1991, or the most recent period for which statistics are available, how many visa and entry clearance applications from persons who wanted to follow a course of study of not more than six months' duration were refused; how many of them appealed against the decision of the entry clearance officer, and in how many of these appeals were the refusal decision upheld;

(2) during the year 1991, or the most recent period for which statistics are available, how many visa and entry clearance applications were refused from people who sought to enter as a visitor; how many of them appealed against that decision of the entry clearance officer, and in how many of these appeals were the refusal decision upheld;

(3) how many applications for entry clearance for visits and short term, less than six months, stay as students were entertained during each year since 1989; how many in each category were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused; how many of the refusals were appealed against; and how many of such appeals were *(a)* unsuccessful, *(b)* successful, *(c)* withdrawn or abandoned or *(d)* settled.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Separate information about entry clearance applications and decisions and about appeals from visitors and students is not available. The available information on total non-settlement entry clearance applications made at all posts overseas is given in the table. Non-settlement entry clearance applications are mainly in respect of visitors. Information on appeals against a refusal of entry clearance for temporary purposes is published in table 37 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics—United Kingdom, 1991", Cm 2063. Information for 1990 is in table 37 of Cm 1571 and for 1989 in table 6 of Cm 1124. A copy of these publications is in the Library.

Applications made at all posts overseas for non-settlement entry clearance to the United Kingdom 1989-91

Number of applicants

	Newly received	*Granted (Total)*	*Refused initially*
1989	865,986	775,246	45,062
1990	962,617	874,330	68,212
1991	915,614	778,845	77,370

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is currently undertaken by his Department to offer legal advice and representation from a choice of providers to individuals pursuing immigration and nationality inquiries; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that such services are fully accessible and are sufficient to meet both the current and projected demand.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office funds the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service and the Refugee Legal Centre to provide free legal advice and assistance for people with rights of appeal under immigration legislation and for asylum claimants. The Government are at present considering recommendations about the future provision of legal services for asylum seekers made in a report published on 21 October by an independent planning group chaired by Ms. Usha Prashar. We shall announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

As I said on 8 July in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), at columns *202-3,* Mr. Humfrey Malins has been invited to lead a planning group outside the Government to draw up proposals for an organisation to take over UKIAS's general immigration work. This group would welcome views from any interested individual or organisation and hopes to publish its report by the end of the year. Green form legal aid continues to be available in immigration and asylum cases.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to ensure that the immigration and nationality department makes a public commitment to provide a non-discriminatory service, supported by measures to monitor and eradicate discriminatory practice.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The immigration and nationality department is fully committed to a policy of non-discrimination and published a formal policy statement on race relations in 1988. This is displayed prominently in all public areas at the headquarters building in Croydon as well as at ports around the country. The immigration rules state specifically that staff should carry out their work without regard to race or colour.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the publicity material produced by the immigration and nationality department for actual and prospective applicants; and in which languages such publicity material is available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The material includes the following. Some of the items are published in Farsi, Bengali, Hindi, Arabic, Gujarati, Turkish, Chinese, Punjabi and Urdu and these arrangements are kept under review.

Form number	*Publicity material*
RON 29 (AP)	Information about Au Pairs.
RON 2 (FP)	Contacting the Immigration and Nationality Department.
RON 2 (S)	Information for overseas students.
RON 2 (V)	Information for visitors from overseas.
RON 32 (S)	Application to stay in the United Kingdom as a student.
RON 56	Notice to students about part-time and holiday work.
RON 71	Information about the Public Enquiry Office.
No form No.	Abolition of re-entry visas.
IS 113	Notice to passengers subject to control under the Immigration Act 1971.

Form number	Publicity material
BN 1	Main publicity leaflet explaining the effect of the 1981 Act, concentrates on British citizenship.
BN 2	General leaflet on British Overseas citizenship.
BN 3	General leaflet on British subjects.
BN 4	Leaflet on transmission of British citizenship by descent. Also explains registration provisions for children of British citizens. Called "Children born abroad".
BN 5	Leaflet explaining the stateless provisions.
BN 6	Leaflet on transmission of British citizenship by parents who are in Crown Service, designated service or in service under a European Community institution.
BN 7	Leaflet explaining the naturalisation provisions in section 6.
BN 8	Leaflet explaining the registration provisions in section 7.
BN 9	Leaflet explaining fully position of children born in the United Kingdom on or after 1 January 1983.
BN 10	Poster for registry offices in the United Kingdom explaining the position of children born in the United Kingdom on or after 1 January 1983.
BN 11	Leaflet explaining the registration of minors as British citizens. This leaflet does not explain the provisions for the registration of children of British citizens. BN 11 and BN 4 may if necessary accompany each other.
BN 12	Leaflet explaining the registration provisions of section 4.
BN 11	Leaflet explaining the British Nationality (Falkland Islands) Act 1983.
BN 15	Leaflet explaining how British nationals can obtain a passport in the United Kingdom.
BN 16	Leaflet containing details of sources of duplicate birth, marriage and death certificates.
BN 17	Leaflet explaining current waiting times for determination of applications.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to ensure that the immigration and nationality department publishes standards for service delivery to include arrangements for regular monitoring, the review of service provision and maximum time scales for dealing with applications.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Service standards for the immigration and nationality department are being developed and published, for example in the IND annual report and the immigration service (ports) operating plan 1992-93.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last reviewed the instructions to immigration officers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: These instructions are kept continuously under review and amended from time to time.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place a copy of the instructions to immigration officers in the Library.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. It is not the usual practice to publish such internal instructions.

Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to offer the assistance of his Department to brief the hon. Members appointed to the Committee on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Officials always seek to respond positively to requests for factual information from right hon. and hon. Members. My right hon. and learned Friend and I will look carefully at any specific requests for briefing for Standing Committee members.

Animals (Scientific Procedures)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to extend the code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures to breeding and supplying establishments.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 29 October 1992, at column *764*.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to undertake a review into the necessity of primate use in research and testing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Animal Procedures Committee, which has a statutory responsibility under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to advise the Home Secretary on animal procedures matters, is currently undertaking a review of primate use. We look forward to receiving the advice of the committee in due course.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish the full terms and form of the entry clearance which can be issued abroad to those seeking entry clearance for the purpose of making an asylum application;

(2) if he will list the proposals brought forward since 1979 to make it easier for asylum seekers to gain pre-entry clearance;

(3) in what circumstances it is possible for a person to claim asylum in the United Kingdom having admitted to an entry clearance officer that this was the intention;

(4) if it is his practice for an individual who has been granted entry clearance abroad for asylum purposes to apply for asylum at the port of entry into the United Kingdom or at the port abroad;

(5) if he will bring forward proposals to make it easier for asylum seekers to gain pre-entry clearance in their home countries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The obligations of the 1951 United Nations convention on the status of refugees are not at large but apply only when a refugee is in the territory of a state party to the convention. Nevertheless, the Government are prepared to grant entry clearance abroad to a person who wishes to travel to the United Kingdom in order to make an application for asylum, if he meets the definition of a refugee under the terms of article 1A of the 1951 convention and has close ties with the United Kingdom such as to make it the most appropriate country of refuge for him. Entry clearance would normally be granted in the form of a visit visa or its equivalent. The person would be free to apply for asylum at the port on arrival in the United Kingdom or direct to the Home Office after arrival. Close dependants of people recognised as refugees in the United Kingdom may apply for entry clearance in their country of origin to join the sponsor on the basis of family reunion. On arrival they may apply to be recognised as refugees. I have no plans to change these arrangements.

EC Interior and Justice Meetings

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the interior and justice meetings for the purposes of intergovernmental co-operation within the European Community which have taken place since 9 April, giving the date and nature of the meeting in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Interior and Justice Ministers have met on two occasions since 9 April 1992. A meeting of Trevi Immigration Ministers was held on 11 and 12 June 1992, and an extraordinary meeting was held on 18 September on the subject of organised crime.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible;

(2) if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit;

(3) if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the agencies concerned: the Forensic Science Service, the United Kingdom Passport Agency and the Fire Service College. I have asked the chief executive of each of these agencies to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. B. L. Fuller to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

FACT FINDING VISITS AND PUBLICATIONS

The Secretary of State has asked the individual Chief Executives of the Executive Agencies within the Home Department to write directly to you in answer to your two Parliamentary Questions about fact finding visits which we have made and the papers we have published during the last 12 months. I am replying as the Chief Executive of the Fire Service College which became an Executive Agency and Trading Fund on 1 April 1992.

Although the College's principal customer is and always will be the United Kingdom Fire Service, one of our other business objectives is to expand the training we provide to industry, commerce and overseas fire brigades. In that connection I have made fact finding visits during the last 12 months to the United States and the Netherlands, and the Deputy Commandant of the College has made similar visits to several countries in Europe, the Middle and Far East, and Africa. Their purpose was to promote the College and assess the opportunities for new business.

The visits raised the College's profile in the countries concerned and confirmed that in many instances they have a significant need for fire related training which we could meet. The College's Marketing Department is following up the enormous interest the visits have generated in an attempt to win training contracts. Those efforts have already met with considerable success.

I have not formally published any papers within this period. However, I did give a paper at the "Industrial Fire World Exposition" in Texas in April this year which was subsequently reported widely in the United States.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Letter from Dr. Janet Thompson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

You recently tabled three Parliamentary Questions seeking information about agencies. As you know, the arrangement now is that the Chief Executive of an Executive Agency, with the agreement of the Minister, replies to Members of Parliament on operational matters. I am therefore replying on behalf of the Forensic Science Service (FSS).

The FSS gained Agency Status on 1 April 1991 and at the same time a system of direct charging was introduced. Since then I have made several visits to outside organisations to bring their experience to bear here. During the past twelve months I have spent 2 days with executives at Hoskins Group PLC in order to gain a wider understanding of organisation development and customer relations. I have also visited Forensic laboratories in the Netherlands as well as United Kingdom laboratories to contribute to an exchange of information on forensic matters.

Your second Question concerns papers published by Chief Executives. The FSS Central Research and Support Establishment based at the Aldermaston laboratory circulates its research papers to a limited number of law enforcement agencies worldwide but these are not generally available and could not be described as published in the wider sense. Individuals are on occasion permitted to publish their research papers in the scientific press under their own names. The FSS is very shortly to publish its first annual report since becoming an agency. A copy will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Your third Question asked about the number of staff in the FSS by grade, and their cost, in 1991-92, and an estimate for 1992-93. The information is enclosed in tabular form. The figures for staff show the average staff in post over each year.

Forensic Science Service
Staff costs by grade 1991-92

Grade	*Average staff in post*	*Salary and ERNIC*	*Superannuation*	*Total cost*
3	0·90	32,764	5,013	37,777
4	0·50	26,154	4,002	30,166
5	4·50	198,010	30,448	229,458
6	5·50	201,695	30,859	232,554
7	68·13	2,074,837	317,465	2,392,402
SSO	130·63	3,090,975	472,919	3,563,895
HSO	130·00	2,501,102	382,889	2,883,771
SO	107·63	1,604,119	250,884	1,855,002
ASO	52·38	590,094	80,727	670,821
SEO	0·25	5,981	935	6,916
HEO	0·75	12,642	1,977	14,819
EO	8·13	105,338	16,475	121,812
AO	13·13	144,822	22,650	167,473
AA	13·50	181,178	28,338	209,515
SPS	0·75	12,012	1,879	13,881
PS	12·00	156,965	24,549	181,514
TYP	17·25	209,327	32,739	242,066
SGB2	20·50	172,027	26,905	198,932
SGB1	1·75	17,968	2,810	20,778
PTO	4·25	61,560	9,628	71,188
Total	598·00	11,390,669	1,753,870	13,144,539

Forensic Science Service
Staff costs by grade: 1992-93

Grade	Average staff in post	Salary and ERNIC	Superannuation	Total costs
3	1·00	67,625	8,216	75,841
5	5·00	227,123	27,595	254,718
6	5·00	190,961	23,202	214,163
7	64·25	2,054,776	249,655	2,304,431
SSO	125·50	3,234,274	392,964	3,527,238
HSO	143·88	2,737,941	992,660	3,070,801
SO	110·13	1,715,343	268,230	1,983,623
ASO	45·50	535,810	83,801	619,810
SEO	1·00	25,120	3,929	29,049
HEO	1·25	22,124	3,460	25,584
EO	10·50	142,934	22,355	165,289
AO	18·88	160,752	25,142	185,894
AA	19·75	192,676	30,135	222,811
SPS	1·00	16,817	2,680	19,447
PS	16·75	214,253	33,609	247,762
TYP	17·60	222,979	34,874	257,853
SGB2	19·63	232,933	36,431	269,384
SGB1	1·00	12,088	1,891	13,978
TG1	2·50	136,122	21,289	157,411
PTO	4·50	68,442	10,704	79,146
Total	607	12,211,092	1,612,722	18,828,813

Letters from Mr. J. E. Hayzeldean to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

FACT FINDING VISITS

The Home Secretary has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about fact-finding visits by me in my capacity as chief executive of the United Kingdom Passport Agency.

In the last 12 months, I have visited all the regional Passport Offices in Belfast, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Newport and Peterborough. In addition I have visited other towns and cities in the UK to meet suppliers and other organisations with which the Passport Agency has dealings. The findings from these visits have been fed into the Passport Agency's corporate and business plans.

PUBLICATIONS

The Home Secretary has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about publications by the UK Passport Agency in the last 12 months. Apart from the normal passport application forms and guidance notes, we have published the following:

Corporate plan 1992-95
Business plan 1992-93
Summary of targets and plans
Publicity leaflet (Beat the Rush).

We hope shortly to be publishing our Annual Report and Accounts for 1991-92.

Letter from J. Hayzeldean to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

Staff Costs

The Home Secretary has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about staff costs in the United Kingdom Passport Agency. I have set out below, as requested, our staff numbers by grade, their cost for 1991-92 and the comparable estimated figures for 1992-93. For 1991-92, the table shows average staff numbers in permanent posts. For 1992-93, the table shows the current complement of permanent posts.

	1991-92	1992-93
Grade 5	1·0	1·0
Grade 6	3·0	3·0
Grade 7	10·0	10·0
Senior Executive Officer	13·0	15·0
Higher Executive Officer	45·0	47·0
Executive Officer	158·0	156·0
Administrative Officer	641·0	631·0
Administrative Assistant	272·5	337·0
Personal Secretary	4·0	4·0
Typing Manager	2·0	2·0
Typist	21·0	22·0
Telex Operator	2·0	0·0
Support Grade Band I	18·0	19·0
Support Grade Band II	59·0	68·0
Support Manager III	1·0	1·0
Total	1,250·5	1,316·0

The costs of employing these staff in 1991-92 amounted to £13,853,000 (salaries plus employers national insurance contributions). The costs of employing seasonal staff and overtime working amounted to a further £2,256,000.

The costs of employing staff in 1992-93 is expected to amount to £15,450,000 (salaries and ERNIC). The costs of employing seasonal staff and overtime working in 1992-93 is expected to amount to a further £3,087,000.

PRIME MINISTER

Sir Peter Kemp

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, columns *389*, what redundancy payments were paid to Sir Peter Kemp following his early retirement.

The Prime Minister: None. As I said in my earlier answers on 23 October, at columns *388-89*, Sir Peter received immediate payments of pension and lump sum due on retirement, six months salary in lieu of notice and a compensation payment.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, columns *388-89*, if he will make a statement on the time and resources given to exploring opportunities of re-employment and retraining for Sir Peter Kemp.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied that all practicable alternative posts for Sir Peter Kemp were considered before he was asked to take early retirement from the civil service.

Civil Servants

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, column *388*, which posts of permanent secretary have been filled by promotion or transfer since the beginning of 1992; and if he will give the dates in each case.

The Prime Minister: Since January 1992 the following permanent secretary appointments have been made on promotion or transfer:

Name	Department	Date
G. A. Hart	Health	2 February
Sir C. W. France	Defence	28 February
W. P. McLennan	Central Statistical Office	2 March
G. H. Phillips	National Heritage	21 April
Mrs. B. J. L. Mills QC	Crown Prosecution Service	21 April
R. T. J. Wilson	Environment	3 June
R. C. Mottram	Public Service and Science	17 August
G. A. Hosker	Treasury Solicitor's Department	19 October

Libya

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out the current position in respect to United Nations sanctions against Libya.

The Prime Minister: The United Nations Security Council reviewed the sanctions against Libya on 12 August and agreed that there was no justification for lifting them. Sanctions will be lifted only when Libya has complied with UN Security Council resolutions 731 and 748.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister what is the number of civil servants in his office whose main task is work related or mainly to the European Community.

The Prime Minister: None of my staff's time is wholly related to work on the European Community, but a number spend significant amounts of time on work related to the European Community.

Windsor Great Park

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister if the Crown Estate will make it its policy to halt the continued felling of the 17th century tree avenue in Windsor great park.

The Prime Minister: The Crown Estate Commissioners consulted English Nature before taking the decision to clear fell, remove and replant Queen Anne's Ride in Windsor great park with 1,000 oak saplings.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will bring forward legislation to amend the Crown Estate Act 1961 so as to vest responsibility for Windsor great park with the Department of the Environment.

The Prime Minister: No.

Forestry

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Prime Minister if he is satisfied with co-ordination of Government policy on forestry and deforestation; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied that the arrangements for the co-ordination of Government policy on forestry and deforestation are working well.

In addition to the normal day-to-day contacts between Departments, an interdepartmental steering group for forestry was set up in 1990. This keeps under review the development and implementation of forestry and related environmental policies in Great Britain to ensure that they remain complementary.

The interdepartmental working group on forestry issues relating to the UN Conference on Environment and Development which was established in the run-up to the Rio summit is being continued. This will ensure that our post-Rio policies relating to forests, including deforestation, are effectively integrated.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what communications have been received from the Danish authorities in the last week regarding the Maastricht treaty.

The Prime Minister: The Danish proposals on the Maastricht treaty were approved by the Folketing market committee on 30 October and were transmitted to me, as President of the European Council, later that day. A copy of the proposals is available in the Library.

Castle Vale Housing Action Trust

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Prime Minister if he will hold a meeting with Mrs. Carole Rafferty, Mr. Kim Rose and Mr. Sydney Gettings of the Castle Vale community action team, Birmingham, concerning the proposed Castle Vale housing action trust.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning met tenants from the Castle Vale estate earlier this year to discuss the proposal for a housing action trust. He expects to do so again when the assessment of feasibility work on the proposal is complete.

Colombian Coal

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what policy the Government have adopted towards the complaint made by British Coal to the European Commission, on the basis of the Commission's anti-dumping rules, about the importation of Colombian coal into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what action he has taken to expedite an investigation by the European Commission into complaints by British Coal that supplies of Colombian coal to the United Kingdom constitute dumping; when inquiries into the complaint were undertaken; when the inquiry into the complaint will be complete and made public; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: British Coal's anti-dumping complaint to the European Commission against imports of coal from Colombia, the United States and China is a matter for the Commission to consider. The Government look to the Commission to take seriously its responsibilities in this area and therefore to consider British Coal's complaint carefully. I understand that the Commission has not yet taken a decision on whether to open an investigation.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Prime Minister what undertakings have been given to the Colombian Government by the British Government on British Coal's anti-dumping petition currently before the European Commission.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 30 October 1992]*: None.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister on what dates he had meetings with representatives of the Government of Colombia at which the sale and supply of Colombian coal to the United Kingdom was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: I have nothing further to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) earlier today.

Mr. Macklnlay: To ask the Prime Minister if he discussed the importation of Colombian coal during his last visit to that country.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: I have nothing further to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) earlier today.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he had in June with the President of Colombia, Cesar Gaviria, on the market for Colombian coal in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: I have nothing further to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) earlier today.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Explosives

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidelines his Department has issued to the Health and Safety Executive on its issuing of import licences for explosives.

Mr. Needham: Under the Explosives Act 1875 and related legislation, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is responsible for issuing import licences for explosives. My Department has no locus in the matter and has issued no guidance to the HSE.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the main proposals put forward by Her Majesty's permanent representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency at the agency's 1992 annual general conference; and if he will make a statement on decisions taken at the conference that will affect the United Kingdom nuclear industry and Her Majesty's Government's present nuclear policy.

Mr. Eggar: As leader of the United Kingdom delegation, I called for action to improve safety in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. On behalf of the European Community and its member states, I also called for further measures to strengthen nuclear safeguards, and congratulated the IAEA on the important contribution it has made to international efforts to uncover and render harmless Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. I have placed a copy of my speech in the Library of the House of Commons.

ECGD

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Needham: During the last 12 months, ECGD has presented its trading accounts for 1990-91 to Parliament. In addition, ECGD has also submitted various explanatory memoranda to Parliament concerning international developments in relation to the OECD consensus on export credits and EC issues. These documents have been placed in the Library.

Rough Diamond Trade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current published rough diamond trade worth in the United Kingdom; what were the comparative figures for other European Community countries; and if he will show these figures as a plus or minus percentage to the United Kingdom figure.

Mr. Needham: The information is in the table:

EC Trade in rough diamonds[1] in 1991

	Value in millions £s		*as percentage of UK figure:*	
	Imports	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Exports*
United Kingdom	397·62	4·04	—	—
France	1·32	0·56	−99·67	−86·15
Belgium/Luxembourg	526·16	1·38	32·33	−65·76
Netherlands	0·14	0·07	−99·97	−98·25
Federal Republic of Germany	0·00	0·02	−100·00	−99·60
Italy	0·04	0·11	−99·99	−97·29
Ireland	0·07	0·00	−99·98	−100·00
Denmark	0·07	0·01	−99·98	−99·79
Greece	0·00	0·00	−100·00	−100·00
Portugal	0·12	0·00	−99·97	−100·00
Spain	0·01	0·00	−100·00	−100·00

[1] UK tariff code 71021000: ie Diamonds rough, unsorted.

Source: EUROSTAT.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC to encourage a Community-wide moratorium on the import of raw logs from the Sarawak region of Malaysia.

Mr. Needham: No. Import restrictions would rob forests of their value and serve only to speed up the rate of deforestation to free land for alternative uses. Our efforts are best directed at persuading all tropical timber-producing countries to manage their forests on a sustainable basis. The Government of Malaysia have re-affirmed their commitment to the International Tropical Timber Organisation to reduce significantly the amount of timber extracted from Sarawak and to work towards the objective of exporting timber only from sustainably managed forests by the year 2000.

Import Statistics

Mr. Garnier: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the total United Kingdom imports by value of all manufactured goods from *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* China, *(c)* Hong Kong and *(d)* Taiwan for each of the last five years, split between textiles, clothing and other.

Mr. Needham: The figures requested are as follows:

United Kingdom imports—£ million

From		Textiles SITC division 65	Clothing SITC division 84	Other manufactured goods	Manufactured goods sections 5-8
United States of America	1987	131·6	22·0	7,654·1	7,807·7
	1988	162·0	30·6	9,096·5	9,289·1
	1989	189·7	38·7	11,633·0	11,861·4
	1990	193·1	58·8	12,392·9	12,644·8
	1991	203·2	65·0	11,709·6	11,977·8
China	1987	60·7	42·1	167·5	270·3
	1988	55·4	49·0	202·0	306·4
	1989	57·9	51·7	275·7	385·3
	1990	60·1	64·5	360·7	485·3
	1991	72·6	106·5	445·6	624·7
Hong Kong	1987	76·2	556·8	869·6	1,502·6
	1988	70·0	656·3	1,023·2	1,749·5
	1989	63·0	709·3	1,212·5	1,984·8
	1990	57·4	693·3	1,181·2	1,931·9
	1991	50·4	785·5	1,271·5	2,107·4
Taiwan	1987	29·2	81·3	878·2	988·7
	1988	29·0	81·4	1,022·6	1,133·0
	1989	36·2	90·5	1,206·8	1,333·5
	1990	40·4	70·4	1,081·9	1,192·7
	1991	36·0	93·3	1,120·5	1,249·8

Source: Business Monitor MA20, Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Coal Industry

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the production levels of *(a)* Trentham colliery complex and *(b)* the seven pits in the Selby area, for the last full year.

Mr. Eggar: This is an operational matter for British Coal.

Refrigerators

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many domestic fridges were imported from Germany, in each year since 1988; and what was their total value in each of these years.

Mr. Needham: The information is given in the table:

UK Imports of Domestic Refrigerators from Germany, 1988-91[1]

	'000 units	Value in (£ million)
1988	102	13·6
1989	137	14·6
1990	124	18·2
1991	111	17·1

[1] Includes one-door refrigerators and 2-door fridge freezers. Germany includes the former DDR.

Source: Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Electrical Appliances (AMDEA).

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many British made domestic fridges were exported in each year since 1988; and how many fridges currently sold in the United Kingdom are imported from other countries.

Mr. Needham: The country of manufacture of refrigerators exported from, or sold in, the United Kingdom is not collected. Import and export information is given in the table:

United Kingdom Trade in Domestic Refrigerators[1]*, 1988-1991 ('000 units)*

	Exports	Imports
1988	115	916
1989	113	910
1990	150	847
1991	147	736

[1] Includes one-door refrigerators and two-door fridge-freezers.

Source: Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Electrical Appliances (AMDEA).

Textiles

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about extension of the European Community discipline on state subsidies to synthetic fibre production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: United Kingdom industry has told me that it hopes to see the synthetic fibres discipline renewed and strengthened. My Department has told the Commission—which has sole responsibility for decisions in this area—that the British Government strongly support this objective.

Animal Testing (Cosmetics)

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will support proposals being put forward to the Council of Ministers to end the use of animals for the testing of cosmetics products and ingredients.

Mr. Leigh: The Government's policy in the negotiations on the proposed sixth Council amendment to the cosmetics directive is to keep animal testing to a minimum consistent with human safety. We will continue to press for reduction in animal testing and we hope that during our presidency member states will agree to the phasing out of testing on animals as soon as they can be replaced with suitably validated alternatives.

Auditing Practices Board

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish details of the oral and written comments made by his representative on the Auditing Practices Board in relation to the going concern exposure draft.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department's representative on the Auditing Practices Board participates in its debates, but no verbatim record is kept and as a non-voting member he does not take a position when the board reaches its decisions. I have placed in the Library a copy of my Department's response to the board's exposure draft on going concern.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what priorities he has suggested to the Auditing Practices Board.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has not suggested priorities to the Auditing Practices Board, but in October last year my Department's representative responded to a general invitation to board members to identify topics for early attention. Those suggested on behalf of the Department included illegal acts, going concern, the role and function of the audit, the auditing of computer-based systems, the relationship between international and United Kingdom auditing standards and guidance, and a programme for revising the existing body of guidance, including the conversion of guidelines to standards.

Company Accounts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many company accounts he has referred to the financial reporting review panel.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Three.

Small Firm Bankruptcies

Mr. Welsh: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next plans to meet the Federation of Small Businesses to discuss the number of small firm bankruptcies in 1991; and what are the numbers involved.

Mr. Leigh: I have no plans to meet the Federation of Small Businesses. Baroness Denton, in her capacity as Minister for Small Firms, has frequent meetings with the federation and all the major small firms organisations to discuss a range of issues.

There were 47,467 insolvencies in England and Wales in 1991.

Post Office

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the external advisers on the future of Post Office services; and what is the estimated expenditure on the provision of such advice in the current year.

Mr. Leigh: Kleinwort Benson and KPMG Peat Marwick have been appointed to advise the Government on the Post Office review. Price Waterhouse has been appointed to advise the Government on the method and timing of the sale of Parcelforce. A total of £500,000 has so far been allocated to this work from within class IV vote 2, subhead A4 (other services) of Supply Estimates 1992-93.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library the Kleinwort Benson report on the future of postal services.

Mr. Leigh: Any reports produced by the Government's advisers on the Post Office are internal Government documents. I do not intend, therefore, to place such documents in the Library.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many times his officials have met the liquidators of BCCI, with the dates and the purposes of the meetings.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My officials met one or more of the joint liquidators of BCCI on 26 March, 19 May, and 23 July 1992. On each occasion the holding of a meeting of creditors, pursuant to section 141 of the Insolvency Act 1986, was discussed. At the 23 July meeting the exercise by the joint liquidators of their powers under schedule 4, part I and II of the Insolvency Act was also discussed.

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial target and capital expenditure limit has been set for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for 1992-93.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's financial target for 1992-93 has been set as an 11 per cent. return on net assets on a current cost basis —before long-term interest payable and extraordinary items—subject to the outcome of a revaluation of the AEA's assets. I have also approved the AEA's capital expenditure programme for the year at £27·3 million.

Serbia and Montenegro

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the level of trade, both exports and imports, with Serbia and Montenegro for each month in the current year by each main category of commodities.

Sir John Cope: I have been asked to reply. Trade with Serbia and Montenegro has been identified separately from that with the other former Yugoslav republics since 1 July 1992.

The figures for the subsequent months are recorded as follows:

	Imports £	*Exports* £
July	215,783	Nil
August	206,938	33,477
September	Nil	45,379

A further breakdown by commodity cannot be published at this time as this would identify individual consignments. Both imports and exports for Serbia and Montenegro require licences and the goods permitted to be exported are strictly for medical purposes, foodstuffs and humanitarian aid.

GATT

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what reports have been received by the Industry Council of the European Community from its Commission concerning its negotiating activities as representing the Community in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade; what consultations the Commission has had with the Council on these matters; and what was the last date when it provided the Commission with a negotiating mandate.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* The Foreign Affairs Council is the forum in which Community Trade Ministers discuss external trade issues. The Commission reports regularly to the Council on progress in the GATT negotiations, and last did so on 6 October. The most recent guidance given to the Commission was at the European Council in Birmingham on 16 October, on which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reported to the House on 20 October, *Official Report*, column 319.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what effect the increase since the second half of 1973 in the terms of trade for finished manufactures and in the relative unit value of exports of finished manufactures has had on the volume of imports and exports and on manufacturing output; and if he will publish a table showing for finished manufactures for each year since 1970 the percentage increase/reduction in the terms of trade and in relative export unit values together with *(a)* the increase in the volume of imports and exports of both finished and semi-finished manufactures and *(b)* the increase in manufacturing output.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* The Department does not produce estimates of the effects of terms of trade and relative export unit values on trade flows and output.

The information requested for relative export unit values is not available. The other statistical information requested is given in the table.

	Finished manufactures: terms of trade[1]		*Finished manufactures*				*Semi-finished manufactures*				*Manufacturing output*	
			Import volume		*Export volume*		*Import volume*		*Export volume*			
	1985 = 100	*annual change percent*	*1985 = 100*	*annual change percent*	*1985 = 100*	*annual change percent*	*1985 = 100*	*annual change percent*	*1985 = 100*	*annual change percent*	*1985 = 100*	*annual change percent*
1970	84	[2]—	22·2	[2]—	61·8	[2]—	47·0	[2]—	61·9	[2]—	100·0	0·3
1971	86	2	25·6	15·3	68·0	10·0	47·8	1·7	65·0	5·0	99·0	−1·0
1972	87	1	31·8	24·2	67·2	−1·2	53·6	12·1	67·4	3·7	101·1	2·1
1973	81	−7	40·2	26·4	74·7	11·2	61·4	14·6	78·0	15·7	110·5	9·3
1974	81	—	41·4	3·0	79·5	6·4	67·3	9·6	81·3	4·2	109·2	−1·2
1975	84	4	40·8	1·4	83·7	5·3	59·5	-11·6	69·9	−14·0	101·6	-7·0
1976	82	−2	44·0	7·8	87·2	4·2	65·3	9·7	81·2	16·2	103·5	1·9
1977	86	5	49·9	13·4	92·5	6·1	68·8	5·4	89·0	9·6	105·6	2·0
1978	89	3	56·0	12·2	90·4	−2·3	76·2	10·8	90·8	2·0	106·0	0·4
1979	94	6	64·8	15·7	87·3	−3·4	84·1	10·4	94·0	3·5	105·9	−0·1
1980	100	6	65·0	0·3	89·4	2·4	82·1	−2·4	92·8	−1·3	96·7	-8·7
1981	101	1	67·0	3·1	85·8	−4·0	74·8	−8·9	84·5	−8·9	90·9	−6·0
1982	101	—	74·8	11·6	87·2	1·6	79·5	6·3	86·4	2·2	91·1	0·2
1983	100	−1	84·9	13·5	83·5	−4·2	89·9	13·1	91·4	5·8	93·8	3·0
1984	99	−1	94·5	11·3	92·5	10·8	96·8	7·7	97·4	6·6	97·4	3·8
1985	100	1	100·0	5·8	100·0	8·1	100·0	3·3	100·0	2·7	100·0	2·7
1986	100	—	105·9	5·9	102·1	2·1	108·3	8·3	106·0	6·0	101·3	1·3
1987	100	—	117·8	11·2	111·6	9·3	117·4	8·4	113·3	6·9	106·6	5·2
1988	105	5	142·2	20·7	119·6	7·2	131·9	12·4	119·8	5·7	114·0	6·9
1989	104	−1	158·7	11·6	135·8	13·5	137·7	4·4	123·2	2·8	118·9	4·3
1990	104	—	158·0	−0·4	147·4	8·5	141·7	2·9	130·7	6·1	118·4	−0·4
1991	102	−2	147·7	−6·5	150·4	2·0	141·9	0·1	135·2	3·4	112·2	−5·2

[1] Terms of trade is the export unit value index as a percentage of the import value index.

[2] Not available.

Car Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the percentage reduction in the value of sterling against the deutschmark since July; and what effect that has had on the retail price of cars imported from Germany.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* The percentage reduction since July was 14·3 per cent. as at 23 October 1992.

The reduction in value of sterling has exerted pressure on German manufacturers to increase the prices of cars they export to the United Kingdom in order to retain profit margins. The wide variety of other factors which affect pricing policies of car manufacturers and the current reduced demand in the United Kingdom car market have made them reluctant to do so. Much will depend on the value that sterling settles at after the current upheavals in the currency markets have passed.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the percentage manufactured-import content of United Kingdom exports of manufactures in standard industrial trade classification 7-8 in 1991 and of the increase since *(a)* 1970 and *(b)* 1979; and if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1970 and the current year to date the percentage increase in United Kingdom output of such manufactures together with the increase in the volume of output, imports and exports of (i) intermediate goods and (ii) semi-manufactures.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 30 October 1992]:* The latest available analysis of the import content of manufactures is for 1985. Estimates of the destination of imports were published for 1985 by the Central Statistical Office in "Input-Output Tables for the UK, 1985" (table 6). Estimates were similarly published for some earlier years, including 1970 and 1979. These published data could be used to produce estimates of the import content of exports in SITC 7-8 for the earlier years, but only at disproportionate cost.

Output information is not available for finished manufactures, semi-manufactures or intermediate goods. These categories of goods are defined only in the trade classification. Volume indices for imports and exports of these categories are regularly published in tables B8 and C9 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", which is available in the Library of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are currently receiving invalidity benefit in each standard planning region in Northern Ireland; and what is the expected expenditure in 1992-93 in each such region.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 2 November 1992:

Your recent Parliamentary Question asking for the numbers of people currently receiving Invalidity Benefit in each standard planning region in Northern Ireland and the expected expenditure in 1992-93 in each such region has been passed to me for reply as I am responsible for the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency.

The information is not available in the form you requested because Northern Ireland is regarded as one region for Invalidity Benefit purposes. However, you may be interested to know that at September 1992 there were 60,048 people in Northern Ireland receiving Invalidity Benefit and that the total expenditure on this benefit for 1992/93 is estimated at £238·4m.

I hope this information is helpful.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to introduce regional UV-B monitoring systems; what initiatives he has taken to encourage Northern Irish industry to switch to non-ozone-depleting substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The National Radiological Protection Board has been measuring levels of UV radiation at three sites in Great Britain since 1988. There are no plans for separate monitoring in Northern Ireland.

The phase-out of man-made chloroflurocarbons under the Montreal protocol will require industry to switch to non-ozone-depleting substances. Northern Ireland industries which require more information may contact the industrial research technology unit's freephone environmental inquiry point, and their attention has already been drawn to this facility.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he intends that persons who are the offspring, or other more distant descendants, of persons of different races shall be covered by legislation against racial discrimination.

Mr. Hanley: In March 1992 the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. Friend the Member for the City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), agreed in principle to the publication of a consultative document which would examine the scope for legislation on racial discrimination and consider what additional action ought to be taken by the Government to promote equity of treatment for ethnic groups. Consideration of the content of possible legislation will be informed by the outcome of the consultative process.

River Bush

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the salmon redd count in the River Bush and its tributaries for each of the last five years; what is his assessment as to the number of redds needed to maintain the present five-year average number of salmon and grilse entering the system; and what is his assessment as to the number of such fish the system could support and the number of redds necessary to attain that number.

Mr. Hanley: The information on salmon redd counts in the River Bush and its tributaries is published in the annual reports of the Fisheries Conservancy Board for 1989, 1990, and 1991, copies of which are available in the Library.

The work on assessing the number of salmon redds required to maintain and support the system is still ongoing and the information requested is not available.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total number of *(a)* salmon and *(b)* grilse taken by anglers in the River Bush in each of the past 10 years or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Hanley: The available information is published in the annual reports of the Fisheries Conservancy Board for the years 1988-91 inclusive, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evidence he has that *(a)* increasing numbers and *(b)* an increasing percentage of salmon and grilse enter the River Bush in each of (i) September, (ii) October and (iii) November; and if he will publish the figures.

Mr. Hanley: The late runs of salmon and grilse into the River Bush over the past six years was as follows:

	Four-week period ending					
	30 September		*28 October*		*25 November*	
	Number	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*
1986	73	2·1	1,302	38·1	166	4·8
1987	628	21·4	225	7·6	83	2·8
1988	556	15·4	278	7·7	55	1·5
1989	251	21·7	206	17·8	25	2·2
1990	205	10·3	105	5·3	46	2·3
1991	119	3·8	1,072	34·5	134	4·3

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what costs have been incurred by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland in each of the past five years and the current year in operating the River Bush angling fishery; what has been the total income from angling in those years; and where a detailed analysis of the costs and income is published by his Office.

Mr. Hanley: Operational costs for the angling aspects of the Department's activities at the River Bush are not recorded separately.

Such information on angling income as is available relates only to the special angling stretches and is published in the annual reports on the sea and inland fisheries of Northern Ireland for 1987-91, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show how many angling permits were issued for each stretch of the River Bush in the *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* 1992 angling seasons up to 30 September, what sums were received for those permits each month; and how many salmon, grilse and sea trout were caught in each stretch in each month and in total, or as much of such information as is available to him at present.

Mr. Hanley: The number of angling permits sold for each stretch of the River Bush between 1989 and 1992 and the annual income received was as follows:

		To 30 September		
Stretch	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
New	413	192	146	221
Town[1]	457	358	273·5	306·5
Leap[1]	511	658	548	590·5
Walk Mill	—	—	—	61
Total	1,381	1,208	967·5	1,179
Income (£)	17,079	17,193	16,332	21,729

[1] Half-day tickets are available on these stretches.

Information on the number of salmon, grilse and sea trout caught is as follows:

Number of Salmon and Grilse caught by month in each stretch of the River Bush between 1989 and 1992

Year	*Stretch*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*Total*
1989	New	3	8	1	2	2	8	5	—	25
	Town	4	8	2	3	2	21	17	—	57
	Leap	0	1	1	3	9	40	51	—	105
	Total	7	12	4	8	14	69	73	—	187
1990	New	0	0	3	6	21	2	3	—	35
	Town	3	2	3	21	47	26	12	—	114
	Leap	0	3	1	42	55	22	27	—	150
	Total	3	5	7	69	123	50	42	—	299
1991	New	1	0	0	26	45	5	20	—	97
	Town	0	2	1	44	23	1	42	—	113
	Leap	0	1	0	28	62	18	64	—	173
	Total	1	3	1	98	130	24	126	—	383
1992	New	0	1	5	17	49	8	4	4	88

Year	Stretch	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total
	Town	9	10	6	6	20	14	21	14	100
	Leap	0	5	6	1	72	24	20	16	144
	Walk Mill	0	0	0	0	2	3	6	1	12
	Total	9	16	17	24	143	49	51	35	344

Reported Sea Trout catches

Year	Number
1989	0
1990	0
1991	1
1992	2

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the number of *(a)* salmon and *(b)* grilse entering the River Bush in each month of each of the past five years and the current year, indicating how many fish in each month were (i) one sea winter fish, (ii) two sea winter fish and (iii) three sea winter fish; and what correlation there was between each sea winter class, their weight and how many were classed as spring, summer, autumn and winter running fish.

Mr. Hanley: The number of salmon and grilse entering the River Bush system in each month for the years 1987 to 1991 was as follows:

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
January	0	0	0	0	0	1
February	3	0	0	0	3	3
March	11	14	10	2	8	17
April	41	14	5	17	21	46
May	29	8	19	17	20	49
June	242	68	32	378	300	39
July	1,098	1,339	122	670	1,056	915
August	549	1,116	458	536	336	689
September	628	645	258	207	119	542
October	227	278	218	111	1,106	—
November	82	55	13	40	106	—
December	31	56	23	10	28	—
TOTAL	2,941	3,593	1,158	1,988	3,103	(2,301)

Separate figures are not available for salmon and grilse.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show how many angling permits were issued for each stretch of the River Bush in the period 1 to 20 October, inclusive, during the current year; what sums were received for these permits; and how many salmon and grilse were caught in each stretch in that period, or as much as such information as is presently available to him.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Stretch	Number of tickets[1]	Income	Catch[2]
		£	
New	17·0	502·00	4
Town[3]	20·5	811·95	14
Leap[3]	81·0	1,857·95	16
Walk Mill	13·0	99·55	1
Total	131·5	3,271·45	35

[1] River Bush game fishery daily tickets.

[2] Total number of salmon and grilse.

[3] Half-day tickets are available on these stretches.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show his estimate of the number of salmon smolts descending the River Bush in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Hanley: Estimates of the number of wild Atlantic salmon smolts descending the River Bush in the years 1987-91 are as follows:

Year	Smolts
1987	22,156
1988	22,994
1989	17,812
1990	17,354
1991	18,471

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Mates: Fifty-nine.

Health and Social Services Trusts

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the particular circumstances in Northern Ireland which underlie the Government's decision to sponsor trust status for social service units in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The health and personal social services in Northern Ireland have an integrated management structure which has been delivering high-quality services for many years. The Government's proposals for reform, set out in the White Paper "Working for Patients", extend to Northern Ireland and the benefits inherent in those reforms should be applied with equal advantage to the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the applications received for health and social services trust status in Northern Ireland to date, indicating those that have been successful, those that are pending, those that have been withdrawn, and those postponed or unsuccessful and indicating the likely timetable for introduction.

Mr. Hanley: In the first round in Northern Ireland, one application for HSS trust status was received from the Royal group of hospitals. It was established as an HSS trust from 1 April 1992 and will come into operation on 1 April 1993.

Applications for trust status in the second round have been received from the following units:

Belfast city hospital
Craigavon area hospitals group
Mater Infirmorum hospital
Ulster, North Down and Ards hospital unit
Green Park unit of management
Eastern ambulance service
North Down and Ards community unit
North and West Belfast community unit
South and East Belfast community unit
Down and Lisburn unit of management

A decision on the applications which have been successful in the second round, and the date on which they will come into operation will be made shortly.

To date, no unit has withdrawn its application.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken to encourage more HSS units in Northern Ireland to apply for trust status.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend will announce the launch of the third round of trusts shortly. The chief executive will then write to all directly managed units inviting expressions of interest in the third round of HSS trusts. It will be a matter for those units to decide for themselves whether to make an application for trust status.

Neil Latimer

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he proposes to take in the light of the further statment made by witness A in the case of Neil Latimer.

Mr. Mates: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State received yesterday an affidavit giving an account of a conversation with witness A, in which she is reported to have made a number of comments about Mr. Latimer's case. My right hon. and learned Friend is considering it.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Fraud

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state for his Department's benefit fraud programme for the year 1991-92 *(a)* the number of staff years used, *(b)* the running costs, *(c)* the additional benefit recovered and *(d)* the unit cost ratio of cost to benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: The investigation of benefit fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefit's Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Andrew Smith, dated 2 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the investigation of social security fraud.

You asked how many staff years had been used in the benefit fraud programme during 1991-92; the running costs; the additional benefit recovered and the unit cost ratio of cost to benefit.

Figures are not available to show the number of staff years used. However in 1991-92 2,873 staff were employed to detect and prosecute fraud at a cost of £62·5 million.

In 1991-92 the estimated savings that accrued from the investigation of fraud totalled £427 million. This is represented by a unit cost ratio of cost to benefit of 1:6·6.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many asylum seekers have been *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted of offences relating to defrauding his Department in each year since 1962.

Miss Widdecombe: Prosecution statistics do not indicate the origin or status of individuals. The information requested is, therefore, not available.

Correspondence

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines are issued to his Department for the processing of correspondence from hon. Members; and what is the average delay between receipt of correspondence from, and the date of response to, an hon. Member.

Miss Widdecombe: Guidance to the Department, including its agencies, makes it clear that Ministers and chief executives aim to reply to letters from hon. Members within an average of four weeks of receipt. So far, in 1992-93 average response time for both Ministers and chief executives has been 21 working days.

Training Courses

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security under what circumstances and for how long a trainee who is receiving income support, who is participating in a local authority or voluntary sector training course supported by the European social fund, may temporarily leave the United Kingdom as part of a transnational visit to another EC country as part of his or her training course without affecting his or her entitlement to income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Unemployed trainees who undertake non-governmental training courses funded by the European social fund must continue to satisfy the normal conditions of entitlement for benefits for unemployment, including income support. Consequently, they must be available for, and actively seeking, work.

Income support recipients who are required to be available for work are not entitled to income support for the duration of an absence from the United Kingdom.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Details of all the external management consultancy projects commissioned by the Department of Social Security in the financial years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 have been placed in the Library.

Information concerning the commissioning of further work as a result of an external consultancy project is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to ensure that housing benefit is available to all persons who cannot afford to pay rent.

Mr. Burt: Housing benefit is available, on an income-related basis, to anyone who has a commercial liability to pay rent for his or her home.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will seek to introduce a new housing benefit system to include households paying mortgages.

Mr. Burt: We have no such plans.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what dates in west Lancashire the cold weather payments system was triggered during the winter of 1991-92; and how many households received payments on each occasion.

Mr. Scott: Such information as is available is in the Library.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to provide assistance to households in need through cold weather credits prior to the onset of winter.

Mr. Scott: No. Income support rates provide for normal day-to-day living expenses, including heating costs throughout the year. Cold weather payments already provide extra assistance to the most vulnerable income support recipients during periods of exceptionally cold weather.

Trainees

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security where a local authority or voluntary sector training provider who is running a training course supported by the European social fund wishes to reimburse the expenses of his or her trainees who are in receipt of income support *(a)* what is the maximum value of a daily luncheon voucher that can be paid to the trainee without affecting his or her entitlement to income support and *(b)* under what circumstances a trainee who has to pay his or her daily travelling expenses to and from his or her place of training in cash can have them reimbursed without affecting his or her entitlement to income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: In calculating entitlement to income support, the value of any regular payment in kind is ignored. As long as a daily luncheon voucher is not redeemable for cash, there is no limit to the value of such vouchers which can be given without affecting entitlement to income support.

Any contractual payment to reimburse the fares of a person undertaking training on a course supported by the European social fund will be taken fully into account in calculating entitlement to income support. However, any non-contractual, voluntary payment intended and used for fares will be fully disregarded.

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total number, and the proportion of *(a)* single pensioners, *(b)* pensioner couples and *(c)* all pensioners who receive (i) income support, (ii) housing benefit, (iii) community charge benefit or (iv) one or more of income support, community charge benefit or housing benefit.

Mr. Burt: The available information is given in the tables:

	Number in receipt of IS (000's)	*Percentage of population over 60.*
(i) Income support		
Single people 60 or over	1,362	11·72
Couples (at least one aged 60 or over)	213	See Note 3
All cases	1,575	See Note 3
(ii) Housing benefit		
Single people 60 or over	1,517	13·06
Couples (at least one aged 60 or over)	493	See Note 3
All cases	2,011	See Note 3
(iii) Community charge benefit		
Single people 60 or over	2,296	19·75
Couples (at least one aged 60 or over)	983	See Note 3
All cases	3,278	See Note 3
(iv) Combined IS/HB/CCB (In receipt of one or more benefit)		
Single people 60 or over	2,800	24·09
Couples (at least one aged 60 or over)	1,069	See Note 3
All cases	3,869	See Note 3

Notes:

1. Source Income Support Annual Statistical Inquiry May 1991.
Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System, May 1991.
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1990.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. Population figures are not available for the number of couples, one or both of which are aged 60 or over.
4. Population figures relate to 1990 (latest available information).
5. There is considerable overlap within the benefits. Most recipients of IS also receive CCB. Some recipients of IS also receive HB.

Welfare Benefits

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to end the Government's statutory duty to maintain the value of welfare benefits in line with the cost of living; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The plans for the uprating of benefits will be announced to the House in due course.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of *(a)* claims and *(b)* successful claims for unemployment benefit made by those paying the special class II national insurance contribution rate for share fishermen in the most convenient available years before and after the introduction of the weekly earnings rule.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further changes are being considered in the level of unemployment benefits.

Mr. Burt: The level of unemployment benefit, with other benefits, is kept under review. We shall be making a statement to the House in due course on the uprating of social security benefits.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently receiving invalidity benefit in each standard planning region of England and in Scotland and Wales; and what is in the expected expenditure for 1992-93 in each such region.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Available information about the numbers of recipients of invalidity benefit, by standard region, is in the table[1]. Planned expenditure on invalidity benefit for 1992-93 is £5,695[2].

Regions	*Numbers*
Scotland	181,400
Wales	146,600
England	
Northern	126,300
Yorkshire and Humberside	124,500
East Midlands	74,200
East Anglia	28,800
South East	219,200
South Western	71,900
West Midlands	105,900
North Western	219,800
Overseas	7,400
Total	1,306,000

Notes:

[1] Information from a 1 per cent. sample of claimants as at 30 March 1991.

[2] The Government's Expenditure Plans 1992-93 to 1994-95.

SCOTLAND

National Testing

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to implement national testing in schools in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We consulted widely in May on new proposals for national testing in Scottish schools. Responses have been carefully considered, and the Scottish Office Education Department is today sending to education authorities in Scotland a circular, which sets out how we now intend to proceed.

Testing is a key part of the five to 14 curriculum and assessment development programme for schools in Scotland. In future, national tests are to be given when the class teacher judges that a pupil is ready to move from one stage of the five to 14 curriculum in English and Mathematics to the next—up to five times for each pupil in the nine years of schooling between the ages of five and 14. Pupils will be able to take the tests informally, in small groups; their individual results will be known only to their class teacher and parents. A summary showing how many pupils had been tested, and at which levels, will be included as appropriate in the head teacher's report on attainment to the school board, where this can be achieved without breaching the confidentiality of individual results. The primary assesssment unit of the Scottish Examination Board will sample each year, for moderation purposes, a number of completed but unidentified test papers. There will be no collation or publication of test results by the Scottish Office Education Department or the primary assessment unit.

We are asking education authorities to introduce the new arrangements for testing in primary schools from January 1993 but have accepted in the light of concerns expressed on behalf of secondary schools, which have not hitherto been involved in testing, that testing should be introduced in SI and S2 a year later, that is, in January 1994.

Regulations currently require pupils in primary 4 and primary 7 to be tested. We would like the new testing arrangements to proceed by agreement. To that end, we are asking authorities to confirm by 15 December that they will implement and monitor the new arrangements, in line with the circular, as a prelude to the withdrawal of regulations.

Copies of the circular have been placed in the library of the House.

Development Grants

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what government assistance was provided to Gripparod plc or its predecessors, in respect of the Carpet Systems factory in Glengarnock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Carpet Systems Ltd. of Glengarnock, Ayrshire, received assistance in 1986 and 1988 under the now terminated regional development grants scheme.

The conditions attaching to these grants were met. No assistance has been provided to any successor company.

Borders Regional Council

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will approve as a matter of urgency the Borders regional council structure plan, submitted in February, and enable Borders regional council to approve and implement its local plans.

Mr. Lang: The Borders regional council structure plan is currently under consideration and I expect to be able to make known my initial views on it shortly. Allowing for the completion of the statutory procedures, it is unlikely that the final approval stage will be reached before mid-1993. At that stage, it will be for the regional council to ensure that its local plans reflect the policies contained in the approved structure plan before submitting them to me, prior to local adoption.

Euthanasia

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made on the implications for voluntary euthanasia in Scotland of the case of Dr. Cox; and what plans there are for legislative guidelines concerning voluntary euthanasia in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Government have no plans to amend the law of Scotland in the light of the case of Dr. Cox. It is a criminal offence to kill another, whether or not that person has consented to the action taken.

Montrose Community Hospital

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the completion date for the new Montrose community hospital;

(2) how much expenditure has been committed by Tayside health board to the purchase of the Old Bond at Marine avenue;

(3) what budget has been allocated by Tayside health board to the construction of the new Montrose community hospital; and what sums have been legally committed.

Mr. Stewart: Tayside health board has no firm timetable for the development of a replacement community hospital in Montrose. In 1989, when suitable land became available for the site of a new hospital, the board was allocated £170,000 for its acquisition. Further allocations of capital by the Scottish Office are dependent on the board submitting detailed proposals for the development of the new hospital.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what planning guidance he has issued to local authorities regarding renewable energy developments, including windmills; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: No such guidance on this has yet been issued but a draft national planning policy guideline (NPPG) on renewable energy and a planning advice note (PAN) on windpower developments are currently being prepared. These will be issued for consultation to all interested bodies before final guidance is published next year.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Lang: At present, around 98 Scottish Office civil servants are engaged on work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Lang: I have passed the hon. Member's question to the chief executives of each of the agencies for which I have responsibility and asked them to reply to him directly.

Letter from J. W. Barron to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992:

PUBLICATION OF PAPERS

The Secretary of State for Scotland has passed to me for my interests your question regarding publication of papers by this Agency.

We have published no papers in the last twelve months within the strict meaning of your question. We have, of course, published our Annual Report for 1991-92 and copies are already available to the Library.

Letter from M. J. Richardson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 23 October 1992:

I refer to your Question to the Secretary of State for Scotland asking if he will list for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Chief Executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

In the Director's absence on leave I list below the papers published by Dr. R. K. M. Hay in the last 12 months.

Hay, R. K. M. and Kemp, D. R. (1992). The prediction of leaf canopy expansion in the leek from a simple model dependent on primordial development. (Ann. appl. Biol., 120, 537-545).

Hay, R. K. M. and Offer, N. W. (in press). *Helianthus tuberosus* as an Alternative Forage Crop for Cool Maritime Regions: A Preliminary Study of the Yield and Nutritional Quality of Shoot Tissues from Perennial Stands. (J. Sci. Food Agric).

If you require any further information, Dr. Hay will return from leave on Wednesday 28 October.

Letter from G. Munro to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

The Secretary of State for Scotland has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question which asked if he would list the titles of papers published by Historic Scotland during the last 12 months.

In that period the agency published its Annual Report and Accounts of 1991-92, and its Corporate Plan for the period 1992-95. Copies are available in the House of Commons Library.

In addition, Historic Scotland published the following papers and reports related to its activities:

(i) "Maintaining Scotland's Archaeological Heritage"
(ii) "Forestry and Archaeology in Scotland"
(iii) "Historic Scotland Education Packs"
(iv) The quarterly magazine "Welcome"
(v) Five volumes of reports relating to research into stonecleaning in Scotland, and the proceedings of a related international conference held in Edinburgh.

A wide range of other leaflets, guidebooks, etc. were also produced and distributed as part of our objectives, and open access was made available to the lists of historic buildings, the schedule of monuments, and the reference information maintained by the Scottish Conservation Bureau.

Letter from A. Macleod to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

PUBLICATION OF PAPERS

The Secretary of State for Scotland has passed to me your question regarding publication of papers by this Agency.

The only document which the Agency has published in the last 12 months has been its Annual Report for 1991-92. Copies of this are available in the Library.

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the past 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. Lang: I have asked each of the chief executives of the agencies for which I am responsible to reply the hon. Member directly.

Letter from M. J. Richardson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992:

I refer to your Question to the Secretary of State for Scotland asking if he will list the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the Chief Executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

In the absence of the Chief Executive of SASA only a provisional answer can be provided. I am not aware of any specific fact finding visits undertaken by Dr. Hay in the last 12 months. Any visits made to other Institutes or Agencies have been in connection with his normal duties as Director of SASA.

If you require any further information, Dr. Hay will return from leave on Wednesday 28 October.

Letter from J. W. Barron to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992:

FACT FINDING VISITS

The Secretary of State for Scotland has passed to me for my interests your question regarding fact finding visits by me during the last twelve months.

While I have paid a number of courtesy calls on professional bodies in Scotland and on others, including the Land Registry in Dublin, I do not think these fall within the catgegory of fact finding visits.

Letter from Mr. A. Macleod to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

FACT FINDING VISITS

The Secretary of State for Scotland has passed to me your question regarding fact finding visits during the last 12 months.

I have not over this period undertaken any fact finding visits outside the Agency. I have of course in performing my duties as Chief Executive undertaken regular visits to SFPA ships and offices at fishing ports in Scotland to meet staff and to keep myself informed about the quality of fisheries enforcement and developments within the fishing industry. I do not believe these fall into the category of fact finding visits.

Letter from G. Munro to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

The Secretary of State for Scotland has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question which asked if he would list the 'fact finding' visits that I have made in the last 12 months, and my findings.

I have made a number of visits in the last 12 months to monuments, archaeological sites, and historic buildings in Scotland as part of my responsibilities as Director and Chief Executive of Historic Scotland. These have included visits with the Historic Buildings Council and the Ancient Monuments Board, statutory bodies which advise the Secretary of State on matters affecting the built heritage. Information obtained during these visits has been used to further the work of the agency and to establish improved working relationships with others involved in the care and protection of the built heritage in Scotland.

Sheriffs

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the rate of remuneration of temporary sheriffs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The rate of remuneration is at present under review. The current rate, where applicable, is £230 per day.

Travellers

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each district the number of sites available for travelling people and the pitches on each such site.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The travelling people's sites run by local authorities in Scotland are listed in the table. In addition, it is estimated that around 190 pitches are available privately.

Water

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response his Department has made to the May 1992 report by County NatWest on privatisation of water services in Scotland; if he will list the dates of all meetings between representatives of his Department and representatives of County NatWest within the last six months, stating for each what subject was discussed and at what level his Department was represented; if he will list the dates of all meetings between representatives of his Department and representatives of County NatWest planned to take place within the next six months, stating for each what subject will be discussed and at what level his Department will be represented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* A meeting was held between a representative of County NatWest, at his request, and senior officials of the Scottish Office on 3 June this year to discuss matters arising out of the report in question. No other response was made to the report and no further meetings are planned at present.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the dates of all meetings between representatives of his Department and representatives of *(a)* the Office of Water Services, *(b)* the National Rivers Authority, *(c)* the drinking water inspectorate, *(d)* the Water Services Association and *(e)* the Water Companies Association within the past six months and planned for the next six months, stating for each what subject was discussed and at what level his Department was represented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* There have been no departmental meetings with representatives of the Office of Water Services, the Water Services Association or the Water Companies Association within the past six months nor are there any meetings planned at present with these organisations. Meetings with officials from the National Rivers Authority take place frequently in the course of normal business and will continue to do so. It is not practicable to list dates and locations of all such contacts.

On 18 May 1992 senior officials from the Scottish Office met representatives of the drinking water inspectorate to discuss matters within the inspectorate's competence. No further meetings are planned at present.

TRANSPORT

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Norris: Due to the diverse nature of their work it is difficult to give a precise figure. I estimate that the main task of about 100 civil servants in my Department is work wholly or mainly related to the European Community.

Coastguard Service

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many sorties were undertaken by Her Majesty's coastguard aircraft stationed at Lee-on-the-Solent in 1991; and how many lives were saved.

Mr. Norris: The coastguard S61N search-and-rescue helicopter currently based at Lee-on-Solent undertook 188 sorties and rescued 106 people during 1991.

Second Severn Crossing

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contracts in the construction or supply of the second Servern crossing are held by foreign companies; what countries are represented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The letting of contracts relating to the second Severn crossing is entirely a matter for the concessionaire for the project, Severn River Crossing plc, and its contractor for the design and construction of the new bridge, the John Laing-GTM Entrepose Joint Venture. However, I understand from the latter company that the majority of contracts let to date have been awarded to British companies, and that over 90 per cent. of the construction materials to be used in the bridge is expected to come from the United Kingdom.

Freight

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instigate a full investigation into ways of shifting freight away from the roads and on to ships.

Mr. Norris: Following a seminar last year, and subsequent discussions with interested organisations, the Department is sponsoring two studies in this area. The first is a general overview designed to identify where potential for a road to water shift of freight traffic might exist and what measures might help to encourage such a shift. The second is looking specifically at the scope for using the planning system to encourage use of water, as an alternative to road, where this is economically and geographically viable. We expect to have reports from both studies early in the new year.

School Buses

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to conclude his consultations regarding *(a)* the compulsory provision of seat belts for school buses and coaches and *(b)* a reduction from three to two children allowed to travel on a double seat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* We are continuing to press the European Commission to amend the directives on seat belt and anchorages to allow us to require belts on all seats in minibuses and coaches, irrespective of their use.

There are no plans at present to reduce from three to two the number of children under 14 allowed to travel on a double seat.

Road Improvements

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the proposed starting dates and estimated costs for road improvements to *(a)* the A21 trunk road and *(b)* the Folkestone to Honiton trunk road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* There are currently six schemes in the national programme for improving the A21 trunk road, and 31 schemes for improving the Folkestone to Honiton trunk road. Starting dates for each scheme will depend on the progress that can be made with the design, statutory and other procedures and the availability of funds.

The table shows our current forecast year for the next key stage in each scheme and its estimated cost.

In addition, there are a number of smaller-scale works in the regional programme, mostly aimed at improving safety and traffic flow.

Scheme	*Estimated works cost* [1]*£ million*	*Next key stage*	*Forecast year*
A21 schemes—From North to South			
Tonbridge Bypass—Pembury Bypass	13·6	Public Inquiry	1993
Kipping's Cross—Lamberhurst	9·3	Draft Order Publication	1993
Lamberhurst Bypass	5·4	Public Inquiry starts	[5]1992
Lamberhurst—Flimwell	7·4	Public Consultation	1993
Hurst Green Bypass	7·0	Public Consultation	1993
Silver Hill Improvements	[2]7·0	Preferred Route Announcement following further consultation	1993
Folkestone–Honiton Trunk Road Schemes—From East to West			
A259 Dymchurch—M20 Junction 11	9·0	Draft Order Publication	1993
A259 St. Mary's Bay and Dymchurch Bypass	10·7	Draft Order Publication	1992
A259 New Romney Bypass	4·0	Draft Order Publication	1992
A259 Brookland Diversion	1·0	Decision following Public Inquiry	1993
A259 Walland Marsh Improvement	4·0	Preferred Route Announcement	1992
A259 Rye Bypass	[3] 41·9	Draft Order Publication	[6]—
A259 Winchester Bypass	[3]18·0	Draft Order Publication	1993
A259 Guestling Thorn and Icklesham Bypass	[2]13·3	Public Consultation	1993
A259 Hastings Eastern Bypass	8·3	Draft Order Publication	1993
A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass	29·7	Draft Order Publication	1993
A259 Pevensey—Bexhill Improvement	4·5	Draft Order Publication	1993
A27 Polegate Bypass	13·1	Decision following Public Inquiry	1993
A27 Lewes—Polegate	25·1	Preferred Route Announcement	1993
A27 Brighton and Hove Bypass Contract 4: Kingston—Hangleton	[2]27·7	Construction completion	1995
A27 Worthing—Lancing Improvement	33·0	Draft Order Publication	1992
A27 Patching Junction Improvement	6·7	Decision following Public Inquiry	1992
A27 Crossbush Bypass	[2]3·9	Construction completion	1993
A27 Arundel Bypass	15·7	Preferred Route Announcement following further consultation	1992
A27 Westhampnett Bypass	[2]10·1	Construction completion	1993
M27 Widening between Junctions 4 and 12	[4]133·0	Award of Stage 1 Design Commission	1993

Scheme	*Estimated works cost* [1]*£ million*	*Next key stage*	*Forecast year*
A31 M27—Ringwood Improvement	41·0	Public Consultation	1993
A31 Ringwood—Ashley Heath Improvement	2·5	Public Consultation	1993
A31 Ashley Heath Grade-separated Junction	3·0	Making of Orders	1993
A31 Lion Gate—Roundhouse Improvements	1·8	Public Consultation	1993
A31 Stag Gate Improvement	2·5	Public Consultation	1993
A31 Winterbourne Zelston Improvement	2·1	Public Consultation	1993-94
A31 Sturt Lane to Red Post Improvement	1·5	Draft Order Publication	1993
A35 Tolpuddle to Puddletown Bypass	12·3	Decision following Public Inquiry	1993
A35 Stinsford to Cuckoo Lane Improvement	2·5	Draft Order Publication	1993
A35 Winterbourne Abbas Bypass	4·6	Public Consultation	1994
A35 Chideock to Morecombelake Bypass	7·3	Draft Order Publication	1992

[1] November 1987 prices, except where otherwise indicated.
[2] Current prices.
[3] 1991 prices.
[4] 1990 prices.
[5] 1 December 1992.
[6] Not yet programmed.

M1

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the situation on the M1 motorway on the night of 6 to 7 August, and the closure of the northbound lanes, junctions 16 and 18; and what advance publicity was given of this closure.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* On the night of 6 to 7 August, traffic using the northbound carriageway of the M1 motorway was reduced to a single lane from 21.30 hours to allow surfacing works to be carried out. Those works, exacerbated by a number of vehicle breakdowns, led to a build-up of traffic after midnight. Once the extent of the problem was recognised, works were halted for the night at 01.30 hours and the road was fully open to traffic by 02·30 hours.

The contract works were well publicised before they began at the end of June; radio announcements and press releases were issued warning of possible delays. Throughout the works, the Department's press office kept in touch with the media.

Motor Cycles (Safety)

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of state for Transport (1) if he will publish figures showing how much the Transport research laboratory is budgeting to spend for 1992-93 and the next two years on research into secondary safety systems for motor-cycle riders; and if he will list the topics of research that are currently under way at the Transport Research Laboratory in respect of secondary vehicle safety systems for motor-cycle riders;

(2) if he will publish figures showing his Department's budget for 1992-93 and each of the next two years on the vehicle safety research programme and the components of that programme covering accident investigations and surveys, primary safety vehicle construction standards, motor-cycle safety and injury reduction to vehicle occupants and pedestrians.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* The Department's planned expenditure on road safety and environmental research, as reported in the Department of Transport 1992 report, incorporates expenditure on secondary safety systems for motor-cycle riders, as below:

Year	*£ million*
1992-93	1·2
1993-94	1·2
1994-95	1·0

Current topics being researched by the Transport Research Laboratory are improved helmet design standards; leg protection specifications; air bag restraint systems; and mathematical modelling of motor-cycling impacts.

These figures can be placed in the context of an overall vehicle safety research programme, as follows.

	1992-93 £ million	*1993-94 £ million*	*1994-95 £ million*
Accident investigations and surveys	0·8	1·1	0·7
Primary safety vehicle construction standards	1·0	0·9	1·3
Motorcycle safety	1·4	1·2	1·0
Injury reduction to vehicle occupants and pedestrians	2·5	2·4	2·8
Total vehicle safety research	5·7	5·6	5·8

In both the tables, the figures for 1993-94 and 1994-95 include the estimated costs of new research proposals.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Key: The Department of National Heritage has no civil servants whose main task is work wholly related to the European Community. However, five members of staff are occupied on work which is related mainly to the EC. A significant number of other staff are routinely concerned with EC matters in the context of their normal day-to-day work.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Newton: One.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Newton: In my capacity as Lord President, I have appointed Mrs. M. Corsar and Mr. J. Miller to the convocation of Heriot-Watt university; Mr. A Bernstein to the court of the Victoria university of Manchester; Dr. R. Brinley Jones, Mr. J. E. Hugh Rees, and Mr. T. C. Wignall to the court of the university college of Swansea; and Lord Prys Davies to the court of the university of Wales. The provisions under which these appointments have been made do not require the nominees to have particular qualifications. In all cases, the appointments have been made for three years ending in 1995. None of the appointments attracts any remuneration.

WALES

Schools (Vandalism)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision is made within the local management of schools system for the cost of repair of damage by vandalism; whether these costs are included within the total budget set for each school or in addition; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local education authorities may include as part of their local management of schools budget formula a "location factor" which can reflect the incidence of vandalism in particular schools. It is also open to them to draw on their contingency reserves for major costs which a school could not reasonably be expected to meet.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the budget agreed with each TEC in Wales for 1992-93, broken down into the five major expenditure blocks; if he will give comparable information for each TEC for 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is shown in the tables. The breakdown is in terms of programmes rather than funding blocks since the former are now the basis for agreeing TEC budgets. The figures for 1991-92 relate to actual expenditure.

1991/92 TEC Expenditure £ million

TEC	*Gwent*	*Mid Glam*	*North East Wales*	*North West Wales*	*Powys*	*South Glam*	*West Wales*
Youth Training	8·310	10·154	5·526	6·493	1·778	4·400	12·082
Compacts	0·000	0·100	0·097	0·000	0·000	0·085	0·093
EBP	0·037	0·038	0·026	0·011	0·022	0·002	0·028
TPS	0·000	0·010	0·000	0·000	0·000	0·000	0·002
WRFE	1·149	1·146	0·599	0·929	0·290	0·787	1·935
Employment Training	4·399	4·680	2·520	2·565	0·837	3·274	8·239
HTNT	0·321	0·122	0·042	0·000	0·000	0·224	0·178
Employment Action	0·119	0·245	0·006	0·042	0·003	0·048	0·152
Business Start-Up	0·910	1·053	0·726	1·196	0·436	0·784	2·154
BES	0·582	0·551	0·614	0·397	0·192	0·477	1·441
LIF	0·468	0·715	0·380	0·279	0·363	0·447	1·021
National Development	0·000	0·033	0·000	0·118	0·068	0·165	0·287
Management Fee	1·095	1·192	0·827	0·853	0·364	0·978	1·683
Total	17·390	20·039	11·363	12·883	4·353	11·671	29·295

Explanatory notes

Youth Training includes Training Credits.

Employment Training and Employment Action exclude Allowances.

Business Start-Up was formerly known as the Enterprise Allowance Scheme.

Abbreviations used:—

EBP—Education Business Partnerships
TPS—Teacher Placement Scheme
WRFE—Work Related Further Education
HTNT—Higher Technology National Training
BES—Business Enterprise Scheme
LIF—Local Initiative Fund

1992/93 TEC Budgets

£ million

TEC	*Gwent*	*Mid Glam*	*North East Wales*	*North West Wales*	*Powys*	*South Glam*	*West Wales*
Youth Training	7·924	9·764	5·115	6·077	1·783	4·786	11·257
Compacts	0·000	0·000	0·070	0·050	0·000	0·085	0·085
EBP	0·025	0·025	0·025	0·025	0·025	0·025	0·050

TEC	*Gwent*	*Mid Glam*	*North East Wales*	*North West Wales*	*Powys*	*South Glam*	*West Wales*
TPS	0·022	0·029	0·015	0·018	0·012	0·020	0·036
WRFE	1·049	1·028	0·555	0·867	0·279	0·747	1·871
Careers Partnerships	0·040	0·000	0·080	0·000	0·040	0·035	0·000
Careers Libraries	0·043	0·050	0·039	0·047	0·024	0·045	0·710
Employment Training	4·227	4·767	2·081	2·857	0·885	3·426	6·661
HTNT	0·341	0·000	0·068	0·065	0·000	0·229	0·000
Employment Action	0·899	1·336	0·325	0·786	0·163	0·776	1·029
Business Start-Up	0·709	0·806	0·429	0·765	0·221	0·401	1·783
BES	0·694	0·724	0·894	0·692	0·289	0·797	1·387
LIF	0·356	0·250	0·342	0·257	0·141	0·297	0·601
National Development	0·930	0·100	0·000	0·457	0·055	0·067	0·153
Research and Evaluation	0·007	0·029	0·000	0·000	0·000	0·005	0·005
Management Fee	1·480	1·653	1·111	1·200	0·496	1·325	2·283
Total	18·746	20·561	11·149	14·163	4·415	13·066	27·911

Explanatory notes

Youth Training includes Training Credits.

Employment Training and Employment Action exclude Allowances.

Business Start-Up was formerly known as the New Enterprise Allowance Scheme.

Abbreviations used:

EBP—Education Business Partnerships

TPS—Teacher Placement Scheme

WRFE—Work Related Further Education

HTNT—Higher Technology Nation Training

BES—Business Enterprise Scheme

LIF—Local Initiative Fund

Environmental Monitoring

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to introduce regional UV-B monitoring systems; what initiatives he has taken to encourage Welsh industry to switch to non-ozone-depleting substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Plans are under way to extend the monitoring network set up by the National Radiological Protection Board in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the terrestrial solar UV levels over the United Kingdom.

The Welsh Office has a continuing programme encouraging businesses to adopt best environmental practice. This includes information on the main alternative technologies available to reduce industry's dependence on ozone-depleting substances. We have also recently established a new network of environmental managers in Wales which aims, inter alia, to raise awareness among business of the importance of phasing out these substances.

Disabled Children

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many disabled children are currently integrated into mainstream schools in each local education authority in Wales; and how many are granted specialist equipment within each authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the provision of specialist equipment for disabled pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools is not collected centrally.

The number of disabled children, in maintained primary and secondary schools, for whom the local education authority was maintaining a statement of special needs in January, 1991, is given as follows:

	Number
Clwyd	1,123
Dyfed	562
Gwent	1,459
Gwynedd	514
Mid Glamorgan	2,421
Powys	170
South Glamorgan	715
West Glamorgan	1,894
Wales	8,858

Note: Figures include children in both mainstream classes and special classes/units in maintained primary and secondary schools. Figures for Dyfed, Mid Glamorgan and Powys include a small number of pupils who are receiving education outside of their own authorities.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to prohibit the disposal of toxic ash from waste incineration on landfill sites in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is the responsibility of the appropriate waste disposal authority to ensure through appropriate conditions in a waste disposal licence issued under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 that deposits of this kind do not cause water pollution or danger to public health.

Housing Stock

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what action his Department is taking to reduce the level of voids in stock managed by Welsh housing associations;

(2) what action his Department is taking to reduce the level of voids in housing stock managed by Welsh local authorities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The action which the Department expects both of housing associations and local authorities is featured in the published "Agenda for Action on Housing for Wales". The relevant target is that void rates should be below 2 per cent.: the current average for local authorities and housing associations combined is 1·2 per cent. Progress is subject to examination in the context of annual review and monitoring meetings.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the past three years; for each of the past three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to advertise the posts of chairman or chairwoman of future national health service trusts.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Present practice is that appointments such as these are not normally advertised.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many respondents were *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* against the establishment of the three national health service trusts proposed in Gwent.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows:

	In support	*Opposed*	*Undeclared*
South Gwent Acute Unit	3	17	8
Gwent Community and Mental Health Unit	5	12	8
Powys, Gwent and South Glamorgan Ambulance Services	1	22	11

The views expressed were taken into account alongside other assessments of the applications and their individual merits.

Transport Grant, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to announce transport supplementary grant allocations to Clwyd county council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: An announcement on transport grant support in 1993-94 will be made following the 1992 public expenditure survey.

Press Releases

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available to hon. Members on the day of issue press releases issued by his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes, whenever practicable.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. David Hunt: There are currently 49 staff in my Department employed wholly or mainly on work related to the European Community. In addition, European Community matters form part of the duties of a wide range of other officials.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Alan Williams: To as the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he announced the re-appointment of Mr. Glyn Davies as chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: On 10 March 1992.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he was informed that the Comptroller and Auditor General had qualified the accounts of the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: On 12 December, although my Department became aware that the Comptroller and Auditor General was considering qualifying the board's 1991 accounts on 21 August 1991.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the National Audit Office report on the retirement settlement to the former chief executive of the Development Board for Rural Wales was available to his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department was sent a copy of the final National Audit Office report in a letter dated 12 December 1991. Although it was first notified of the proposed contents of the National Audit Office report in correspondence dated 1 October 1991.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what account he took of the fact that the Public Accounts Committee report was pending on the qualified accounts of the Development Board for Rural Wales when he re-appointed for three years the chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I announced the re-appointment of Mr. Glyn Davies as chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales for a further term of three years on 10 March 1992, after taking full account of proceedings in the Public Accounts Committee hearing on 15 January 1992. His previous term of appointment was due to end on 31 March 1992, and the Public Accounts Committee report on the qualified accounts of the Development Board for Rural Wales was not published until 24 September 1992. I also took account of the excellent performance of the Development Board for Rural Wales during Mr. Glyn Davies' chairmanship, examples of which are to be found in Cm 1516.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Suppliers Group

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries are currently members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group; what consideration has been given to expanding its membership; and what consideration has been given to establishing a secretariat for the group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following countries are currently members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG):

Australia
Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Canada
Czech and Slovak Republic
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Luxembourg
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russian Federation
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom
United States of America

At its plenary meeting in Warsaw in March this year, the NSG agreed to set up a working group on institutional questions whose terms of reference included a review of the criteria for membership of the NSG. The findings of the working group are likely to be discussed at the next NSG plenary next March. There are no plans at present to establish a secretariat.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the involvement of the United Kingdom in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom plays an active part in the workings of the Nuclear Suppliers Groups (NSG). Representatives from the United Kingdom attended the last plenary meeting in Warsaw in March and sit on all NSG working groups.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Nuclear Suppliers Group working party studying the control of nuclear dual-use items has completed its work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 15 July 1992 at column *735*.

Zangger Committee

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is *(a)* the current annual expenditure of the Zangger committee and *(b)* the number of staff in its secretariat.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Zangger committee is an informal body. It has no contributory budget and member states finance their own involvement.

A member of staff of the United Kingdom mission to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna acts as secretary to the committee, which meets twice a year, in additional to his other duties.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries are currently members of the Zangger committee; and what consideration has been given to expanding the membership.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following countries are currently members of the Zangger committee:

Australia
Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Canada
Czech and Slovak Republic
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Luxembourg
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russian Federation
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom
United States of America

The question of which, if any, additional countries should be invited to become members is kept constantly under review.

Bulgaria, France, Portugal and Spain became members at the last meeting of the committee in Vienna on 22 October.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the current policies of confidentiality relating to the work of the Zangger committee and the Nuclear Suppliers Group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In view of the substance of the work of the Zangger committee and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is satisfied that it is appropriate that they should discuss matters confidentially. The product of the two groups' work—notably, the lists of items which trigger safeguards—is, of course, made public.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given to merging the Zangger committee and the Nuclear Suppliers Group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are at present no plans to merge the Zangger committee and the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of his proposals to harmonise and improve export controls through the Zangger committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Zangger committee is not an export control body as such. It is an informal international forum for interpreting supplier commitments under article III(2) of the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The United Kingdom will continue to play an active role in its discussions.

Japan

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications his Department has had with his counterparts in Japan relating to the non-proliferation treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have discussed a wide range of issues with Japanese counterparts in recent meetings. As far as nuclear non-proliferation is concerned, recent contacts have concentrated on formal preparations for the 1995 NPT extension conference. We are also regularly in touch with the Japanese on non-proliferation issues within the auspices of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger committee.

Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what dates *(a)* he received and *(b)* he replied to a letter from the constituents of the hon. Member for Gower residing in Norton Mumbles, Swansea, regarding events in Bosnia and Croatia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We received a letter dated 2 October from Mr. Blank of 4 Castle road, Norton Mumbles, Swansea on 14 October. A reply was sent to Mr. Blank on 22 October.

British Council (Cyprus)

Mr. John D. Taylor : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what was the expenditure by the British Council for Cyprus for *(a)* interchange of people, *(b)* libraries, books and information, *(c)* English language and literature, *(d)* specialist work in science and education and *(e)* the arts, during 1991-92; and how much under each heading is identified with (i) Greek Southern Cyprus and (ii) Turkish Northern Cyprus.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Total expenditure in Cyprus in 1991-92—including local and headquarters overheads—was £1,949,972, divided as in the table:

	Total	*Southern Cyprus*		*Northern Cyprus*	
	£	*£*	*Per cent.*	*£*	*Per cent.*
Interchange of people	1,065,207	623,472	59	436,735	41
Libraries, books and information	389,071	298,471	77	90,600	23
English language and literature	135,412	54,744	40	80,668	60
Specialist work in science and education	284,032	278,352	98	5,680	2
Arts	76,250	73,950	97	2,300	3
Total	1,949,972	1,333,989	68	615,983	32

The figures supplied in response to the hon. Member's question on 19 October were based on local programme costs.

International Science and Technology Centre

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to bring to the attention of British commercial organisations the establishment of the international science and technology centre in Russia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The international science and technology centre is intended to channel the skills and talents of the former weapons scientists in Russia and Ukraine towards suitable civil projects. Her Majesty's Government will seek to bring projects proposed for funding by the centre to the attention of the United Kingdom companies.

Non-governmental Organisations

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to hold the next routine meeting with non-governmental organisations on arms control, non-proliferation and security matters; and what actions Her Majesty's Government have taken arising from proposals or questions raised at the most recent NGO meeting on security topics.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no immediate plans to meet non-governmental organisations on arms control, non-proliferation and security matters.

Officials met representatives of the British Atlantic Committee and Peace Through NATO on 22 October for discussion on these issues. The views and questions raised during the meeting have been noted.

Nuclear Materials (Theft)

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he records on incidents overseas of *(a)* the theft of nuclear materials and *(b)* the attempted sale of stolen nuclear materials; if he will list recent such incidents; what is his assessment of the risks that these activities present; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We keep records of all incidents which come to our attention involving theft or illegal sales of nuclear materials overseas. The three most recent incidents which have been brought to our attention are as follows: the seizure of a small quantity of low-enriched uranium by the Italian authorities in August; two cases in Germany last month in one of which the authorities seized 4·8 pounds of low-enriched uranium and in the other a small quantity of caesium and strontium. All such incidents so far have involved materials of negligible proliferation concern. But we are not complacent. Clearly the theft or sale of weapons grade material would represent a severe proliferation danger. We are currently following up reports in a Sunday newspaper of a possible attempted illegal sale of plutonium in Bulgaria.

Petitions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what petitions have been received by the United Kingdom in its role a president of the European Council; and what responses have been made by the presidency on behalf of the European Communities.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are aware of no formal petitions addressed direct to the United Kingdom as President of the Council of Ministers, although we receive a large number of informal questions and requests as presidency. We have received from the European Parliament one petition addressed to it by the National and Local Government Officers Association on the United Kingdom Local Government and Housing Act; and have taken note.

Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish for the last year the average time his Department takes to reply to letters from right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster gave the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 3 July 1992 at column *771*.

The FCO has a target response time of 10 working days for all ministerial correspondence with right hon. and hon. Members. A longer response time may be necessary if there is a heavy volume of correspondence on issues of wide parliamentary and public concern.

Figures for 1992 will appear in the FCO's next annual report, early in 1993. These will show the number of letters received in the course of the year, the number of replies despatched within the target time and the percentage of the total this represents.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There are approximately 170 officers in my Department, including the aid wing, engaged wholly in EC work. There are no central statistics on the numbers of FCO and DS staff working mainly or partly on EC matters.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average time it takes an adjudicator to make known his findings to an appellant since the appellant made an appeal against a refusal to permit entry clearance from Pakistan to the United Kingdom for a visit.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All posts overseas, including those in Pakistan, are under instruction to dispatch explanatory appeal statements within one month of the receipt of an appeal against the refusal of a visit visa. Processing of appeal papers thereafter is a matter for the Lord Chancellor's Department. It advises that the average time between receipt by the appellate authorities of the notice of appeal and explanatory statement and the adjudicator's findings being made known to the appellant is eight months.

Russia

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the note from the Russian authorities proposing an end to restrictions on British citizens in Russia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British embassy in Moscow replied formally to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 30 October acknowledging the Russian proposal. Our travel notification requirements were originally imposed on Soviet officials in the United Kingdom in response to a corresponding requirement imposed by the authorities of the USSR. In accordance with our policy that this retaliatory measure would be lifted once the Russian measures were abolished, we have ended with effect from 30 October our requirement for resident Russian officials, journalists and business men to give notice of journeys over 25 miles from central London.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Angola

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent election in Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We support the conclusion of the United Nations Special Representatives in Angola that the legislative and presidential elections held there on 29 and 30 September were free and fair. Together with other members of the international community we condemn the recent violence in Angola and we urge UNITA to accept the result of the election and to proceed to the second round of presidential elections rendered necessary by the inconclusive result of the first round.

South Africa

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now join the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers in South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At present, we have no plans to join the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers in South Africa.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all of the reports the Overseas Development Administration has commissioned from external consultants in each of the past three years; for each of the past three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Detailed in the table are those reports commissioned from external consultants by the Overseas Development Administration in connection with its core administrative responsibilities, for each of the past three years. It does not include details of consultants employed under the overseas aid programme. Consultancies are awarded, after competition, to the consultant considered best able to provide value for money in terms of quality of work and price. None of the reports listed led directly to the commissioning of further consultancy work.

Year	*Report commissioned*	*Consultant*
1990	Review of personnel management	A. Fowler
1991	Review of Aid Management Overseas in Africa	Sir Terence Streeton
1991	Review of Aid Management Overseas in South East Asia	A. Sutherland
1991	Level of Procurement Business	R. Walsgrove
1992	Review of Africa Division	R. Walsgrove
1992	Market Testing and contracting out	Coopers & Lybrand

Urban Settlement

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is currently being undertaken by the Overseas Development Administration to assist developing countries to adopt planning zoning policies to prevent prime agricultural land from being used for urban settlement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Assistance is provided in a number of ways to help achieve good urban planning practice. Eighteen overseas planners received training in 1991-92. We are providing physical planners in Lesotho, the Caribbean and St. Helena. We also contribute to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) urban management programme and the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements. The ODA executive agency, the Natural Resources Institute, has established an urban unit which is developing the institute's capacity to respond to issues arising from urban encroachment into the natural and agricultural environment.

Disasters

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, column 968, if he will give a breakdown of the £600,000 and £250,000 expenditure on disaster preparedness projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The breakdown of the £600,000 expenditure in financial year 1991-92 and the £250,000 commitment in financial year 1992-93 on disaster preparedness projects are provided in the tables:

Table 1

Expenditure, by project, on disaster preparedness in financial year 1991-92

Project	*Expenditure* £
Field testing of "Permatents"	32,120
Development of guidelines for building improvement programmes in disaster prone areas	73,304
Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) disaster preparedness project	139,372
Training of senior Egyptian officials in the development of disaster preparedness	11,204
UNDP/UNDRO disaster management training programme	250,000
United Kingdom science, technology and engineering committee-fellowship of engineering	44,050
Research on Lake Nyos, Cameroon	3,897
Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) Cholera Pandemic training	17,490
Funding of 2 Kashmir students training in earthquake preparedness	1,925
Support for UNDRO South Pacific programme office	28,571
Total expenditure	601,933

Table 2

Commitment, by project, on disaster preparedness in financial year 1992-1993 (as at 16 July 1992)

Project	*Commitment* £
Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre: Funding of pilot study for logistics training and management	28,396
Cambridge Architectural Research Ltd and the Disaster Management Centre of Oxford	88,075
Study into oil pollution preparedness in the Caribbean Dependant Territories	31,381
Research on Lake Nyos, Cameroon	804
Funding of Vietnamese Scholar at Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, Bangkok	3,000
Study into Taal Volcano, Phillipines	4,000
DHA-UNDRO needs assessment consultancy into fire hazards in the Katmandu Valley	5,882
ICSU/WHO International Symposium on Tropical Cyclone Disasters, Beijing	5,730
Regional Disaster Preparedness-ITDG, Peru	50,000
Field testing of "Permatents"	19,200
Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre consultancy to NIRD India	6,600
Funding for Anguillan and Lesothoan participants at Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Course	13,500
Total Commitment	256,568

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will bring the Overseas Development Administration's environmental impact assessment procedures in line with those used by the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All projects under consideration for ODA funding are subjected to assessment for environmental impact, guided by ODA's detailed and comprehensive manual of environmental appraisal. The Commonwealth Development Corporation is currently reviewing its own guidelines on environmental policies and procedures. The

ODA will ensure through discussion with the CDC that its revised guidelines are consistent with ODA policies and procedures in this area.

World Bank Projects

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to publish his voting position on World bank projects; and what proposals he has to improve the openness of the World bank procedure.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The proceedings of the World bank board's consideration of projects are confidential so as not to inhibit full and frank discussion. Within this constraint, we consider the procedures of the World bank are as open as can reasonably be expected.

Sardar Sarovar Dam

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the World bank proposals for funding for the Sardar Sarovar Dam in India.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The World Bank approved loans amounting to $450 million in 1985 as part of a $3 billion project in the Narmada valley in India. In June this year, the report of an independent review committee established by the bank was published. The design and implementation of the project, including the resettlement and rehabilitation, environmental and other aspects were criticised. On 23 October, the bank's board of directors agreed on balance that the best course of action was to continue with bank support for the project on the basis of an action programme with detailed targets, which has been agreed with the Indian authorities.

A further review will be carried out in April 1993 which will reconsider whether disbursements against the bank's loan can continue. The board welcomed the commitments made by the new Government in India and their considerable efforts to address the problems identified; but we made it clear that disbursements must be suspended in six months' time if real progress on resettlement and rehabilitation and environmental issues have not been made by that time.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when the environmental policies and procedures of the Commonwealth Development Corporation will next be reviewed;

(2) if non-governmental organisations will be involved in the next review of the environmental policies and procedures of the Commonwealth Development Corporation;

(3) what process of review will be employed in considering the adequacy of the environmental policies and procedures employed by the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: The Commonwealth Development Corporation's guidelines on its environmental policies and procedures are currently under review. CDC is willing to hold further meetings with environmental NGOs that have expressed a wish to discuss the corporation's investments overseas. ODA will ensure through discussion with CDC that its revised guidelines are consistent with ODA policies and procedures in this area.

HEALTH

Occupational Therapists

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated percentage difference between the number of occupational therapists available and the number required to meet the demands of care in the community.

Mr. Yeo: It is acknowledged that the national demand for occupational therapists for all purposes exceeds supply. However, this is being addressed in a number of ways.

The number of occupational therapists employed in the national health service in England has increased considerably from 3,183 in 1982 to 5,609 in 1991—an increase of 76 per cent. This is planned to increase further to around 7,000 by 1995. The number employed by local authorities in England has also grown substantially from 697 in 1982 to 1,717 in 1991—an increase of 146 per cent.

There has also been a decline in vacancy rates in the national health service and local authorities. It is anticipated that this decline will continue so that by 1995 the supply and demand for occupational therapists should be approximately in balance.

School Medical Inspections

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pupils were checked in routine school medical inspections in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not collected centrally.

Dewsbury Health Authority

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the expected relationship between the proposed health authority for west Yorkshire and the existing Dewsbury health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Yorkshire regional health authority is currently considering responses to its consultation document to establish a new health authority for west Yorkshire. This would cover the area of the existing Calderdale, Dewsbury and Huddersfield health authorities, which would be abolished if the proposed new authority were approved. If the regional health authority decides to recommend its proposals to Ministers, we will need to be satisfied that the proposals will secure the best possible health care for the people of Calderdale, Dewsbury and Huddersfield.

Epilepsy

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if training in the management of epilepsy is included in social work training at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Mrs. Yeo: In order to qualify for the diploma in social work, students are required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of health and disability issues. There is no specific requirement that they be trained in the management of epilepsy. The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work has further work in hand to identify the knowledge and skills required of social workers at post-qualifying level.

NHS Closures

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each NHS establishment closed in each year since 1974, with the number of beds involved, and the site value on disposal.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Dr. Helen Zeitlin

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has yet reached a decision on the appeal made by Dr. Helen Zeitlin under paragraph 190 of the terms and conditions of service of hospital medical and dental staff (England and Wales) against her dismissal on the grounds of redundancy by West Midlands regional health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The parties to the appeal have today been informed of my decision to uphold the appeal and accept the recommendation of the professional committee constituted under the paragraph 190 procedures that Dr. Zeitlin's appointment should continue.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of civil servants in her Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Sackville: Thirty-three.

NHS Premises (Fire Precautions)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ring-fence the funds required to bring national health service premises up to the legal minimum under proposals for fire legislation.

Mr. Sackville: No. Management of national health service premises is devolved to health authorities and trusts. It is for individual authorities and trusts, in the light of their local circumstances, to make the best use of all the resources at their disposal to provide health care services which are cost effective and meet relevant safety requirements.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the total cost of bringing all national health service premises up to the legal minimum required with respect to fire legislation in the absence of Crown immunity from prosecution.

Mr. Sackville: No specific estimate has been made of the cost of bringing national health service premises up to legal minimum standards. The removal of Crown immunity has not changed the standards of fire safety which health authorities and trusts must observe. They are required to agree with local fire authority a programme for any necessary improvements.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 18 May, *Official Report*, column *63*, if she will itemise the cost of establishing national health service trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 26 October 1992 at columns *477–80*.

In the first three waves of NHS trusts, a sum of £12,000 per trust was paid to regions to help meet statutory consultation costs. On establishment, £15,000 in the first wave and £25,000 in the second, per trust, was allocated to regions towards conveyancing costs. In addition, £190,000 in the first wave and £226,000 in the second was approved for each trust as a non-recurring revenue addition paid to help cover expenditure incurred during their shadow running period—the period immediately prior to their operational date when they have no access to money of their own. This covers shadow board costs, legal expenses connected with the transfer of assets, employment of staff and other miscellaneous expenses. A similar sum will be allocated for the third wave.

Totals of £230,000, £279,000 and £164,000 in the first three waves respectively supported training and development costs for units applying for trust status.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of preparing national health service trust applications in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* each district in the north.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on 30 October 1992 at column *940*.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of employing management consultants and private agencies to assist in the preparation of national health service trust applications *(a)* in the northern region and *(b)* in each district in the north.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Sexual Offenders (Rehabilitation)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements for access to information and expertise her Department has with the Gracewell clinic for rehabilitating sexual offenders; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We are aware of the work undertaken by the Gracewell clinic; Government officials have visited the organisation.

Patients Charter

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to make the charter standards under the patients charter applicable to fund-holding practices; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The standards in the patients charter which are appropriate to GP fund holders already apply and this has been made clear in guidance.

Child Abuse

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of 9 March 1989, *Official Report*, column *607*, how many times the interdepartmental working group on child sexual abuse has met since 9 March 1989; and what has been discussed.

Mr. Yeo: Since March 1989 the interdepartmental group (IDG) on child abuse has met 15 times and made good progress in addressing a wide range of cross-sector policy issues. The IDG has recently issued a strategic statement on working with offenders, setting out strategic and service objectives for social services departments, health services, and Home Office probation and prison services. A copy of the statement is in the Library.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates he has of the percentage of children who are sexually abused.

Mr. Yeo: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The information collected centrally relates to the numbers of children who are on the child protection registers. These list all children in the local authority's area who are the subject of an inter-agency protection plan because of the risk of abuse. Child protection registers are therefore not a record of all cases of child abuse. The latest information available relates to the year ending 31 March 1991 and is in the published feedback "Children and Young Persons on Child Protection Registers England 1991". Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what progress has been made on child sexual abuse since the statement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 15 May 1989, *Official Report*, columns 145-48; if she will provide a table of recent, current and proposed research funded by each Government Department relevant to child sexual abuse in each of the years since 1979, listing *(a)* projects under consideration, with earmarked funding, *(b)* projects in progress, *(c)* projects completed, *(d)* broad themes indentified for research and the actual and projected cost in each case; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will make a statement on the progress which has been made on each of the projects of research on child abuse listed in her predecessor's answer of 27 January 1989, *Official Report*, column *798*;

(3) what investigations her Department is *(a)* funding and *(b)* co-operating on in respect of (i) the sexual abuse of children and (ii) the ritual abuse of children;

(4) if she will update her answer of 27 January 1989, *Official Report*, columns *795-98*, showing the total amount spent by her Department on research into the sexual abuse of children in each of the years since 1979, listing the name of each project, its cost and completion date.

Mr. Yeo: Information is not available centrally in the precise form requested. The "Strategic Statement on Working with Abusers", produced by the inter-departmental group on child abuse, a Department of Health paper "Expenditure on Child Care Research Financial Year 1990/91" and a departmental report on "Progress on the 1992 Child Care Research Strategy", contain information on these matters. Copies of these documents are available in the Library.

In addition, the Department is funding a research project into cases of organised abuse where there are alleged ritualistic elements. The project is being carried out in collaboration with an Economic and Science Research Council-funded project by researchers from Manchester university.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will establish a regional centre for the research and treatment of sexual offenders and their child victims.

Mr. Yeo: I have no plans to do so. It is a matter for the local statutory and voluntary organisations concerned to assess the need and provision for such a regional centre.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contact her Department has with Governments in the United States of America, Australia and the EC regarding their experience in the creation and running of national institutes for research into child sexual abuse.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the then Minister for Health on 14 June 1990 at column *272*.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the amount of money being spent by Government Departments on research into the sexual abuse of children *(a)* at May 1989 and *(b)* currently; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The following amounts were allocated by Government Departments for research into child sexual abuse.

	1989-90 £	*1992-93* £
Department of Health	92,000	493,000
Home Office	72,000	54,000
Social Work Services Group (Scottish Office)	17,000	112,000
Total	181,000	659,000

In addition the Department of Health funds a number of projects covering both sexual and physical abuse of children.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what facilities her Department offers to local government to spread the best practice in suspected cases of sexual abuse of children.

Mr. Yeo: The Department routinely issues guidance to local authorities and is due to host a continuation of the series of annual national conferences for chairmen of area protection committees, the proceedings of which will be disseminated. In addition, several projects in the Department's central training initiative are concerned with child sexual abuse and as part of the training support programme (child care) a special development group has produced guidelines for local authority training officers to assist them with planning their staff training in his area. The Department's social services inspectorate also produces reports which highlight good practice.

A new edition of "Working Together" was issued to coincided with the implementation of the Children Act 1989 and reflected the changes introduced by the Act and the greater emphasis on parental participation.

A centrally funded training initiative was launched in 1986, £689,000 will be given for a range of training projects in 1991-93.

A training support programme (Child Care and Children Act) was started in 1989-90 to enhance the quality of social services provided for children and their families by increasing and improving training provision for staff who work in this field.

Guidelines for SSD trainers and managers on child sexual abuse were issued in conjuction with "Working Together". The guidelines provide local authority trainers and managers with overall principles and a framework within which child sexual abuse training should be organised.

A centrally funded treatment initiative began in 1990-91; £400,000 will be given for a range of projects in 1992-93.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions she has had with Sir Roy Griffiths on the subject of the National Audit Office report HC 197-IX; and if she will make a statement;

(2) pursuant to her answer of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *369*, to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), what will be the form of Sir Roy Griffiths' investigations into West Midlands regional health authority; and if she will make his findings public;

(3) what discussions she has had on the future of the chair and other senior offices of West Midlands regional health authority with Sir Roy Griffiths.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 22 October 1992 at column *369*. Sir Roy Griffiths has been asked to work with West Midlands regional health authority in looking at its management systems in order to allow the authority to discharge its role more effectively in the future. The emphasis of this work is on the procedures adopted by the authority which gave rise to the problems identified by the National Audit Office rather than a specific examination of the competence of individuals. Sir Roy will be keeping the Department in touch with progress and there are no plans for a formal report to be published at the conclusion of his work.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the effect of West Midlands regional health authority's moratorium on capital spending on the time scale for *(a)* completion of the "Building a Healthy Birmingham" plan generally *(b)* the rebuilding of the Birmingham women's hospital, *(c)* the rebuilding of the Birmingham children's hospital and *(d)* the rebuilding of the elderly service block at Selly Oak hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: A temporary moratorium on capital spending has been imposed by West Midlands regional health authority to enable them to take stock of their capital programme. I understand the region will be discussing the position at the regional health authority meeting on 19 November.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what investigations she has made into the collapse of QA Business Services, the former management services division of West Midlands regional health authority;

(2) what investigations she has made into the Healthtrac supplies system in West Midlands regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Both Healthtrac and QA Business Services are currently the subject of a review by the Audit Commission. We shall consider the conclusions most carefully as soon as they are available.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with Sir James Ackers or other representatives of West Midlands regional health authority on the subject of National Audit Office report HC 197-IX; and what were the results of these discussions.

Dr. Mawhinney: Discussions about the National Audit report are continuing between the Department and the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to intervene in the proposed closure of Birmingham's royal orthopaedic and accident hospitals, or the transfer of services from the general hospital, following the publication of National Audit Office report HC 197-IX.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. Responsibility for the public consultation on the proposed closures of the royal orthopaedic and accident hospitals and transfer of services to the general hospital rests with South Birmingham district health authority. They are due to discuss the proposal at their district health authority meeting on 4 November when I would hope that general agreement can be reached.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions took place at her meeting with Sir James Ackers of 28 October on his future as chair of West Midlands regional health authority; and what other matters were discussed.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health did not meet Sir James Ackers on 28 October.

Dentists

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the number of dentists in the Birmingham family health services authority withdrawing national health service treatment from their existing patients; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: One dentist out of a total of 355 in the Birmingham family health services authority area has notified his decision to discontinue national health service treatment for 26 adult patients. No dentist has de-registered child patients.

Anybody who needs help in obtaining NHS dental treatment should contact his or her local family health services authority for advice.

Nurses Pay Review Body

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for the future status of the nurses pay review body and the role it will have in the current year's pay round negotiations.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 29 October 1992 at column *846*.

Yugoslav Children

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children have been admitted into the United Kingdom in the current year, as refugees from the former Yugoslavia; what additional resources the Government have made available to local authorities and voluntary organisations to help with the cost of caring for those children; and whether she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Home Office is responsible for policy and information on asylum issues. Detailed information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, I understand that between 2 August and 31 October 1992 a total of 901 dependants—mainly children—arrived in the United Kingdom as dependants accompanying asylum applicants from the former Yugoslavia and have been temporarily admitted. No additional resources have been made available by the Government to local authorities or voluntary organisations.

South Birmingham Health Authority

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what disciplinary action has been taken against managers in South Birmingham health authority in respect of the deficit facing that authority; and what were the results.

Dr. Mawhinney: Disciplinary action is a matter for the South Birmingham district and West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how widely the KPMG Peat Marwick report into South Birmingham health authority has been circulated; and if she will place a copy in the Library.

Dr. Mawhinney: The KPMG Peat Marwick report has been formally circulated to the national health service management executive, to directors of West Midlands regional health authority and the directors of South Birmingham health authority. Its circulation is a matter for the regional health authority.

EMPLOYMENT

Homeworkers

13. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimates she has of the numbers of homeworkers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is estimated that some 667,000 people work at home in the United Kingdom as their main job, including those who are self-employed.

Earnings

14. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the north are earning half or less than half of male average earnings.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Around 90,000 men, including those working part time.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information she has for the currrent year on the number and proportion of *(a)* male, *(b)* female and *(c)* all full-time adult employees in each standard region who earn less than two thirds of median male earnings.

Mr. McLoughlin: Two thirds of median gross hourly earnings for full-time male adult employees was £4·65 in April 1992. The estimated numbers and proportions of employees earning less than this amount are given in the table.

Full-time employees on adult rates of pay whose pay was unaffected by absence for the survey pay period: member (thousands) and percentage earning less than £4·65

April 1992

Region	*Males*		*Females*		*All*	
	Nos 000's	*Per cent.*	*Nos 000's*	*Per cent.*	*Nos 000's*	*Per cent.*
South East	360	11	390	20	740	14
East Anglia	80	20	70	39	150	27
South West	150	20	150	36	300	26
East Midlands	150	21	160	43	310	28
West Midlands	180	19	210	42	380	27
Yorkshire and Humberside	180	21	180	42	360	28
North West	200	19	220	36	420	25
North	90	19	110	42	210	26
Wales	100	22	100	40	190	28
Scotland	180	20	210	39	380	27

Note: The numbers have been rounded to the nearest ten thousand and so the figures for all employees may differ slightly from the sums of those for males and females.

Source: New Earnings Survey 1992, Employment Department.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will publish tables showing the proportions of manual, non-manual and all full-time employees earning less than *(a)* £147·85 per week, *(b)* £197·30 per week and *(c)* £207·13 per week excluding overtime payments for (i) men, (ii) women and (iii) both sexes by standard economic region, for Great Britain as a whole and for Northern Ireland;

(2) if she will publish tables showing the proportion of full-time employees earning less than *(a)* £120·12, *(b)* £147·85, *(c)* ·197·30 and *(d)* £207·13 excluding overtime payments for (i) Great Britain as a whole, (ii) each county in England, (iii) each county in Wales, (iv) each London borough and Greater London as a whole and (v) each regional authority and borough in Scotland.

Mr. McLoughlin: Due to the considerable amount of information requested, I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the number and proportion of *(a)* male, *(b)* female and *(c)* all full-time adult employees who earn less than 68 per cent. of average earnings in each standard region.

Mr. McLoughlin: In April 1992, 68 per cent. of average gross hourly earnings for all full-time adult employees was £5·10. The estimated numbers and proportions of employees earning less than this amount are given in the table.

Full time Employees on adult rates of pay whose pay was unaffected by absence for the survey pay period: number (thousands) and percentage earning less than £5·10

April 1992

Region	*Males*		*Females*		*All*	
	Nos. 000's	*Per cent.*	*Nos. 000's*	*Per cent.*	*Nos. 000's*	*Per cent.*
South East	520	16	530	27	1,040	20
East Anglia	110	29	90	50	200	36
South West	210	28	190	46	400	35
East Midlands	210	29	200	52	410	37
West Midlands	250	27	260	53	510	36
Yorkshire and Humberside	250	29	220	51	470	37
North West	280	26	280	46	560	33
North	130	26	140	52	270	35
Wales	130	30	120	49	250	37
Scotland	250	28	260	49	500	36

Note: The numbers have been rounded to the nearest ten thousand and so the figures for all employees may differ slightly from the sums of those for males and females.

Source: New Earnings Survey 1992, Employment Department.

Unemployment

15. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unemployment figures at the latest possible date; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figure is 2,843,300; this is some 280,700 less than at its peak in July 1986.

16. **Mr. Mathew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what change there has been in male unemployment in Cornwall over the past 12 months.

Mr. McLoughlin: On the unadjusted basis, the number of male unemployed claimants in the county of Cornwall increased by 2,897 between September 1991 and September 1992.

17. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about the current levels of unemployment in London.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In September 1992 the seasonally adjusted figure for people unemployed and claiming benefit in Greater London was 444,600.

19. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Yorkshire and Humberside are registered unemployed; and what percentage this is of the local work force.

Mr. McLoughlin: In September 1992, seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment in Yorkshire and Humberside was 240,100 or 10·1 per cent., of the work force.

24. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action is being taken at a European Community level under the British presidency to help combat unemployment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friends are fighting to complete the single market and secure a conclusion of the general agreement on tariffs and trade round which is vital for jobs in Europe. We will also continue to oppose job destroying measures like the working time directive.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the levels of unemployment within Wakefield metropolitan district.

Mr. McLoughlin: In September 1992, claimant unemployment on the unadjusted basis in Wakefield local authority district stood at 14,639.

Youth Training

18. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those leaving youth training in the latest convenient period have found full-time employment within six months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Forty-five per cent. of young people leaving youth training in 1991 in Great Britain were in full-time employment six months later. A further 20 per cent. were in part-time work or further education or training.

Qualifications

20. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures she is taking to produce a better qualified work force.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) earlier today.

22. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress she can report towards a national system of vocational qualifications.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) is undertaking the lead role in the reform of the vocational qualifications system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC) is undertaking parallel work in Scotland.

NCVQ and SCOTVEC are on target to have accredited by the end of 1992 national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish vocational qualifications (SVQs) covering 80 per cent. of the employed population at levels 1 to 4 of the national framework. These cover all the most economically significant occupations.

SVQs are based on the same standards of competence as NVQs and both sets of qualifications are therefore fully compatible. For the first time we will have a genuinely United Kingdom-wide system of vocational qualifications.

Coal Mining Communities

21. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest steps she has taken to ensure continuing employment for mineworkers and school leavers in mining areas; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: A substantial package of employment and training measures to assist areas affected by colliery closures is set out in my right hon. Friend's letter of 19 October to the Chairman of the Employment Select Committee, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Training and Enterprise Councils

23. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the funding of training and enterprise councils in 1992-93.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Training and enterprise councils have a key role in working with other bodies towards achieving the Government's strategic priorities for training, enterprise and vocational education. We have made £2·2 billion available for TEC delivered programmes.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish the budget agreed with each training and enterprise council in England for 1992-93, broken down into the five major expenditure blocks; if she will give comparable information for each TEC for 1991-92; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the precise form requested as expenditure blocks are no longer the basis for agreeing TEC budgets. Information about TEC programme budgets is available and details are shown on the tables. The £2·1 billion planned expenditure for programmes operated by TECs/LECs for 1992-93, is over £100 million more than was spent last year.

TEC Budgets
1991-92

£ million

	Block 1	[1] *Block 2*	*Block 3*	*Block 4*	*Block 5*
Essex	15·00	6·20	3·30	1·90	2·10
Hampshire	20·30	5·60	2·70	1·80	1·60
Heart of England	5·90	1·70	1·20	0·80	0·90
Hertfordshire	10·70	3·10	2·40	1·70	1·30
Isle of Wight	2·00	0·70	0·50	0·60	0·50
Kent	19·00	6·00	3·20	1·60	1·80
Milton Keynes/North Buckinghamshire	3·90	1·20	0·80	0·60	0·60
Surrey	6·40	2·80	1·80	1·30	1·00
Sussex	13·50	5·00	2·70	1·30	1·70
Thames Valley Enterprise	11·30	2·60	1·90	2·00	1·80
SOUTH EAST TOTAL	108·00	34·90	20·50	13·60	13·30
AZTEC	4·50	3·30	1·60	0·70	1·00
CENTEC	3·90	3·80	2·70	1·10	1·20
CILNTEC	3·60	2·60	1·50	0·80	0·60
LETEC	12·60	10·10	2·70	1·30	2·00
North London	3·30	3·90	1·70	0·80	0·70
North West London[2]	3·30	1·70	0·90	0·30	0·60
SOLOTEC	9·90	4·30	1·80	1·40	1·50
South Thames	7·00	8·60	3·10	1·60	1·80
West London	4·50	2·30	1·30	0·90	0·80
LONDON TOTAL	51·60	40·60	17·30	8·90	10·20
Avon	15·00	6·20	4·00	1·30	2·10
Devon/Cornwall	29·60	11·00	6·10	2·60	3·20
Dorset	8·10	3·00	2·00	1·00	1·10
Gloucestershire	7·40	2·10	1·60	0·70	1·00
Somerset	7·30	2·00	1·50	0·70	1·00
Wiltshire	7·40	1·70	1·60	0·70	0·90
SOUTH WEST TOTAL	74·80	26·00	16·80	7·00	9·30
Birmingham	21·40	17·30	4·10	1·60	2·30
Central England	5·80	2·30	1·40	0·60	0·80
Coventry/Warwickshire	14·80	5·40	2·60	1·80	1·60
Dudley	6·00	3·10	0·90	0·50	0·70
HAWTEC	5·60	2·10	1·20	0·70	0·70
Sandwell	5·90	3·20	1·00	0·50	0·80
Shropshire	7·60	3·00	1·50	0·50	0·80
Staffordshire	21·50	6·40	2·90	1·40	1·80
Walsall	5·20	3·40	0·90	0·40	0·70

	Block 1	[1]Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5
Wolverhampton	5·80	3·40	1·00	0·60	0·70
WEST MIDLANDS TOTAL	99·60	49·60	17·50	8·60	10·90
Bedfordshire	7·60	2·40	1·20	0·70	0·70
CAMBSTEC	3·90	0·70	0·80	0·60	0·60
North Derbyshire[2]	6·80	2·20	1·10	0·40	0·70
South Derbyshire	10·50	4·10	1·80	0·50	0·90
Leicestershire	16·90	5·20	2·70	1·30	1·30
Lincolnshire	11·90	3·80	1·60	0·90	1·00
Norfolk/Waveney	14·40	5·00	2·20	1·10	1·20
Northamptonshire	7·00	2·90	1·40	0·60	0·90
Greater Nottinghamshire	12·00	5·10	2·00	0·90	0·90
North Nottinghamshire	9·60	5·10	1·30	0·70	0·80
Greater Peterborough	5·20	1·60	0·60	0·30	0·70
Suffolk	9·70	2·10	1·30	0·70	0·90
EAST MIDLANDS TOTAL	113·50	40·20	18·00	8·70	10·60
Barnsley/Doncaster	15·20	8·30	1·80	0·60	1·40
Bradford and District	11·00	4·90	1·70	0·40	1·20
Calderdale/Kirklees	11·20	5·90	2·10	1·00	1·20
Humberside	20·20	11·40	3·20	0·80	2·00
Leeds[2]	11·70	6·30	2·20	0·80	1·50
North Yorkshire	9·70	3·60	2·10	0·90	1·10
Rotherham[3]	6·70	3·60	1·00	0·40	0·80
Sheffield[2]	14·10	7·20	2·20	0·70	1·50
Wakefield	6·50	3·60	1·10	0·40	1·00
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE TOTAL	106·30	54·80	17·40	6·00	11·70
Bolton/Bury	7·70	2·70	1·40	0·90	0·80
Manchester	19·30	10·80	4·50	1·80	2·70
METROTEC	5·90	3·90	1·00	0·70	0·50
Oldham[2]	5·30	1·60	0·80	0·90	0·50
Rochdale	3·40	2·80	0·70	0·40	0·50
South and East Cheshire	6·10	2·00	1·30	1·20	0·50
Stockport[2]	5·60	1·70	1·40	0·60	0·60
NORTH WEST (GM) TOTAL	53·30	25·50	11·10	6·50	6·10
CEWTEC	11·00	7·10	2·40	0·60	1·20
Cumbria	11·10	3·70	1·60	1·10	1·10
ELTEC	10·40	3·70	1·80	1·20	0·90
LAWTEC	14·50	6·90	2·80	1·10	1·50
Merseyside	20·80	12·80	3·60	0·90	2·00
NORMID	7·40	2·20	1·02	0·50	0·70
QUALITEC	5·70	2·30	0·60	0·40	0·60
NORTH WEST (W) TOTAL	80·90	38·70	13·82	5·80	8·00
Durham	16·80	11·00	2·70	1·80	2·40
Northumberland	7·80	3·60	1·60	1·00	1·30
Teeside	17·80	11·40	2·50	1·00	2·80
Tyneside	22·90	13·60	3·50	2·80	3·00
Wearside	10·40	7·10	1·40	0·90	1·60
NORTHERN TOTAL	75·70	46·70	11·70	7·50	11·10

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[1] Excluding allowances.

[2] Seven TECs do not currently deliver Employment Action. The Department manages the delivery of EA in these areas.

[3] Rotherham TEC did not plan any EA 1991-92.

TEC Budgets
1992-93

(£ million)

	YT and credits	WRFE	Compacts	EBPs	TVE	Careers partners	Careers libraries	Employ training ex. allows	HTNT	Employ action ex. allows	Business enterprise support	LIF	National devel project	Research	Youth devel project	TEC MGMT fee
Essex	16·02	2·07	0·00	0·03	0·07	0·03	0·12	7·75	0·25	2·03	2·49	0·58	0·06	0·00	0·01	2·54
Hampshire	17·54	3·49	0·04	0·03	0·07	0·03	0·17	5·37	0·34	0·93	3·12	[illegible]	0·05	0·00	0·00	2·07
Heart of England	5·70	0·88	0·04	0·03	0·03	0·03	0·07	1·74	0·05	0·26	1·20	[illegible]	0·12	0·00	0·00	1·32
Hertfordshire	13·19	1·07	0·00	0·03	0·05	0·00	0·13	3·06	0·06	0·56	3·00	0·15	0·28	0·00	0·00	1·79
Isle of Wight	1·06	0·30	0·00	0·03	0·01	0·00	0·02	0·55	0·00	0·26	0·49	0·06	0·06	0·00	0·02	0·60
Kent	1·90	2·04	0·00	0·03	0·07	0·02	0·18	5·27	0·53	1·90	2·75	1·27	0·18	0·00	0·02	2·05
Milton Keynes/North Bucks	3·99	0·35	0·00	0·03	0·02	0·00	0·02	1·23	0·00	0·35	0·76	0·35	0·06	0·00	0·00	0·83
Surrey	6·40	1·84	0·00	0·03	0·05	0·03	0·12	1·50	0·33	0·33	1·45	0·78	0·02	0·00	0·00	1·43
Sussex	11·25	2·26	0·02	0·06	0·06	0·04	0·22	5·05	0·26	0·06	3·98	[illegible]	0·02	0·00	0·00	2·06
Thames Valley Enterprise	9·23	2·70	0·03	0·05	0·06	0·00	0·13	[illegible]	0·30	0·83	2·40	0·90	0·15	0·00	0·00	2·28

	YT and credits	*WRFE*	*Compacts*	*EBPs*	*TPS*	*Careers partners*	*Careers libraries*	*Employ training ex. allows*	*HTNT*	*Employ action ex. allows*	*Business enterprise support*	*LIF*	*National devel project*	*Research*	*Youth devel project*	*TEC MGMT fee*
South East Total	84·99	19·44	0·13	0·25	0·48	0·18	1·17	33·65	2·68	8·57	22·24	7·11	1·99	0·00	0·05	17·01
AZTEC	3·62	1·36	0·10	0·02	0·02	0·00	0·07	1·65	0·85	0·87	1·46	0·34	0·19	0·00	0·00	1·18
CENTEC	6·54	1·35	0·10	0·02	0·03	0·04	0·07	6·59	0·39	1·44	4·18	0·70	0·03	0·00	0·00	2·76
CILNTEC	7·25	1·37	0·20	0·01	0·01	0·04	0·04	5·93	0·16	1·33	2·82	1·11	0·19	0·00	0·00	2·16
LETEC	12·54	3·07	0·15	0·05	0·05	0·08	0·12	9·80	0·52	2·70	2·75	0·71	0·01	0·00	0·00	3·24
North London	4·14	1·89	0·10	0·03	0·03	0·00	0·08	4·99	0·86	1·35	2·56	0·58	0·32	0·01	0·00	1·98
North West London[1]	2·46	1·66	0·06	0·01	0·02	0·00	0·04	2·83	0·00	0·00	1·34	0·28	0·01	0·03	0·00	1·29
SOLOTEC	9·09	1·84	0·02	0·03	0·03	0·00	0·10	3·30	0·10	0·82	1·98	0·58	0·26	0·00	0·00	1·97
South Thames	9·15	2·82	0·20	0·03	0·04	0·04	0·10	9·13	1·14	2·63	3·36	1·17	0·37	0·00	0·00	2·74
West London[1]	6·56	2·17	0·00	0·08	0·03	0·04	0·08	2·52	0·86	0·00	1·92	0·85	0·18	0·10	0·00	1·88
London Total	61·35	17·53	0·93	0·28	0·26	0·24	0·70	46·74	4·88	11·14	22·37	6·32	1·56	0·14	0·00	19·20
Avon	11·81	1·65	0·10	0·03	0·04	0·04	0·11	6·12	0·63	1·25	3·60	0·70	0·27	0·00	0·00	2·49
Devon/Cornwall	26·31	3·40	0·10	0·05	0·06	0·04	0·18	9·00	0·17	2·07	5·44	1·62	0·17	0·00	0·00	3·86
Dorset	7·30	1·19	0·02	0·02	0·03	0·04	0·08	2·33	0·58	0·67	2·10	0·49	0·30	0·00	0·00	1·38
Gloucestershire	6·58	1·00	0·03	0·02	0·03	0·01	0·07	2·00	0·10	0·44	1·80	0·39	0·24	0·00	0·00	1·21
Somerset	6·39	1·19	0·00	0·02	0·02	0·02	0·05	2·10	0·21	0·50	1·80	0·20	0·07	0·00	0·00	1·18
Wiltshire	6·76	1·29	0·00	0·02	0·03	0·02	0·07	2·13	0·12	0·43	1·79	0·45	0·23	0·00	0·00	1·21
South West total	65·15	9·72	0·25	0·16	0·21	0·17	0·56	23·68	1·81	5·36	16·64	3·85	1·28	0·00	0·00	11·33
Birmingham	20·64	2·38	0·10	0·02	0·05	0·04	0·12	15·61	0·87	2·12	3·91	0·59	0·48	0·00	0·04	2·80
Central England	5·11	0·95	0·05	0·02	0·02	0·02	0·05	1·82	0·07	0·89	1·36	0·29	0·00	0·00	0·00	1·06
Coventry/Warwickshire	11·86	1·76	0·10	0·04	0·04	0·04	0·11	4·95	0·36	1·10	2·65	0·33	0·15	0·01	0·00	1·88
Dudley	5·20	0·76	0·10	0·02	0·01	0·04	0·04	2·51	0·12	0·48	0·97	0·26	0·17	0·00	0·03	1·01
HAWTEC	5·47	0·80	0·00	0·02	0·02	0·02	0·07	1·84	0·08	0·49	1·53	0·34	0·15	0·00	0·00	0·98
Sandwell	5·46	0·64	0·00	0·02	0·02	0·00	0·04	2·63	0·10	0·60	1·01	0·30	0·08	0·01	0·00	1·98
Shropshire	7·66	0·86	0·10	0·02	0·02	0·02	0·08	2·41	0·08	0·46	1·43	0·28	0·11	0·00	0·00	1·15
Staffordshire	20·57	2·02	0·00	0·02	0·05	0·03	0·14	5·38	0·38	0·95	3·17	0·62	0·06	0·00	0·00	2·21
Walsall	4·32	0·52	0·10	0·02	0·01	0·00	0·03	2·31	0·00	0·50	0·87	0·26	0·11	0·00	0·00	0·94
Wolverhampton	5·24	0·61	0·10	0·02	0·02	0·00	0·03	2·50	0·26	0·60	1·00	0·49	0·16	0·00	0·00	1·09
West Midlands Total	91·53	11·30	0·65	0·22	0·26	0·21	0·71	41·96	2·32	8·19	17·90	3·76	1·47	0·02	0·07	14·20
Bedfordshire	5·30	1·10	0·00	0·03	0·03	0·03	0·08	1·51	0·66	0·56	1·11	0·36	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·95
CAMBSTEC	2·64	0·63	0·03	0·02	0·02	0·00	0·06	0·64	0·05	0·33	0·88	0·23	0·03	0·00	0·03	0·78
North Derbyshire[1]	5·09	0·73	0·00	0·02	0·02	0·02	0·05	2·21	0·09	0·00	1·11	0·26	0·05	0·00	0·00	0·92
South Derbyshire	8·63	1·16	0·10	0·02	0·03	0·02	0·08	3·89	0·14	0·57	1·75	0·58	0·11	0·00	0·00	1·25
Leicestershire	13·34	1·57	0·10	0·03	0·04	0·03	0·14	4·02	0·38	0·73	2·90	0·79	0·32	0·00	0·00	1·82
Lincolnshire	10·19	1·22	0·00	0·02	0·02	0·03	0·08	3·71	0·15	1·41	1·95	0·28	0·10	0·00	0·04	1·50
Norfolk/Waveney	10·73	1·65	0·00	0·03	0·04	0·03	0·11	4·82	0·00	0·75	2·16	0·64	0·00	0·00	0·00	1·61
Northamptonshire	6·75	1·17	0·00	0·03	0·03	0·00	0·10	1·69	0·09	0·54	1·60	0·53	0·00	0·00	0·00	1·23
Greater Nottinghamshire	9·66	1·40	0·02	0·02	0·03	0·04	0·89	4·11	0·32	0·92	1·80	0·34	0·03	0·00	0·00	1·38
North Nottinghamshire	7·37	0·76	0·00	0·02	0·02	0·04	0·07	5·39	0·00	0·45	1·46	0·32	0·11	0·00	0·00	1·11
Greater Peterborough	4·50	0·68	0·05	0·01	0·01	0·00	0·04	1·77	0·00	0·45	0·60	0·27	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·92
Suffolk	9·53	0·75	0·05	0·03	0·03	0·03	0·08	1·66	0·00	0·45	1·36	0·37	0·00	0·00	0·00	1·20
East Midlands Total	93·73	12·82	0·35	0·28	0·32	0·27	1·78	35·42	1·88	7·16	18·68	4·97	0·76	0·00	0·07	14·67
Barnsley/Doncaster	12·90	0·90	0·20	0·03	0·03	0·04	0·10	5·50	0·70	0·90	1·50	0·50	0·08	0·00	0·00	1·70
Bradford and District	10·60	0·80	0·10	0·02	0·03	0·00	0·10	4·20	0·10	0·70	1·80	0·50	0·30	0·00	0·00	1·50
Calderdale/Kirklees	9·70	1·30	0·10	0·03	0·03	0·03	0·10	5·00	0·20	0·80	2·00	0·40	0·20	0·00	0·00	1·50
Humberside	17·90	1·60	0·10	0·02	0·05	0·00	0·10	8·50	1·00	1·40	3·20	1·00	0·20	0·00	0·00	2·70
Leeds[1]	8·80	1·30	0·00	0·02	0·02	0·00	0·10	5·20	0·70	0·00	2·30	0·70	0·20	0·00	0·00	2·00
North Yorkshire	8·00	1·50	0·00	0·02	0·02	0·02	0·10	3·20	0·10	0·30	2·20	0·60	0·10	0·00	0·00	1·40
Rotherham	5·60	0·50	0·10	0·02	0·02	0·00	0·10	2·70	0·40	0·40	1·10	0·40	0·10	0·00	0·00	1·10
Sheffield[1]	9·50	1·40	0·10	0·02	0·03	0·03	0·10	6·20	0·80	0·00	2·20	0·70	0·20	0·00	0·00	2·10
Wakefield	5·30	0·60	0·00	0·02	0·02	0·00	0·10	3·00	0·20	0·50	1·20	0·20	0·10	0·00	0·00	1·30
Yorkshire and Humberside Total	88·30	9·90	0·70	0·20	0·25	0·12	0·90	43·50	4·20	5·00	17·50	5·00	1·48	0·00	0·00	15·30
Bolton/Bury	6·88	1·03	0·10	0·02	0·02	0·03	0·05	2·12	0·21	0·71	1·53	0·27	0·45	0·00	0·00	0·97
Manchester	16·41	2·59	0·20	0·04	0·06	0·05	0·13	8·71	0·85	1·68	4·32	0·45	0·34	0·00	0·00	3·50
METROTEC	5·31	0·73	0·10	0·01	0·02	0·03	0·03	2·18	0·20	0·43	1·15	0·25	0·01	0·00	0·00	0·84
Oldham	4·83	0·41	0·10	0·01	0·01	0·03	0·02	1·54	0·07	0·29	0·78	0·27	0·06	0·00	0·00	0·76
Rochdale	3·77	0·53	0·10	0·01	0·01	0·03	0·02	2·13	0·00	0·45	0·74	0·27	0·06	0·00	0·00	0·74
South and East Cheshire	6·48	0·68	0·02	0·01	0·01	0·02	0·03	1·92	0·06	0·70	1·36	0·27	0·45	0·01	0·00	0·81
Stockport	4·73	0·67	0·02	0·01	0·02	0·04	0·04	1·59	0·13	0·23	1·52	0·34	0·17	0·00	0·00	0·96
North West (GM) Total	48·41	6·63	0·64	0·12	0·15	0·21	0·33	20·20	1·52	4·49	11·40	2·12	1·54	0·01	0·00	8·59
CEWTEC	9·46	0·99	0·10	0·02	0·03	0·00	0·06	4·98	0·40	0·52	2·40	0·27	0·08	0·00	0·00	1·65
Cumbria	9·65	0·77	0·02	0·02	0·02	0·03	0·07	2·39	0·30	0·66	1·60	0·30	0·41	0·00	0·00	1·44
ELTEC	9·31	1·61	0·02	0·02	0·02	0·02	0·07	3·45	0·00	0·46	1·89	0·30	0·33	0·02	0·00	1·28
LAWTEC	12·79	2·39	0·10	0·03	0·04	0·02	0·10	4·89	1·26	1·19	2·76	0·44	0·26	0·03	0·00	2·05
Merseyside	22·75	2·21	0·30	0·04	0·05	0·00	0·11	13·19	0·51	3·03	4·30	0·41	0·50	0·00	0·00	3·60
NORMID	7·17	0·96	0·10	0·02	0·02	0·02	0·05	2·71	0·00	0·34	1·45	0·27	0·19	0·00	0·00	1·27
QUALITEC	5·07	0·42	0·10	0·01	0·01	0·03	0·02	1·95	0·06	0·41	0·62	0·27	0·08	0·00	0·00	0·78
North West (W) Total	76·20	9·35	0·74	0·16	0·19	0·12	0·48	33·56	2·53	6·61	15·02	2·26	1·85	0·05	0·00	12·07
Durham	12·99	1·05	0·05	0·02	0·03	0·03	0·09	8·45	0·36	0·49	2·48	1·33	0·12	0·00	0·06	2·54
Northumberland	7·75	0·41	0·00	0·01	0·01	0·02	0·05	2·89	0·00	0·68	1·30	0·35	0·46	0·00	0·00	1·35
Teesside	15·66	1·02	0·10	0·02	0·03	0·00	0·09	9·18	0·33	1·29	2·38	0·44	0·11	0·00	0·00	2·83
Tyneside	17·04	1·48	0·40	0·04	0·05	0·06	0·11	10·71	0·79	1·64	3·49	1·00	0·43	0·00	0·13	3·08
Wearside	7·35	0·73	0·10	0·01	0·01	0·01	0·05	5·17	0·65	0·82	1·29	0·52	0·18	0·00	0·00	1·58
Northern Total	60·79	4·69	0·65	0·10	0·13	0·12	0·39	36·40	2·13	4·92	10·94	3·64	1·30	0·00	0·19	11·38

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[1] 5 TECs do not currently deliver Employment Action. The Department manages the delivery of Employment Action in these areas.

Manufacturing Employment

25. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures she intends to introduce in order to arrest the decline in manufacturing jobs in the north-west region.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Employment Service and training and enterprise councils deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help unemployed people find the best and quickest route back to employment, whether in the manufacturing or other sectors.

Labour Statistics

26. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the latest available figure for *(a)* registered jobs vacancies and *(b)* unemployment in the Houghton and Washington constituency; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: In September 1992 there were 166 unfilled vacancies registered in jobcentres serving the Houghton and Washington parliamentary constituency. The number of unemployed claimants in the constituency, on the unadjusted basis, was 5,226.

Jobcentre vacancies represent only a minor proportion of the number available in the economy.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table showing the proportions of *(a)* men and *(b)* women, broken down by ethnic origin and employment by occupational group—standard occupational classification—for (i) Great Britain and (ii) the west midlands region in 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information from the labour force survey is given in the table:

People in employment by sex, ethnic origin and occupation group, Spring 1992

Per cent.

Region of residence *Sex* *Occupation group (SOC)*	*All[1] origins*	*White*	*Ethnic minority groups*				
			All	*Black*	*Indian*	*Pakistani/ Bangladeshi*	*Mixed/ other origins*
GREAT BRITAIN							
Male							
All persons (thousands = 100 per cent.)[2]	13,890	13,274	606	143	229	101	133
1. Managers and administrators	19	19	20	9	25	22	31
2. Professional occupations	11	11	14	10	17	[3]—	18
3. Associate professional and technical occupations	8	8	8	9	7	[3]—	9
4. Clerical and secretarial occupations	7	7	8	10	9	[3]—	[3]—
5. Craft and related occupations	23	23	14	19	15	12	9
6. Personal and protective service occupations	6	6	8	9	[3]—	12	13
7. Sales occupations	5	5	7	[3]—	7	[3]—	9
8. Plant and machine operatives	14	14	15	18	13	25	[3]—
9. Other occupations	8	8	7	10	5	[3]—	[3]—
Female							
All persons (thousands = 100 per cent.)[2]	11,174	10,701	465	155	178	30	101
1. Managers and administrators	11	11	10	7	12	[3]—	11
2. Professional occupations	9	9	7	[3]—	9	[3]—	[3]—
3. Associate professional and technical occupations	10	10	13	18	6	[3]—	17
4. Clerical and secretarial occupations	27	27	23	23	25	[3]—	21
5. Craft and related occupations	3	3	6	[3]—	10	[3]—	[3]—
6. Personal and protective service occupations	14	14	14	22	5	[3]—	19
7. Sales occupations	12	12	11	[3]—	13	[3]—	12
8. Plant and machine operatives	4	4	8	[3]—	13	[3]—	[3]—
9. Other occupations	10	10	9	15	6	[3]—	[3]—
WEST MIDLANDS							
Male							
All persons (thousands = 100 per cent.)[2]	1,306	1,231	75	18	34	17	[3]—
1. Managers and administrators	17	16	21	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
2. Professional occupations	10	10	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
3. Associate professional and technical occupations	6	6	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
4. Clerical and secretarial occupations	6	6	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
5. Craft and related occupations	25	26	22	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
6. Personal and protective service occupations	5	5	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
7. Sales occupations	6	6	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
8. Plant and machine operatives	18	18	21	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
9. Other occupations	7	7	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Female							
All persons (thousands = 100 per cent.)[2]	1,006	951	55	17	27	[3]—	[3]—
1. Managers and administrators	10	10	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
2. Professional occupations	8	8	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
3. Associate professional and technical occupations	8	8	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
4. Clerical and secretarial occupations	25	25	20	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
5. Craft and related occupations	5	4	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
6. Personal and protective service occupations	15	15	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
7. Sales occupations	11	11	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—

Region of residence Sex Occupation group (SOC)	All[1] origins	White	Ethnic minority groups All	Black	Indian	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	Mixed/ other origins
8. Plant and machine operatives	7	6	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
9. Other occupations	12	12	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—

[1] Includes those who did not state their ethnic origin.

[2] Includes those who did not state their occupation, but percentages are based on totals which exclude this group.

[3] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.

Source: LFS estimates.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the number of male and female part-time workers in Great Britain in April.

Mr. McLoughlin: Estimates of part-time workers are derived from quarterly employment surveys. These are carried out in March, June, September and December of each year, so April figures are not available. Latest figures are as follows:

Part-time work force in employment in Great Britain
Seasonally adjusted

Thousand

	Male	Female
March 1992	1,541	5,145
June 1992	1,573	5,121

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table showing the proportions of *(a)* men and *(b)* women, broken down by ethnic origin and employment by industry group—standard industrial classification—for (i) Great Britain and (ii) west midlands region in 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information from the labour force survey is given in the table:

People in employment by sex, ethnic origin with industry group
Spring 1992

Per cent.

Region of residence Sex Industry group (SIC 1980)	All origins[1]	White	Ethnic minority groups All	Black	Indian	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	Mixed/ other origins
GREAT BRITAIN							
Males							
All persons (thousands = 100 per cent.)[2]	13,890	13,274	606	143	229	101	133
0. Agriculture, forestry, fishing	3	3	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
1. Energy and water supply	3	3	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
2. Minerals, ores, metals, chemicals	4	4	3	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
3. Metal goods, engineering, vehicles	14	14	11	14	13	[3]—	[3]—
4. Other manufacturing industries	9	9	10	7	13	16	[3]—
5. Construction	11	11	4	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
6. Distribution, hotels and catering, repairs	17	17	30	17	31	41	34
7. Transport and communication	9	9	12	16	10	13	8
8. Banking, finance, business services, leasing	11	11	9	10	8	[3]—	12
9. Other services[4]	19	19	20	26	17	12	25
Female							
All persons (thousands = 100 per cent.)[2]	11,174	10,701	465	155	178	30	101
0. Agriculture, forestry, fishing	1	1	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
1. Energy and water supply	1	1	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
2. Minerals, ores, metals, chemicals	2	2	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
3. Metal goods, engineering, vehicles	5	5	5	[3]—	8	[3]—	[3]—
4. Other manufacturing industries	7	7	9	[3]—	16	[3]—	[3]—
5. Construction	2	2	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
6. Distribution, hotels and catering, repairs	24	24	27	16	31	35	33
7. Transport and communication	3	3	5	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
8. Banking, finance, business services, leasing	12	12	9	9	9	[3]—	[3]—
9. Other services[4]	43	43	43	58	30	35	44
WEST MIDLANDS							
Male							
All persons (thousands = 100 per cent.)[2]	1,306	1,231	75	18	34	17	[3]—
0. Agriculture, forestry, fishing	3	3	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
1. Energy and water supply	3	3	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
2. Minerals, ores, metals, chemicals	5	5	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
3. Metal goods, engineering, vehicles	23	23	25	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
4. Other manufacturing industries	9	9	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
5. Construction	10	11	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
6. Distribution, hotels and catering, repairs	18	17	28	[3]—	36	[3]—	[3]—
7. Transport and communication	7	7	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
8. Banking, finance, business services, leasing	7	8	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
9. Other services[4]	14	15	13	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—

Region of residence *Sex* *Industry group (SIC 1980)*	*All origins*[1]	*White*	*Ethnic minority groups*				
			All	*Black*	*Indian*	*Pakistani/ Bangladeshi*	*Mixed/ other origins*
Female							
All persons (thousands = 100 per cent.)[2]	1,006	951	55	17	27	[3]—	[3]—
0. Agriculture, forestry, fishing	1	1	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
1. Energy and water supply	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
2. Minerals, ores, metals, chemicals	3	3	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
3. Metal goods, engineering, vehicles	7	7	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
4. Other manufacturing industries	8	7	19	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
5. Construction	2	2	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
6. Distribution, hotels and catering, repairs	24	25	23	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
7. Transport and communication	3	3	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
8. Banking, finance, business services, leasing	9	9	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
9. Other services[4]	41	42	36	66	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—

Source: LFS estimates.

[1] Includes those who did not state their ethnic origin.

[2] Includes those who did not specify industry, but percentages are based on totals which exclude this group.

[3] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.

[4] Comprises all other public services excluding sanitary, research and development, recreational and domestic services.

Wages Councils

27. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers in the northern region are currently covered by wages councils orders.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that some 140,000 workers, aged 21 or over, are covered by the wages councils in the wages inspectorate's northern division.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of employees covered by each wages council, indicating the proportion of women in each case.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: The estimated number of workers covered by each wages council in March 1992 is detailed in the table. Approximately two thirds of all wages council workers are women, but I regret that there are no estimates of the number of women covered by individual councils.

Estimated number of workers covered by wages councils: March 1992

Wages council	*Workers*
Aerated Waters	4,400
Boot and Shoe Repairing	5,000
Button Manufacturing	1,000
Clothing Manufacturing	118,500
Coffin Furniture and Cerement Making	200
Cotton Waste Reclamation	300
Fur	800
Flax and Hemp	400
General Waste Materials Reclamation	13,000
Hairdressing Undertaking	69,000
Hat, Cap and Millinery	4,500
Lace Finishing	900
Laundry	24,500
Licensed Non-Residential Establishment	538,000
Licensed Residential Establishment and Licensed Restaurant	417,000
Linen and Cotton Handkerchief and Household Goods and Linen Piece Goods	2,800
Made-up Textiles	3,500
Ostrich and Fancy Feather and Artificial Flower	500
Perambulator and Invalid Carriage	2,000
Retail Bespoke Tailoring	4,000
Retail Food and Allied Trades	490,000
Retail Trades (Non-Food)	736,000
Rope Twine and Net	2,200
Sack and Bag	1,000
Toy Manufacturing	11,500
Unlicensed Place of Refreshment	110,000
Total	2,561,000

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the ratio of wages inspectors to wages council establishments and employees covered by wages councils respectively in 1979 and each succeeding year.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: The information requested is in the table:

Year	*Ratio of wages inspectors to estimated number of wages council establishments*	*Ratio of wages inspectors to estimated number of employees covered by wages councils*
1979	1:2,471	1:17,618
1980	1:2,530	1:17,959
1981	1:3,399	1:23,791
1982	1:3,373	1:23,576
1983	1:3,330	1:23,576
1984	1:3,272	1:23,781
1985	1:3,136	1:22,790
1986	1:3,241	1:23,576
1987	1:5,195	1:33,868
1988	1:5,418	1:35,320
1989	1:5,746	1:37,460
1990	1:5,988	1:37,460
1991	1:6,125	1:38,037
1992[1]	1:6,356	1:40,651

[1] 1992 Average number of Wages Inspectors to 30 September 1992.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the present establishment of wages inspectors.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: The present complement of wages inspectors is 71 posts.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of employees covered by wages councils are estimated by her Department as being paid *(a)* less than the wages council pay rate, *(b)* at the wages council pay rate and *(c)* more than the wages council pay rate.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: Estimates, based on an analysis of employers' wage records checked by the wages inspectorate, show that only 3 per cent. to 4 per cent. of workers are underpaid. Of the remainder, about one third are paid on, or only just above, the council minimum rate, with two thirds paid significantly above the minimum.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many wages inspectors are at present in post.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* There are 55 wages inspectors in post.

Mineworkers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the work of the Health and Safety Executive in relation to mineworkers.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 30 October at columns *936-37*. Health authorities are responsible for monitoring and assessing the health needs of the populations they serve, and responding to special needs as they arise.

Disabled People (Grants)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much is currently allocated by her Department to publicise grants established to assist trainees and employees with disabilities; and if she will list the publicity material produced by her Department relating to such grants during 1991 and, to date, in 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not possible to provide the information on expenditure in the form requested.

The Department provides a variety of grants, free loans and similar financial assistance which were established to assist trainees and employees generally, including any with disabilities. Expenditure on publicising that financial help cannot be broken down to identify an element relating to people with disabilities.

In addition, there is a range of material which publicises financial assistance aimed specifically at people with disabilities but also publicises other schemes and services. The element relating to grants or other financial assistance cannot be identified separately.

Information on the resources devoted by training and enterprise councils to publicising grants or similar financial assistance for which they are responsible is not collected centrally.

The following publicity material relates to grants, free loans and similar financial assistance established to assist only people with disabilities (including employees) and was all available (in this or a slightly different form) in 1991 and, to date, in 1992:

—Travel of work grants leaflet (PWD1)
—Personal reader service leaflet (PWD2)
—Special aids to employment (PWD3)
—Adaptations to premises and equipment leaflet (PWD4)
—Working at home with technology (PWD6)
—Job introduction scheme leaflet (EPWD7)
—Personal reader service leaflet (EPWD8)
—Special aids to employment (EPWD9)
—Adaptations to premises and equipment leaflet (EPWD10)
—Working at home with technology (EPWD13)
—Sheltered placement scheme leaflet (SPSL1)
—Sheltered placement scheme leaflet (SPSL2)

There is a wide range of other publicity material which mentions financial assistance that can assist trainees and employees with disabilities, including:

—Just the job booklet (EMPL45)
—Job hunting for people with disabilities handbook (PWD16) and tape version
—Employing people with disabilities sources of help leaflet (PEL2)
—Employing people with disabilities, multiple sclerosis leaflet (EPWD17)
—Employing people with disabilities, mental illness leaflet (EPWD18)
—Employing people with disabilities, mental handicap leaflet (EPWD19)
—Employing people with disabilities, deaf and hearing impaired leaflet (EPWD20)
—Employing people with disabilities, epilepsy leaflet (EPWD21)
—Employing pepole with disabilities, blind and visually impaired leaflet (EPWD22)
—Employing people with disabilities, haemophilia leaflet (EPWD25)
—Disabled persons register leaflet (PWD5)
—Sheltered placement scheme video

Career Development Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each region, and for Great Britain as a whole, how many applications for loans under the career development scheme have been made in 1992 and how many have been rejected; how many women have been awarded loans; how many employment training participants have been awarded loans; what have been the successful course completion rates in each region; how much has been awarded in total for each region and how much has been recovered; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information by region on the number of loans approved under the career development loan scheme, numbers of applications rejected, number of loans approved for women, the value of loans approved and the successful course completion rate are shown in the tables. The information given is for the period October 1991 to the end of September 1992.

Details of the number of ET participants and of the amount of money repaid are not available.

Further information on career development loans can be found in the 1991-92 annual report. This will be published in mid-November and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Region	*Number of loans approved*	*Rejected applications*	*Number of loans for women*
South East	2,028	713	669
London	2,068	1,081	757
East Anglia	383	164	122
South West	1,066	247	346
West Midlands	580	216	196
East Midlands	553	182	132
Yorkshire and Humberside	710	507	234
North West	645	504	201
Northern	450	140	124
Wales	341	126	129
Scotland	940	290	258
Great Britain	9,764	4,170	3,168

Region	*Value of loans (£)*	*Course completion rate Per cent.*
South East	5,705,941	81
London	6,097,653	85
East Anglia	903,894	77
South West	2,611,040	84
West Midlands	1,498,780	72
East Midlands	1,341,318	75
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,799,379	78
North West	1,698,611	73
Northern	1,106,255	70
Wales	1,001,640	78
Scotland	2,277,714	77
Great Britain	26,042,225	79

Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the latest information she has on the percentage of men and women in each occupational group for *(a)* youth training and *(b)* employment training; what is the comparable information for one year previously; and if she will make a statement;

(2) for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, how many and what proportion of all employment training participants were within *(a)* the guarantee group and *(b)* the aim group for each year since 1989, and for 1992-93; and if she will make a statement;

(3) if she will list the qualifications that were achieved by participants for each six-month period of employment training since September 1990.

Mr. McLoughlin: As the information is contained in a considerable number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements have been made to ensure that unemployed claimants who join a place on employment training do not lose payments and coverage from conditions in mortgage protection insurance policies which require them to obtain regular confirmation from the Employment Service that they are available for and actively seeking work; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. Fogden to Ms. Clare Short, dated 3 November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about what arrangements have been made to ensure that unemployed claimants who join a place on Employment Training (ET) do not lose payments and coverage from conditions in mortgage protection insurance policies which require them to obtain regular confirmation from the Employment Service that they are available for and actively seeking work. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

It is our policy to provide factual information to insurance companies, or other organisations, providing the request is accompanied by the consent of the client concerned. After recent meetings between my people and representatives from the Association of British Insurers, a standardised insurance form has been designed which will be used in all my offices to ensure that information about clients is supplied swiftly and accurately. This should help insurance companies to reach quick and appropriate decisions on what payments may be due under the terms of the client's policy. The information that we supply to the insurance companies includes the dates that a client has been "signing on" as unemployed, the benefits in payment, whether the client is in part-time employment and whether the claim is suspended or disallowed for any reason, such as a doubt that a client is available for or actively seeking work.

It may be helpful if I explain the ET payment system. Participation on the programme is voluntary and the general principle governing the entitlement to training allowance is that every trainee should be £10 per week better off than they would be if they remained (or became) unemployed. Training allowance is therefore paid at a level equal to their previous benefit rate but with the addition of a £10 training premium. People on ET cannot simply continue to receive the benefits that they were getting before, for example, unemployment benefit, because by joining ET they cease to satisfy the eligibility conditions for those benefits.

Whether payments under insurance policies can be made to people who are participating in Employment Training is a matter for the insurance companies, depending on the detailed terms of the policy taken out by the client. In general these require people to be unemployed, available for and actively seeking work in order for payments to be made.

If however, payments under insurance policies cannot be made, clients may, if they have not already done so, wish to seek help with housing costs through Income Support (IS).

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Employment Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list by grade and number employed the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and the estimate for 1992-93 for the Employment Service.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question asking for a list by grade and number employed, the staffing costs for the year 1991/92 and the estimate for 1992-93 for the Employment Service. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as the Chief Executive of the Agency.

The number of staff employed by the Employment Service has increased steadily over the last eighteen months. Whilst the overall staff usage is monitored monthly average figures by grade are not produced. A detailed count of staff is carried out annually on 1 April and I am enclosing two sets of tables showing the Employment Service staff in post by grade at the 1 April 1991 and the 1 April 1992.

During the 1991-92 financial year the Employment Service spent just over £525 million on salaries. The salary allocation for 1992/93 is £624 million.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Employment Service—Staff in post: 1 April 1991

A. Permanents

National ES Total

	Employment service staff in post at 1 April 1991								
	Full-time actual staff numbers			*Part-time actual staff numbers*			*Total posts (NB2p/t = 1f/t)*		
	M	*W*	*Total*	*M*	*W*	*Total*	*M*	*W*	*Total*
Admin									
1 Grade 3	2·0	—	2·0	—	—	—	2·0	—	2·0
2 Grade 4	5·0	—	5·0	—	—	—	5·0	—	5·0
3 Grade 5	15·0	2·0	17·0	—	—	—	15·0	2·0	17·0
4 Grade 6	17·0	8·0	25·0	—	—	—	17·0	8·0	25·0
5 Grade 7	143·0	27·0	170·0	1·0	1·0	2·0	143·5	27·5	171·0
6 SEO	297·0	86·0	383·0	3·0	10·0	13·0	298·5	91·0	389·5
7 HEO	1,285·0	867·0	2,152·0	7·0	68·0	75·0	1,288·5	901·0	2,189·5
8 HEO(D)	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
9 Admin trainee (HEO)	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
10 EO	3,649·0	6,284·0	9,933·0	34·0	1,231·0	1,265·0	3,666·0	6,899·0	10,565·5
11 MT	5·0	13·0	18·0	—	—	—	5·0	13·0	18·0
12 AO	4,439·0	12,271·0	16,710·0	88·0	3,621·0	3,709·0	4,483·0	14,081·5	18,564·5
13 AA	363·0	989·0	1,352·0	9·0	238·0	247·0	367·5	1,108·0	1,475·5
14 Senior personal secretary	—	6·0	6·0	—	—	—	—	6·0	6·0
15 Personal secretary	1·0	40·0	41·0	—	1·0	1·0	1·0	40·5	41·5
16 Chief typing manager	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17 Typing manager	—	7·0	7·0	—	1·0	1·0	—	7·5	7·5
18 Typist	2·0	189·0	191·0	2·0	85·0	87·0	3·0	231·5	234·5
19 Trainee typist	—	1·0	1·0	—	1·0	1·0	—	1·5	1·5
20 Reprographics officer	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0
21 Total of lines 1–20	10,225·0	20,791·0	31,016·0	144·0	5,257·0	5,401·0	10,297·0	23,419·5	33,716·5
Non-admin									
22 Senior messenger	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
23 Messenger	63·0	3·0	66·0	2·0	1·0	3·0	64·0	3·5	67·5
24 Security officer IV	5·0	—	5·0	—	—	—	5·0	—	5·0
25 Security officer V	23·0	—	23·0	2·0	—	2·0	24·0	—	24·0
26 Telephone operator	19·0	61·0	80·0	—	15·0	15·0	19·0	68·5	87·5
27 Cleaner	—	2·0	2·0	3·0	124·0	127·0	1·5	64·0	65·5
28 Driver	4·0	—	4·0	—	—	—	4·0	—	4·0
29 Total of lines 22–28	114·0	66·0	180·0	7·0	140·0	147·0	117·5	136·0	253·5
30 Graphics Officer	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
31 Graphic Technical Grade	2·0	3·0	5·0	—	—	—	2·0	3·0	5·0
32 Senior Instructional Officer	29·0	—	29·0	—	—	—	29·0	—	29·0
33 Higher Instructional Officer	55·0	1·0	56·0	—	—	—	55·0	1·0	56·0
34 Instructional Officer 1	195·0	15·0	210·0	—	—	—	195·0	15·0	210·0
35 Senior Industrial Officer	1·0	1·0	2·0	—	—	—	1·0	1·0	2·0
36 Senior Economic Assistant	3·0	—	3·0	—	—	—	3·0	—	3·0
37 Economic Assistant	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
38 Senior Information Officer	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
39 Information Officer	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
40 Accountant (GD7)	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
41 Accountant (SEO)	2·0	—	2·0	—	—	—	2·0	—	2·0
42 Accountant (HEO)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
43 Accountant (EO)	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
44 Auditor (SEO)	7·0	1·0	8·0	—	—	—	7·0	1·0	8·0
45 Auditor (HEO)	20·0	10·0	30·0	—	—	—	20·0	10·0	30·0
46 Senior Assistant Statistician	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0
47 Assistant Statistician	1·0	1·0	2·0	—	—	—	1·0	1·0	2·0
48 Senior Research Officer	1·0	2·0	3·0	—	2·0	2·0	1·0	3·0	4·0
49 Research Officer	—	3·0	3·0	—	3·0	3·0	—	4·5	4·5
50 Doctor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
51 Senior Psychologist	14·0	8·0	22·0	—	—	—	14·0	8·0	22·0
52 Higher Psychologist	12·0	15·0	27·0	1·0	1·0	2·0	12·5	15·5	28·0
53 Psychologist	3·0	11·0	14·0	—	1·0	1·0	3·0	11·5	14·5
54 Physiotherapist 1	—	2·0	2·0	—	1·0	1·0	—	2·5	2·5
55 Physiotherapist 2	2·0	—	2·0	—	—	—	2·0	—	2·0
56 Chief Nursing Consultant	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0
57 Nursing Consultant	2·0	2·0	4·0	—	—	—	2·0	2·0	4·0
58 Senior Social Worker	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
59 Higher Social Worker	4·0	3·0	7·0	—	—	—	4·0	3·0	7·0
60 Social Worker	10·0	10·0	20·0	—	—	—	10·0	10·0	20·0
61 Hostel Manager	2·0	—	2·0	—	—	—	2·0	—	2·0
62 Hostel steward	1·0	1·0	2·0	—	—	—	1·0	1·0	2·0
63 Hostel Orderly	2·0	—	2·0	—	1·0	1·0	2·0	·5	2·5
64 Senior Prof & Tech Officer	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 Higher Prof & Tech Officer	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
66 Senior Training Advisor	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
67 Welfare and Rec Officer	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
68 Senior Storekeeper	4·0	—	4·0	—	—	—	4·0	—	4·0

Employment service staff in post at 1 April 1991

	Full-time actual staff numbers			*Part-time actual staff numbers*			*Total posts (NB2p/t = 1f/t)*		
	M	*W*	*Total*	*M*	*W*	*Total*	*M*	*W*	*Total*
69 Storekeeper	4·0	—	4·0	—	—	—	4·0	—	4·0
70 Timekeeper	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
71 Assistant Librarian	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
72 Support Manager GD3	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
73 Others (Supp GD1)	1·0	7·0	8·0	—	1·0	1·0	1·0	7·5	8·5
74 Others (Supp GD2)	10·0	5·0	15·0	—	—	—	10·0	5·0	15·0
75 Total of lines 30-74	396·0	103·0	499·0	1·0	10·0	11·0	396·5	108·0	504·5
Industrial									
76 Labourer	21·0	—	21·0	—	—	—	21·0	—	21·0
77 Handyman	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
79 Total of lines 75-78	22·0	—	22·0	—	—	—	22·0	—	22·0
80 Total Permanents (lines 21+29+75+79)	10,757·0	20,960·0	31,717·0	152·0	5,407·0	5,559·0	10,833·0	23,663·5	34,496·5
B. Casuals									
81 AO	426·0	779·0	1,205·0	9·0	84·0	93·0	430·5	821·0	1,251·5
82 AA	370·0	888·0	1,258·0	6·0	62·0	68·0	373·0	919·0	1,292·0
83 Typist	1·0	31·0	32·0	—	10·0	10·0	1·0	36·0	37·0
84 Telephone Operator	—	3·0	3·0	—	—	—	—	3·0	3·0
85 Security Officer	3·0	—	3·0	—	—	—	3·0	—	3·0
86 Messenger	1·0	—	1·0	1·0	—	1·0	1·5	—	1·5
87 Driver	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
88 Cleaner	—	—	—	—	3·0	3·0	—	1·5	1·5
89 Instructional Officer	4·0	2·0	6·0	—	—	—	4·0	2·0	6·0
90 Higher Psychologist	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
91 Psychologist	6·0	17·0	23·0	1·0	2·0	3·0	6·5	18·0	24·5
92 Social Worker	—	4·0	4·0	—	5·0	5·0	—	6·5	6·5
93 Hostel Orderly	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0
94 Labourer	2·0	—	2·0	—	—	—	2·0	—	2·0
95 Handyman	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
96 Other (Supp GD 1)	1·0	2·0	3·0	—	—	—	1·0	2·0	3·0
97 Other (Supp GD 2)	15·0	3·0	18·0	—	2·0	2·0	15·0	4·0	19·0
98 Total Casual lines 81-97	830·0	1,730·0	2,560·0	17·0	168·0	185·0	838·5	1,814·0	2,652·5
99 Grand Total (lines 80+98)	11,587·0	22,690·0	34·277·0	169·0	5,575·0	5,744·0	11,671·5	25,477·5	37,149·0

Employment Service—Staff in post: 1 April 1992

A. Permanents

National Total

	Full-time actual staff numbers			*Part-time actual staff numbers*			*Total posts (NB 2p/t = 1f/t)*		
	M	*W*	*Total*	*M*	*W*	*Total*	*M*	*W*	*Total*
Admin									
1 Grade 3	2·0	—	2·0	—	—	—	2·0	—	2·0
2 Grade 4	6·0	—	6·0	—	—	—	6·0	—	6·0
3 Grade 5	13·0	2·0	15·0	—	—	—	13·0	2·0	15·0
4 Grade 6	21·0	7·0	28·0	—	—	—	21·0	7·0	28·0
5 Grade 7	136·0	29·0	165·0	1·0	2·0	3·0	136·5	30·0	166·5
6 SEO	308·0	107·0	415·0	3·0	8·0	11·0	309·5	111·0	420·5
7 HEO	1,223·0	826·0	2,049·0	7·0	70·0	77·0	1,226·5	861·0	2,087·5
8 HEO(D)	—	3·0	3·0	—	—	—	—	3·0	3·0
9 Admin trainee (HEO)	1·0	1·0	2·0	—	—	—	1·0	1·0	2·0
10 EO	4,145·0	7,333·0	11,478·0	55·0	1,637·0	1,692·0	4,172·5	8,151·5	12,324·0
11 MT	3·0	19·0	22·0	—	1·0	1·0	3·0	19·5	22·5
12 AO	6,502·0	16,249·0	22,751·0	77·0	3,891·0	3,968·0	6,540·5	18,194·5	24,735·0
13 AA	565·0	1,614·0	2,179·0	12·0	232·0	244·0	571·0	1,730·0	2,301·0
14 Senior Personal Secretary	—	7·0	7·0	—	—	—	—	7·0	7·0
15 Personal Secretary	—	42·0	42·0	—	4·0	4·0	—	44·0	44·0
16 Chief Typing Manager	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17 Typing Manager	—	8·0	8·0	—	1·0	1·0	—	8·5	8·5
18 Typist	1·0	129·0	130·0	—	87·0	87·0	1·0	172·5	173·5
19 Trainee Typist	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0
20 Reprographics Officer	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0
21 Total of lines 1-20	12,926·0	26,378·0	39,304·0	155·0	5,933·0	6,088·0	13,003·5	29,344·5	42,348·0
Non-Admin									
22 Senior Messenger	2·0	—	2·0	—	—	—	2·0	—	2·0
23 Messenger	61·0	5·0	66·0	3·0	7·0	10·0	62·5	8·5	71·0
24 Security Officer IV	10·0	5·0	15·0	—	2·0	2·0	10·0	6·0	16·0
25 Security Officer V	16·0	—	16·0	—	—	—	16·0	—	16·0

	Full-time actual staff numbers			Part-time actual staff numbers			Total posts (NB 2p/t = 1f/t)		
	M	W	Total	M	W	Total	M	W	Total
26 Telephone Operator	9·0	45·0	54·0	1·0	19·0	20·0	9·5	54·5	64·0
27 Cleaner	—	9·0	9·0	3·0	114·0	117·0	1·5	66·0	67·5
28 Driver	4·0	—	4·0	—	—	—	4·0	—	4·0
29 Total of lines 22-28	102·0	64·0	166·0	7·0	142·0	149·0	105·5	135·0	240·5
30 Graphics officer	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
31 Graphic technical grade	4·0	3·0	7·0	—	—	—	4·0	3·0	7·0
32 Senior instructional officer	14·0	1·0	15·0	—	—	—	14·0	1·0	15·0
33 Higher instructional officer	49·0	1·0	50·0	—	—	—	49·0	1·0	50·0
34 Instructional officer 1	155·0	15·0	170·0	—	—	—	155·0	15·0	170·0
35 Senior industrial officer	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
36 Senior Economic Assistant	4·0	—	4·0	—	—	—	4·0	—	4·0
37 Economic assistant	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
38 Senior information officer	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
39 Information officer	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
40 Accountant (GD7)	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
41 Accountant (SEO)	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
42 Accountant (HEO)	2·0	—	2·0	—	—	—	2·0	—	2·0
43 Accountant (EO)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
44 Auditor (SEO)	6·0	1·0	7·0	—	—	—	6·0	1·0	7·0
45 Auditor (HEO)	12·0	8·0	20·0	—	1·0	1·0	12·0	8·5	20·5
46 Senior assistant statistician	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
47 Assistant statistician	—	2·0	2·0	—	—	—	—	2·0	2·0
48 Senior Research Officer	—	4·0	4·0	—	4·0	4·0	—	6·0	6·0
49 Research officer	—	3·0	3·0	—	1·0	1·0	—	3·5	3·5
50 Doctor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
51 Senior psychologist	13·0	11·0	24·0	—	—	—	13·0	11·0	24·0
52 Higher psychologist	8·0	12·0	20·0	5·0	2·0	7·0	10·5	13·0	23·5
53 Psychologist	2·0	10·0	12·0	—	2·0	2·0	2·0	11·0	13·0
54 Phsyiotherapist 1	1·0	2·0	3·0	—	1·0	1·0	1·0	2·5	3·5
55 Phsyiotherapist 2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
56 Chief nursing consultant	1·0	1·0	2·0	—	—	—	1·0	1·0	2·0
57 Nursing consultant	2·0	2·0	4·0	—	—	—	2·0	2·0	4·0
58 Senior social worker	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
59 Higher social worker	3·0	2·0	5·0	—	—	—	3·0	2·0	5·0
60 Social worker	11·0	7·0	18·0	—	1·0	1·0	11·0	7·5	18·5
61 Hostel manager	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
62 Hostel steward	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0
63 Hostel orderly	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
64 Senior Prof & Tech officer	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 Higher Prof & Tech officer	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
66 Senior training advisor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
67 Welfare and Rec officer	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
68 Senior storekeeper	2·0	—	2·0	—	—	—	2·0	—	2·0
69 Storekeeper	5·0	—	5·0	—	—	—	5·0	—	5·0
70 Timekeeper	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0
71 Assistant Librarian	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
72 Support Manager GD3	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
73 Others (Supp GD1)	1·0	9·0	10·0	—	5·0	5·0	1·0	11·5	12·5
74 Others (Supp GD2)	32·0	6·0	38·0	—	4·0	4·0	32·0	8·0	40·0
75 Total of lines 30-74	336·0	102·0	438·0	5·0	21·0	26·0	338·5	112·5	451·0
Industrial									
76 Labourer	12·0	—	12·0	—	—	—	12·0	—	12·0
77 Handyman	7·0	—	7·0	—	—	—	7·0	—	7·0
78									
79 Total of lines 75-78	19·0	—	19·0	—	—	—	19·0	—	19·0
80 Total Permanents (lines 21+29+75+79)	13,383·0	26,544·0	39,927·0	167·0	6,096·0	6,263·0	13,466·5	29,592·0	43,058·5
B. Canals									
81 EO	10·0	12·0	22·0	1·0	1·0	2·0	10·5	12·5	23·0
82 AO	765·0	1,291·0	2,056·0	7·0	75·0	82·0	768·5	1,328·5	2,097·0
83 AA	377·0	1,143·0	1,520·0	8·0	75·0	83·0	381·0	1,180·5	1,561·5
84 Typist	1·0	11·0	12·0	—	5·0	5·0	1·0	13·5	14·5
85 Telephone Operator	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0
86 Security Officer	5·0	1·0	6·0	—	—	—	5·0	1·0	6·0
87 Messenger	3·0	1·0	4·0	2·0	—	2·0	4·0	1·0	5·0
88 Driver									
89 Cleaner	—	—	—	—	10·0	10·0	—	5·0	5·0
90 Instructionil Officer	1·0	2·0	3·0	—	—	—	1·0	2·0	3·0
91 Higher Psychologist	—	1·0	1·0	—	1·0	1·0	—	1·5	1·5
92 Psychologist	1·0	11·0	12·0	—	1·0	1·0	1·0	11·5	12·5
93 Social Worker	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0	—	·5	·5

	Full-time actual staff numbers			Part-time actual staff numbers			Total posts (NB 2p/t = 1f/t)		
	M	W	Total	M	W	Total	M	W	Total
94 Hostel Orderly	1·0	1·0	2·0	—	—	—	1·0	1·0	2·0
95 Labourer	4·0	—	4·0	—	—	—	4·0	—	4·0
96 Handyman									
97 Other (Supp GD 1)	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	1·0
98 Other (Supp GD 2)	17·0	2·0	19·0	—	—	—	17·0	2·0	19·0
99 Total Casual lines 80-98	1,186·0	2,477·0	3,663·0	18·0	169·0	187·0	1,195·0	2,561·5	3,756·5
100 Grand Total (lines 80+99)	14,569·0	29,021·0	43,590·0	185·0	6,265·0	6,450·0	14,661·5	32,153·5	46,815·0

Coal Industry

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the coal industry *(a)* in 1987 and *(b)* at the latest available date.

Mr. McLoughlin: There were 62,000 employees in employment in coal extraction and solid fuels in Great Britain in August 1992, the latest date for which information is available. This compares with 142,000 people in August 1987.

Unemployed Graduates

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the number of graduates in *(a)* engineering and *(b)* the social sciences who are currently unemployed.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that this information is not available.

Occupational Disease

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the figures for deaths in the United Kingdom from occupational disease and the numbers of doctors employed in the employment medical advisory service for each year since 1980.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available figures for deaths due to asbestosis, mesothelioma and other industrial diseases, and for doctors in the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) employment medical advisory service, are given in the table:

Deaths from occupational diseases, and doctors employed in HSE's employment medical advisory service in Great Britain

Year	Asbestosis	Mesothelioma	Other diseases	Doctors
1980	102	458	697	71·5
1981	137	472	633	75·0
1982	128	504	624	64·0
1983	121	573	655	65·0
1984	129	624	531	62·5
1985	140	615	587	62·0
1986	166	702	524	60·0
1987	144	808	484	55·5
1988	152	862	—	46·5
1989	157	900	—	45·0
1990	163	882	—	46·0
1991	—	—	—	47·0
1992	—	—	—	52·0

Note: as at 1 April.

For asbestosis and mesothelioma, the numbers are of death certificates mentioning these conditions. An estimated 100 mesotheliomas annually are not asbestos related. For other diseases, the numbers are for awards of death benefit under the industrial injuries scheme up to the discontinuation of this benefit in April 1988. These figures exclude asbestos-related lung cancers, which are estimated to be about twice as numerous as mesotheliomas.

Health and Safety Conference

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how her Department will be represented at the health and safety enforcement in Europe conference to be held at the Queen Elizabeth II centre between 9 and 11 November.

Mr. McLoughlin: The conference is being organised jointly by the Health and Safety Executive and the Institution of Environmental Health Officers; it is a presidency special event which is aimed at those concerned with the enforcement of health and safety legislation in member states of the European Community. I will be giving the keynote speech at the conference. A number of Health and Safety Executive officials will be speaking.

Redundancies

Dr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of redundancies in the south-west in the last quarter for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: Data on redundancies are obtained from the labour force survey, the confirmed redundancy series having been discontinued. Estimates from the spring 1992 labour force survey show that, in the three months prior to the survey, 25,000 people were made redundant in the south-west.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of redundancies in Greater London in the last quarter for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: Data on redundancies are obtained from the labour force survey, the confirmed redundancy series having been discontinued. Estimates from the spring 1992 labour force survey show that, in the three months prior to the survey, 37,000 people were made redundant in Greater London.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of civil servants in her Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of civil servants in the Employment Department whose main task is work wholly or mainly related to the European Community is 158, including clerical and secretarial staff. Of these, 62 staff are concerned with applications for grants from the European social fund. Of course the total number of staff who spend a proportion of their time on European Community business is much larger.

Pharmaceutical Industry

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the pharmaceutical industry in each standard region in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* currently.

Mr. McLoughlin: The earliest and most recent consistent estimates of employees in employment in the pharmaceutical industry, by standard region, are from the 1981 and 1989 censuses of employment. Data can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Curry: Records are not kept to distinguish between staff in my Department who are engaged wholly or mainly on European Community related work and those who are not, and therefore it is not possible to provide an accurate breakdown of numbers. However, estimates given previously and still holding good are that between one quarter and one third of the Department's staff, including common services and support staff, are engaged directly or indirectly on work arising from EC membership. On 1 October 1992 this was between 2,550 and 3,400 people.

In addition the 1,066 staff of the Intervention Board executive agency are wholly engaged on EC-related work.

Organic Agriculture

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his intentions with respect to implementing his commitment to seek agreement in the Agriculture Council to provide financial encouragement for organic agriculture.

Mr. Gummer: The agri-environment regulation agreed in July provides a framework within which financial aid to encourage organic farming could be provided. Proposals for such a scheme would need to be considered in the context of our agri-environment measures to be presented to the Commission.

Agri-environment

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new schemes he intends to implement in order to maximise the benefits to the United Kingdom environment and agriculture under the agri-environment regulation.

Mr. Gummer: This will have to be considered in the context of the agri-environment measures to be presented to the Commission. We have until July 1993 to present these and will consult widely before taking final decisions.

Mink

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current number of representations he has received opposing the abolition of the Mink Keeping Order.

Mr. Soames: Of the responses received in direct response to the consultation exercise inviting views on the future arrangements for the secure keeping of mink, 21 organisations supported the option of renewing the order instead of letting it lapse. Support for renewal has also been received from two hon. Members.

Famine Relief

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the charging basis for the use of EC food surpluses for famine relief purposes.

Mr. Curry: Community food aid for famine relief purposes is normally supplied free of charge. Member states are reimbursed the full value from the Community budget.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the use of EC food surpluses for famine relief purposes has on the accounting cost of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Curry: Normally, none, because the cost reflecting world market prices is charged to the Community food aid budget, with the difference between the world prices and the EC price—the EC support cost—being charged as CAP expenditure. Exceptionally, however, the full cost of some emergency food aid measures to eastern European countries has been charged to the CAP budget. The 1992 budget contains provisions for 385 mecu—£279 million—for such exceptional measures.

Trade Deficits

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the projected trade deficit for flowers and ornamental plants in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(2) what is the projected trade deficit for sheep and goats in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(3) what is the projected trade deficit for rye and maslin in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(4) what is the projected trade deficit for barley in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(5) what is the projected trade deficit for sugarbeet in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(6) what is the projected trade deficit for cattle including calves in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(7) what is the projected trade deficit for milk in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(8) what is the projected trade deficit for wool in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(9) what is the projected trade deficit for pulses in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(10) what is the projected trade deficit for wheat and spelt in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, respectively shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(11) what is the projected trade deficit for fresh vegetables in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(12) what is the projected trade deficit for seeds in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(13) what is the projected trade deficit for poultry in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(14) what is the projected trade deficit for nursery plants in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(15) what is the projected trade deficit for oats and summer cereal mixture in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(16) what is the projected trade deficit for oil seeds and oleaginous fruit except olives in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(17) what is the projected trade deficit for potatoes in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(18) what is the projected trade deficit for fresh fruit in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(19) what is the projected trade deficit for equines in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(20) what is the projected trade deficit for pigs in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(21) what is the projected trade deficit for eggs in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit;

(22) what is the projected trade deficit for hops in the year 1992-93; and what it was for each of the years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, shown for EC countries and non-EC countries and displayed as a percentage of the total food deficit.

Mr. Curry: The table shows figures for the United Kingdom trade balance for the commodity groups requested. However, there is no official information available on trade in "summer cereal mixture" and maslin is only recorded with wheat in the overseas trade statistics. The figures are on a calendar year basis, the form in which they are most readily available. Figures are also given for trade in "Food, Feed and Drink", the Ministry's standard aggregate, but comparisons with this aggregate in percentage terms would not be meaningful. There is no readily available aggregate dealing only with food items.

Balance of overseas trade (£ millions)

	1987		*1988*		*1989*		*1990*		*1991*		*1992 (to August)*	
	EC	*Non-EC*	*EC*	*Non-EC*	*EC*	*Non-EC*	*EC*	*Non-EC*	*EC*	*Non-EC*	*EC*	*Non-EC*
Cattle (including calves)	−25·6	1·4	−65·9	0·8	−25·2	−0·1	−35·6	−1·0	−3·4	−0·7	11·3	−0·4
Sheep and goats	9·2	−0·8	20·7	−0·5	23·2	−0·1	21·3	0·1	33·7	0·0	23·3	0·0
Pigs	3·4	1·1	4·2	1·8	9·6	2·2	12·3	3·5	20·8	3·5	20·8	1·7
Poultry	5·2	6·5	7·4	6·3	8·7	0·8	11·6	8·9	15·9	10·3	11·1	7·8
Equines	56·0	33·1	4·7	−13·3	−28·6	−20·5	−53·3	−2·7	−1·7	3·6	−13·0	6·7
Milk	−11·9	2·4	−9·4	4·2	9·6	3·7	13·8	6·1	33·2	5·6	9·3	1·7
Eggs	7·2	1·3	7·0	2·0	3·2	1·9	−19·8	2·0	−3·1	3·2	1·5	1·9
Wheat, spelt and maslin	11·0	77·6	−41·0	−17·0	76·2	123·7	149·8	103·0	304·0	28·4	143·7	58·5
Barley	91·0	84·4	48·1	97·6	13·8	197·5	71·6	78·8	130·5	34·7	87·6	34·7
Rye	−2·8	−0·1	−3·5	0·0	−1·9	0·0	−3·6	−0·1	−1·4	0·0	−1·3	0·0
Oats	0·2	0·0	−0·7	−0·1	0·6	−0·2	−0·5	−0·1	1·2	0·0	4·3	−0·1
Fresh vegetables (including potatoes, pulses, hops and sugar beet)	−369·8	−112·1	−379·4	−129·0	−416·4	−123·2	−456·6	−152·9	−470·5	−157·3	−365·2	−66·7
Potatoes	−36·9	−12·6	−21·2	−30·2	−30·6	−16·8	−24·1	−26·8	−17·0	−20·9	−13·5	−32·1

	1987		1988		1989		1990		1991		1992 (to August)	
	EC	Non-EC	EC	Non-EC	EC	Non-EC	EC	Non-EC	EC	Non-EC	EC	Non-EC
Pulses (dried)	79·7	−78·2	23·9	−50·5	73·6	−71·2	26·9	−61·3	30·8	−43·1	11·7	−24·7
Hops	−1·8	−1·7	−1·6	−1·5	1·5	−1·7	4·5	−1·5	2·1	−1·8	1·1	−0·5
Sugar beet	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·0	−0·1	0·0	−0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Fresh fruit (excluding nuts)	−453·1	−460·3	−447·6	−494·6	−553·4	−482·6	−570·4	−587·3	−575·0	−606·5	−388·5	−488·4
Oil seeds	−53·7	−115·1	−56·0	−129·8	−58·8	−143·3	−31·6	−174·2	−37·2	−134·3	−59·7	−82·1
Wool	12·1	−173·8	6·2	−118·1	17·8	−104·6	29·5	−71·8	17·8	−38·0	17·8	−43·9
Seeds	−27·7	−6·3	−32·3	−6·3	−22·7	−8·2	−21·9	−7·4	−22·8	−8·7	−13·7	−6·1
Flowers and ornamental plants	−101·4	−27·8	−119·4	−31·6	−147·7	−35·5	−157·5	−39·4	−154·0	−47·2	−97·6	−34·0
Nursery plants	−78·5	−4·5	−86·4	−4·6	−92·1	−4·7	−103·6	−4·5	−104·4	−4·2	−67·0	−1·7
Food, feed and drink	−3,395·7	−1,714·0	−3,866·5	−1,826·4	−4,109·2	−1,424·6	−4,394·2	−1,552·1	−3,725·5	−1,709·4	−2,700·3	−1,302·3

Ostriches

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines he has issued to local authorities on dealing with planning applications and welfare issues of commercial ostrich farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Government have issued planning guidance to local authorities on the agricultural implications of planning applications and development plans, but this does not include specific guidance on ostrich farming.

The welfare of farmed animals is the responsibility of the state veterinary service which is monitoring ostrich farms. Local authorities have been asked to inform the SVS of any applications for licences to keep ostriches under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 as amended so that their welfare can be monitored.

Abattoirs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many abattoirs are currently operational in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* England, *(c)* Wales, *(d)* Humberside and *(e)* south Humberside; and how many in each section currently meet latest EC hygiene regulations.

Mr. Soames: At present all abattoirs in Great Britain operate under licences granted by local authorities. Records are not routinely maintained centrally on the operational status of individual abattoirs, other than those which are approved for intra-Community trade. However, annual statistics derived from state veterinary service visits indicate the following approximate figures for the areas in question:

(a) United Kingdom—686 abattoirs of which 98 are EC export approved.

(b) England—554 abattoirs of which 54 are EC export approved.

(c) Wales—52 abattoirs of which 4 are EC export approved.

(d) Humberside—13 abattoirs of which 1 is EC export approved.

(e) South Humberside—1 abattoir which is EC export approved.

With effect from 1 January 1993 Agriculture Departments will be responsible for licensing all abattoirs. Staff of the state veterinary service are in the process of visiting all abattoirs wishing to continue trading after this date in order to assess their compliance with the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992, which implement the single market hygiene requirements.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 4 November 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what statistics he keeps on the reasons for refusal of asylum cases; and if he will publish these, including the number of refusals on the ground of multiple applications.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The main statistics available are of refusals after determination of the claim to refugee status, those on safe third country grounds and those under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules. For these statistics I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 20 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns *261-62*. Figures for refusals of multiple applications are not identifiable separately.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with EC counterparts to harmonise the primary purpose rule with practices in other EC countries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Discussions have been held at official level in the ad hoc group on immigration with a view to agreeing a set of principles and a resolution on the harmonisation of family reunification policies in the member states. The existence in the United Kingdom of the primary purpose rule has been taken into account in those discussions.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken since June to reduce levels of secrecy in the work of the ad hoc group on immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A public statement on the decisions and conclusions adopted will be made in the normal way following the meeting of EC Ministers concerned with immigration on 30 November.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of how many individuals are in the United Kingdom *(a)* illegally, *(b)* in breach of their entry conditions and *(c)* otherwise in the United Kingdom unofficially.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Comprehensive information on the number of immigration offenders resident in the United Kingdom is not available, and it is not possible to make a reliable estimate. In many cases it is not possible to determine whether a person is an immigration offender until he/she has been traced and interviewed. In the 12 months up to the end of June 1992, some 8,800 immigration offenders were detected and served with illegal entry notices or with notices of intention to deport for being in breach of their conditions to enter or remain.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the topics and proposals on immigration, asylum and other matters that Her Majesty's Government are putting before the Edinburgh summit.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Immigration and asylum matters will be discussed by immigration Ministers of EC member states on 30 November. It is too early to say whether any of these matters will need to be referred to the Edinburgh European Council.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the meeting of the ad hoc European group on immigration held on 10 and 11 September giving details of its conclusions, of how Parliament will be kept informed about the group's proceedings, of what matters are currently under consideration by the group, when the group will meet again, what sub-groups have been formed and for which subjects.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the answers that I gave on 19 October 1992, *Official Report*, cols *50-52*, to his previous questions on this matter.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to establish a system to compensate individuals who have suffered damage, loss, inconvenience or general disadvantages as a result of poor quality of service from the immigration and nationality department.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are arrangements in place for making ex gratia compensation payments in certain circumstances where a person has suffered financial loss as a direct result of negligence, error or delay by an officer of the Home Office.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in each year since 1988 that evidence from DNA testing has been available to immigration appeals against refusing entry to children, what percentage of original refusals by entry clearance officers were *(a)* correct and *(b)* incorrect;

(2) how many individuals initially refused entry because of not being related as claimed and subsequently accepted as related after DNA testing have *(a)* subsequently reapplied for entry and *(b)* been refused, giving as a percentage the grounds of the refusal in each category.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information is not available in the form requested. I will write to the hon. Member setting out such figures on cases involving DNA evidence as can be obtained at reasonable cost.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the latest year for which figures are available, of those persons refused entry under the primary purpose rule how many were married to *(a)* British citizens, *(b)* citizens of another nation, but settled in the United Kingdom and *(c)* other categories as totals and as a percentage of the whole.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the subjective and the objective criteria used in each of the EC countries which are comparable to the primary purpose rule in the United Kingdom in respect of applications from a spouse to join his or her partner.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available. It is a matter for each member state to decide, in accordance with its national immigration legislation, what criteria to apply in relation to the admission of spouses.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the current situation of the Zairean national who was returned to Zaire in May 1991 whose case subsequently gave rise to contempt of court proceedings involving the Minister's predecessor.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Treasury Solicitor was informed on 18 July 1991 that the person concerned had contacted his legal representatives from Nigeria. We have heard nothing more as to his whereabouts since then.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of staff have been employed by the immigration and nationality department to deal specifically with applications for asylum in each of the past five years; and if he will make it his policy to ensure a regular review of staffing levels in the department.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of staff employed in the asylum division to deal specifically with applications for asylum on 1 October in each of the last five years was as follows:

Year	*Number*
1988	52
1989	62
1990	86
1991	200
1992	435

Staffing levels are kept under constant review.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional individuals have joined their spouse in the United Kingdom as a result of the change in guidance in June to no longer use primary purpose as a reason to refuse in cases where a marriage has existed for five years or where there is a child of the marriage with the right of abode in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the trends emerging from this change.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not possible to make an estimate of the effect of this change. The available information on decisions on entry clearance applications in respect of spouses relates only to those made in the Indian sub-continent; the latest statistics for which are published in tables 8 and 9 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics—First and Second Quarters of 1992". A copy of this bulletin is in the Library.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidelines setting out the type of questions to be asked at entry clearance interviews of non-EC nationals at United Kingdom ports.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Existing instructions to immigration officers are to the effect that questioning should be confined to what is relevant to the decisions the officer will have to make. Cases vary greatly, and I see no need for more detailed guidelines.

Procedures at entry clearance interviews overseas are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, but similar principles are followed.

Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for burden sharing with other EC countries in respect of refugees from non-EC countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Member states of the European Community provide assistance in different ways in response to refugee problems, but no plans are under consideration for burden-sharing in the sense of distributing refugees or asylum seekers within the territory of the Community in accordance with quotas for each member state.

Primates (Experiments)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many primates were used for research and testing in the United Kingdom in 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on the number of procedures on primates started in 1991 and the number of primates used during 1991 is contained in table 2a and 2b respectively of the Command Paper "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain, 1991", a copy of which is in the Library.

Safer Cities

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the timetable and procedure relating to the submissions for additional safer cities status.

Mr. Jack: The safer cities programme was originally intended to create 20 local projects, all of which have now been established. We remain committed to doubling the number of safer cities projects to 40, when circumstances and resources enable us to do so. At that time I will advise the hon. Member of the timetable and procedures which will be followed.

Prisons Inspectorate

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the dates on which he received the last 25 reports of inspections by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons; and on what dates the reports were published by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The dates on which the 25 most recent inspection reports by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons were submitted to me and on which they were published by the Inspectorate are as follows:

Inspection	*Submission—1992*	*Publication—1992*
HMP Styal	26 February	16 July
HMP Birmingham	5 March	23 July
HMP Leicester	12 March	21 October

Inspection	*Submission—1992*	*Publication—1992*
HMP Latchmere House	24 March	23 July
HMP Sudbury	31 March	being printed
HMP Stafford	15 April	21 October
HMP Manchester	15 April	13 August
HMP Wymott	30 April	being printed
HMP Lewes	30 April	being printed
HMP Long Lartin	29 May	being printed
HMP The Mount	10 June	being printed
HMP Wellingborough	11 June	being printed
HMP Bullwood Hall	15 June	being printed
HMP Morton Hall	18 June	Not yet published
HMP Acklington	30 June	Not yet published
HMP Spring Hill	22 July	Not yet published
HMP Ashwell	6 August	Not yet published
HMP Bristol	30 September	Not yet published
HMP Haslar	30 September	Not yet published
HMP Hindley	30 September	Not yet published
HMP Maidstone	30 September	Not yet published
HMP Whatton	30 September	Not yet published
HMP Swansea	22 October	Not yet published
HMP Portland	26 October	Not yet published
HMP Blantyre House	26 October	Not yet published

Electoral Registers

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of adults in the city of Southampton on the electoral register in use at the time of the general election on 9 April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There were 146,499 parliamentary electors registered in the constituencies of Southampton, Itchen and Southampton, Test at the time of the general election on 9 April; 1,634 of these were young people (attainers) reaching 18 years of age during the currency of the 1992-93 register. Information about the number of young attainers who had reached voting age by 9 April is not held centrally.

Suicide

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suicides by teenagers were attempted either while held in custody or in prison in Wales in the years 1981 to 1990; how many occurred in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of acts of deliberate self-harm by teenagers in prison service establishments in Wales was 21 in 1990 and 24 in 1991. No distinction is made between attempted suicides and other acts of deliberate self-harm. Information for earlier years is not available. No deaths occurred as a result of acts of deliberate self-harm by teenagers in Welsh prisons in 1991.

Information about attempted suicides in police custody is not recorded centrally by the Home Office or by police forces in Wales. Questions relating to local authority secure accommodation in Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Wolds Remand Centre

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers and grades of staff employed at the Wolds remand centre.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are 196 people working at Wolds prison. They include prisoner custody officers and supervisors; management, administrative and maintenance staff; full and part-time chaplains; subcontracted catering, medical and education staff and seconded probation officers.

Probation Service

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to market test all or any of the work of the probation service in England and Wales.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 28 October 1992]*: The Government's intention to apply market testing principles to aspects of the work undertaken by the probation service was set out in the "Competing for Quality" White Paper, including the encouragement of competition within both the public and independent sectors in the development and management of hostels.

Passports

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passports are lost each year when submitted for revision of name or other details to the Passport Agency.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the chief executive of the United Kingdom Passport Agency. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. Hayzelden to Ms. Tessa Jowell, dated 30 October 1992:

PASSPORTS

The Home Secretary has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about passports submitted to the Passport Agency for revision of name or other details.

The UK Passport Agency issues over 3 million new or replacement passports each year. In addition, over 250,000 passports are submitted for a change of name or the addition of children's names. Most of these new, replacement or amended passports are sent out by post, although there is a facility for customers to collect their completed passports in person if this is more convenient.

It is very rare for a passport that has been submitted for a name change to be lost in the Passport Office, though some do go astray in the post. For that reason, we do not keep separate statistics. I am aware of a particular problem that arose in relation to one of your constituents on which you are in correspondence with the London Passport Office. We are naturally keen to ensure that such problems do not arise in future. We have impressed on all staff the importance of document security, both from the point of view of customer service and the prevention of passport fraud.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Turks and Caicos Islands

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to give greater autonomy to the Turks and Caicos islands.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A constitutional commissioner visited the Turks and Caicos Islands in February 1992 and his report was placed in the libraries of the House of Commons and House of Lords on 27 July. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will decide what action to take about the commissioner's recommendations once consultation with the Turks and Caicos Islands is complete.

European Community Law

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *696*, if he will make a statement on the principal duties of citizens which flow from the direct effect of EC law.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Mostly EC laws concern Governments, public bodies and companies. However, some do affect individuals directly, especially if they are traders, eg the Directive on Toy Safety. Another example, binding on all, is the duty to inform the authorities of the transfer of a firearm under the Weapons Directive. Nowhere is there any duty of the kind normally regarded as deriving from national citizenship, eg military service.

Albania

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level of consular representation in Albania; whether he will extend that representation to full embassy status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is a British chargé d'affaires in Tirana. He undertakes a limited range of consular functions. There are no immediate plans to change this arrangement.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Heads of State of Community member states hold any different status under article 8 of the treaty of Rome proposed under the Maastricht treaty from that held by other citizens of the union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No. Heads of Community member states will be entitled to the same rights as other citizens of the European union.

Baltic States

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government concerning the decision by the Russian Government to slow, or cease, the withdrawal of troops from the Baltic countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in frequent contact with the Russian Government about the withdrawal of former Soviet troops from the Baltic states and will, of course, be expressing our concern about the latest developments. We were encouraged by the Russian/Lithuanian agreement of 8 September on the withdrawal of troops by 31 August 1993, and look to Russia to agree to, and implement, similar timetables with Estonia and Latvia, in accordance with the terms of the Helsinki declaration of July 1992.

Council of Ministers

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community's Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The information is as follows:

Council of Ministers business for November 1992

1. The following meetings are planned:

3 November: Consumer Affairs Council
9 November: Foreign Affairs Council
10 November: Internal Market Council
12 November: Culture Council
13 November: Health Council
16 November
17 November } Agricultural Council
17 November: Budget Council
18 November: Development Council
19 November: Telecommunications Council
23 November: Economic and Finance Council
23 November: Fisheries Council
24 November: Industrial Affairs Council
27 November: Education Council
30 November: Energy Council

2. The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

(a) *Consumer Affairs Council—3 November*
- —Sixth amendment to cosmetics directive
- —Time-share
- —Distance selling
- —Comparative advertising
- —Consumer aspects of Sutherland report on operation of the Internal Market
- —Enforcement of consumer protection law
- —Rapid information of exchange system on consumer products
- —European home and leisure accident surveillance system (EHLASS)

(b) *Foreign Affairs Council—9 November*
- —Follow up to Birmingham European Council
  - —Ratification of Maastricht
  - —Subsidiarity
  - —Transparency
- —Delors II package
- —Enlargement—Finland
- —33rd meeting of EC/Turkey Association Council
- —Ex-Yugoslavia
- —Phare programme

(c) *Internal Market Council—10 November*
- —Abolition of frontier controls
- —2nd amendment of machinery directive (possible)
- —External projections on vehicles of category N (possible)
- —Regulation of the CE Mark (possible)
- —Vehicle noise (possible)
- —2/3 wheeled vehicles: braking and power (possible)
- —2nd company law directive
- —European company statute (6516/91)
- —Making the Single Market work post 1992
- —Community trademark regulations
- —Medicines—agency and future systems (9490/91)
- —Rental and lending rights (possible) (6344/92)
- —Harmonisation of copyright term
- —Amendment to public works directive (possible)
- —Food hygiene directive (possible) (4690/92)
- —Sweeteners directive (possible) (7762/92)
- —Directive and regulation on cultural goods (9962/91)
- —Standardisation and intellectual property

(d) *Culture Council—12 November*
- —Cultural priorities
- —City of culture
- —Books and reading
- —Cultural goods (possible)

(e) *Health Council—13 November*
- —Future action in the field of public health (SEC(92)1866)
- —Communicable diseases
- —Health education (6571/92)
- —Drugs
  - —2nd drug demand reduction report (7291/92)
  - —information of the European Drugs Prevention Week
- —Tobacco
  - —draft tobacco advertising directive (6294/92)

—orientation debate on Presidency memorandum (9030/92)
—Cancer evaluation (possible)

(f) *Agriculture Council—16-17 November*
—Bananas (8372/92; 9023/92; 9421/92; 9432/92)
—Agrimoney (7907/92; 9361/92)
—Milk codification (8950/91; 9280/92)
—Italian milk quotas (8067/92; 9261/1/92)
—Spanish and Portuguese transition
—GATT (not applicable)
—Integrated controls (possible) (10537/91; 9373/92)
—New Zealand butter (possible)
—Sheep VRAs (possible)
—Sugar (cane) (possible)
—Animal identification (possible) (6414/92; 9446/92)
—Exotic disease (possible)
—General welfare (possible)

(g) *Budget Council—17 November*
—Draft community budget for 1993

(h) *Development Council—18 November*
—Development co-operation policy in the run-up to 2000 (107/3/92)
—Family planning in co-operation with developing countries (121/1/92)
—Human rights, democracy and development (125/92)
—Follow up to UNCED
—clean and efficient energy for development (120/1/92)
—financial aspects
—Emergency aid
—Somalia
—Mozambique
—Flexibility in responding to disasters and subsequent rehabilitation needs
—Untying of aid
—Co-operation with NGOs

(i) *Telecommunications Council—19 November*
—ONP directive on voice telephony
—Resolution on frequencies
—Resolution on numbering policy
—Review of article 90 Services directive and ONP framework directive
—HDTV Action plan
—Postal services green paper
—Telecoms manufacturing industry
—Trans-European networks (possible)
—ETSI and intellectual property rights (possible)

(j) (*Economic and Finance Council—23 November*
—Delors II
—Belgian convergence programme
—Relations with FSU/CEE
—Abolition of fiscal frontiers
—Investment services directive
—Direct tax
—Fraud
—Customs convention
—Balance of payments loan to Italy
—Transport taxation (possible)

(k) *Fisheries Council—23 November*
—Annual price fixing for fish
—Tariff suspensions/quotas
—New basic regulation (replacing 170/83)
—Amendment of structure regulation (4028/86)
—Orientation debate on structural policy (possible)
—Commission report on industrial fishing (possible)
—Commission report on discards (possible)

(l) *Industrial Affairs Council—24 November*
—Business and environment
—SMES
—Competition policy
—Administrative simplification
—ECSC—Future of Treaty of Paris
—Spanish steel
—Mining (possible)
—Maritime industries (possible)

(m) *Education Council—27 November*
—Tempus II (educational links with Eastern and Central Europe) (9082/92)
—European dimension in higher education
—Open and distance learning
—Health education in schools (6571/92)
—EC/US cooperation in education and training (7192/92)
—European schools (6700/92)
—Information from the Commission
—consultation on commission memorandum on higher education (9497/91)

(n) *Energy Council—30 November*
—Liberalisation of energy markets (4911/92)
—Hydrocarbon licensing regimes (6566/92)
—Oil crisis measures (6245/92)
—EC accession to the International Energy agency (IEA) (6245/92)
—New and renewables (ALTENER) programme (7757/92)
—Energy efficiency (SAVE) programme (7847/92)
—Stabilization of CO2 emissions (8918/91)
—European Energy Charter

3. The *Consumer Affairs Council* will meet on 3 November where Ministers will seek to achieve a common position on the proposed 6th Council amendment to the cosmetics directive. The Council will also discuss the following: time-share and distance selling; comparative advertising; consumer aspects of the Sutherland report on operation of the Internal market; the enforcement of consumer protection law; the rapid information exchange system on consumer products and the European Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance System (EHLASS).

4. The *Foreign Affairs Council* will meet on 9 November. Items for consideration by Ministers will include follow up to the Birmingham European Council; further discussion on the Commission's proposals for the future financing of the Community (the "Delors II package") and progress on the current applications for EC membership. Ministers will also discuss the former Yugoslavia and the Community's response to the latest developments, including the humanitarian crisis. The Council will approve draft conclusions outlining the Commission approach to the second phase of the PHARE programme. A Cooperation Council with Turkey will also be held in the margins.

5. The *Internal Market Council* will meet on 10 November and will discuss the abolition of frontier controls; the 2nd company law directive; European company statute; making the Single Market work Post 1992; the Community trademark regulation; proposals for regulation and directives on the future system for the free movement of medicinal products; harmonisation of copyright term; a proposal for a Council regulation on the export of cultural goods, and standardisation and intellectual property. The Council may also consider the 2nd amendment of the machinery directive; external projections on certain goods vehicles; vehicle noise; rental and lending rights; an amendment to the public works directive; the food hygiene directive and the sweeteners directive.

6. The *Culture Council* will meet on 12 November. The Council will consider a Commission communication on new perspectives for the European City of Culture programme; a public awareness campaign for books and reading and a proposal for a regulation on the export of cultural goods.

7. The *Health Council* will meet on 13 November and will discuss a framework for future action in the field of public health. The Council is also expected to agree a draft resolution on the monitoring and surveillance of communicable diseases. Other items for discussion by Ministers include: a report on health education in schools; draft conclusions on the 2nd report on drug demand reduction; information on the European Drug Prevention Week; the draft directive on tobacco advertising and an evaluation of the 1991 report on "Europe against Cancer".

8. The *Agriculture Council* will meet on 16 and 17 November. Ministers will discuss bananas; the agrimonetary system; milk codification; Italian milk quotas; Spanish and Portuguese transitional arrangements, and the agriculture aspects of

GATT. Discussion may also focus on: integrated administrative controls; New Zealand butter; sheep voluntary restraint agreements; animal identification; exotic diseases and general welfare.

9. The *Budget Council* will meet on 17 November to discuss the European Parliament's amendments and modifications as a result of their first reading of the draft budget for 1993.

10. The *Development Council* will meet on 18 November and will agree common objectives for the Community and member states for the 90s including a work programme and mechanisms for improving coordination and collaboration. Ministers will endorse priorities and objectives for the community in family planning in cooperation with developing countries. A review of the November 1991 resolution on human rights, democracy and development in the light of a Commission report on its implementation; how the Community's research and technology programmes might benefit developing countries, and details of the 3 becu promised by the Community in support of Agenda 21 at the Rio Conference will also be considered. The Council will discuss various aspects of the Community's response to disasters, including the Community and member states action in Somalia and their participation in the UN 100-day plan for Somalia, and ways of increasing flexibility of funding the Community response to disasters. An oral report on Community plans for Mozambique will also be heard. Other items for discussion include: an oral report on progress made in drafting a proposal on untying aid at Community level and a Commission paper which describes follow-up to the May 1991 Council resolution on NGOs.

11. The *Telecommunications Council* will meet on 19 November. Discussion will concentrate on the ONP directive on voice telephony; the Council resolution on frequencies, a review of the Article 90 services directive and the ONP framework directive; the HDTV action plan; the postal services green paper and the telecoms manufacturing industry. Trans-European networks, ETSI and intellectual property rights may also be discussed.

12. The *Economic and Finance Council* will meet on 23 November to consider further the Commission's proposals for the future financing of the Community (Delors II). Ministers will also discuss the Belgian convergence programme; aid to Romania and the Baltic States, and the abolition of fiscal frontiers. The Council will continue in its efforts to achieve a common position on the Investment Services Directive. The draft 7th Directive on the sale of second-hand goods, works of art, antiques and collector's items; the United Kingdom Presidency's paper on increases in the current Third Country travellers' allowances; matters concerning the Community action to combat fraud against the EC budget, and a request from Italy for a balance of payments loan may also be discussed. Further items for discussion may include: the draft simplification directives for VAT and excise, and the signing of the Customs Information system Convention by EC Finance Ministers.

13. The *Fisheries Council* will meet on 23 November. Ministers may discuss: annual price fixing on fish; tariff suspension/quotas; the new basic regulation that will replace 170/83; amendment of the structures regulation 4028/83 orientation debate on structural policy; new control regulations; the Commission report on industrial fishing and the Commission report on discards.

14. The *Industrial Affairs Council* will meet on 24 November. The Council hope to discuss resolutions on the strengthening of the Community's commitment to minimizing the administrative burdens placed on business by Community legislation and on the proper integration of environmental and industrial policies. Ministers are also expected to discuss the phasing out of the ECSC Treaty; the future direction of Community policy on small and medium sized enterprises; competition policy and the Commission proposal to allow Spain to give restructuring aid to its steel industry. Other items include: communications on maritime industries and Community non-energy mining.

15. The *Education Council* will meet on 27 November and will have an orientation debate on the proposal for a second phase of the TEMPUS programme, which offers support to the higher education systems of Central and Eastern Europe. Ministers will also discuss conclusions on measures for developing of the European dimension in higher education, and on criteria for the Community action on open and distance learning. The Council will consider a report on Health education in schools and the Commission's proposal for a programme of EC/US Cooperation in Education and Training. Amendment to the convention defining the statute of the European Schools, and a presentation from the Commission on the outcomes of the consultations on their memorandum on higher education in the EC is also likely to be discussed.

16. The *Energy Council* will meet on 30 November. Ministers will discuss proposals for the promotion of new and renewable energies (ALTENER); oil crisis measures; Community accession to the IEA, and harmonisation of hydrocarbon licensing regimes. The Council will also consider proposals for liberalisation of the gas and electricity markets; improved energy efficiency as well as progress in relation to the rest of the Community's strategy to limit CO_2 emissions, and the European Energy Charter. Discussion may further focus on a new Community regime for state aids to the coal industry.

North Atlantic Assembly

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the United Kingdom delegation to the North Atlantic Assembly.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following will represent the United Kingdom at the North Atlantic Assembly:

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, MP (Leader)
Mr. Robert Banks, MP
Mr. Winston Churchill, MP
Sir Peter Emery, MP
Mr. Michael Jopling, MP
Mr. Patrick Nicholls, MP
Mr. Peter Viggers, MP
Mr. Jerry Wiggin, MP
The Earl of Kimberley
Lord Lucas of Chilworth
Dr. David Clark, MP
Mr. Donald Anderson, MP
Mr. Harry Cohen, MP
Mr. Frank Cook, MP
Mr. Bruce George, MP
Mrs. Alice Mahon, MP
Lord Howell
Mr. Menzies Campbell, MP

Colombian Coal

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances he has been given by the Colombian authorities that coal being imported into the United Kingdom from Colombia does not come from mines which are exploiting child labour.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government-owned Colombian coal company, Carbocol, has assured the British Government that no coal exported to the United Kingdom is produced using child labour.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide details of the outcome of the meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency board of governors in June.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

A copy of the International Atomic Energy Agency newsbrief for June-July 1992, containing details of the meetings of the June board of governors, has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Israel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what restrictions remain in place on the export of nuclear materials or equipment to Israel.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

Exports of nuclear materials or equipment to Israel as set out in the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1991, as amended, require a licence issued by the Department of Trade and Industry. Applications for export licences are considered on their individual merits and take account of advice received from other Government Departments which will reflect the United Kingdom's obligations in respect of nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been spent by the International Atomic Energy Agency in each of the last five years on monitoring work in relation to the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The published accounts show that International Atomic Energy Agency expenditure on nuclear safeguards in each of the last five years has been as follows:

	United States $ million
1987	43·8
1988	47·5
1989	48·3
1990	58·6
1991	58·0

DEFENCE

Indonesian Armed Forces

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will discontinue the training of members of the Indonesian armed forces by the United Kingdom armed forces and in his Ministry's establishments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Naval Bases

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide the most recent figures for the annual running costs of *(a)* Portland naval base, excluding the naval air station, *(b)* Portsmouth naval base and *(c)* Devonport naval base.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In 1991-92 the annual running costs of the three naval bases were:

Naval Base	*£ million*
(a) Portland (excluding air station)	12·1
(b) Portsmouth	99·7
(c) Devonport (excluding royal dockyard)	86·7

These totals exclude major expenditure on capital works and the cost of lodger units accommodated in all naval bases.

Defence Support Agency

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what performance targets have been set for the Director General of the Defence Accounts Defence Support Agency for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The director general of defence accounts has been set a range of revised targets for 1992-93 that will ensure continuing improvement in the quality of service he provides to Defence and other customers.

The targets set for the period 1992-93 are:

—To achieve the agreed Headquarters Staff reductions arising from Options for Change by 31 March 1993.

—To carry out agreed tasks to time and standard within budget.

—To seek to achieve, in co-operation with his customers, higher standards in the delivery of services.

—To establish a training policy and training plan by 31 March 1993.

—To seek further efficiencies in the use of resources, including the use of new technology, to the advantage of the Agency and its customers, thereby making efficiency savings of at least 0·5 per cent. of the total Cash Budget.

—To complete the feasibility stage of the mainframe replacement study by 30 September 1992.

—To take on new bill payment business from the Property Services Agency in respect of defence works by 31 March 1993.

—To continue to develop improved management and financial information systems which will meet the needs of internal management and satisfy requirements for reports from the Secretary of State.

—To ensure the successful implementation of the amendment of the MOD central ledger system for a revised vote structure to meet the needs of the new management strategy by 31 March 1993.

Performance against these key targets will be published in the director general's report and accounts in April next year, a copy of which will be placed in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Housing

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the forthcoming local authority housing investment programme bids.

Mr. Baldry: As is customary, the relevant local authority associations have made representations at national level through the consultative mechanism under the Housing Consultative Council, and individual local housing authorities have submitted housing investment programme strategy statements and bids to my Department's regional offices. These will all be considered before decisions are announced in December.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for improving the right-to-repair scheme for council tenants.

Mr. Baldry: Provisions for a new right to repair are included in the Housing and Urban Development Bill introduced on 22 October. The new scheme will replace the existing right to repair and will enable secure tenants of local authorities to have qualifying urgent repairs carried out by a second contractor when the first has not done the work by a target date. Details of the scheme, including the qualifying repairs, will be set out in regulations which may also require landlords to pay compensation if the first contractor fails to do a repair within the target time.

Housing (Multiple Occupation)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received expressing objections to chapter 7 of the draft housing in multiple occupancy management guide; and if what is his policy toward that chapter.

Mr. Baldry: The Department received 22 representations which expressed objections to chapter 7 of the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation Management Guide; 48 responses to the consultation were received in total. All comments received will be taken into consideration when the final version of the management guide is to be produced in due course.

Homelessness

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to allow an automatic right of appeal to county courts for homeless applicants who are refused provision by a local authority.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have no immediate plans for further legislative change.

Private Rented Sector

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidelines requesting that each property within the private rented sector should be issued a minimum and maximum controlled rent level within the maximum rent payable when the property is proven to be of a set standard.

Mr. Baldry: No. Years of rent controls have contributed to the decline in the private rented sector. We removed these from most new lettings as part of the package of deregulation measures introduced by the Housing Act 1988 designed to revive the sector.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that tenants are enabled to take effective legal action against private rented sector landlords who default on repair obligations.

Mr. Baldry: Tenants can already take action against private landlords who fail to carry out repairs either by taking the landlord to court themselves or by bringing the matter to the attention of their local authority. Local authorities have powers to require private landlords to carry out repairs or if necessary to do the work themselves and charge the landlord. These powers were considerably strengthened by the Housing Act 1988. We therefore have no plans to make any further amendments to the legislation.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to encourage the establishment of rental deposit boards to monitor the return to private rented sector tenants of deposits against damage.

Mr. Baldry: Although we do not consider the compulsory use of rent deposit boards to be desirable, we would welcome any proposals to set up such schemes on a voluntary basis.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidelines to local authorities to encourage the setting up of licensing and monitoring systems for the private rented sector.

Mr. Baldry: No. We would not wish to introduce further regulation into the private rented sector.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish a committee of inquiry into private rented accommodation.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to establish a new form of protected tenancy within the private rented sector, with limited grounds granted for early repossession.

Mr. Baldry: We have no plans to introduce such a tenancy.

Domestic Water Supplies

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state by region the number of water disconnections for non-payment in 1991-92 and 1990-91 *(a)* for domestic properties and *(b)* for commercial properties.

Mr. Maclean: Water companies are obliged to report disconnections every six months to OFWAT's customer service committees. This information is collated and published by the Director General of Water Services in a press release twice a year. The following table contains the Director General's information on disconnection of domestic customers and non-domestic disconnections in the form requested.

(a) Disconnections by area (domestic)

Region	*1991-92*	*1990-91*
Central	4,797	462
Eastern	1,889	971
North West	2,074	889
Northumbria	1,009	662
South West	381	210
Southern	3,064	429
Thames	2,084	966
Wales	2,951	1,305
Wessex	492	194
Yorkshire	2,545	1,585

Source: OFWAT News Release PN15/92.

(b) Disconnections by area (non domestic)

Region	*1991-92*	*1990-91*
Central	870	409
Eastern	145	149
North West	177	129
Northumbria	228	249
South West	11	9
Southern	356	191
Thames	264	160
Wales	84	92
Wessex	9	20
Yorkshire	217	143
All areas	2,391	1,551

Source: OFWAT 26 October 1992.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce proposals to ensure that public authorities are notified of any domestic water disconnections on grounds of health and safety.

Mr. Maclean: Section 63 of the Water Industry Act 1991 already requires a water undertaker who disconnects, or otherwise cuts off, a supply of water to any inhabited house and does so without restoring the supply to that house within 24 hours, to serve notice informing the local authority in whose area the house is situated no later than 48 hours after the supply is cut off.

Charities (Water Payments)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will act to ensure that properties used for charitable or community use such as churches have concessionary standing charges for their water payments.

Mr. Maclean: No. Water companies are private companies and their charges must cover their costs and it is for them to decide their tariffs subject to the Director General of Water Services' duty under section 2(3)(a) of the Water Industry Act 1991, to ensure that their pricing is not discriminatory. The Director General recognises that standing charges may represent a large proportion of water charges for some customers and has asked water companies to consider their tariff structures to ensure that they reflect the true costs of supply in different cases.

Industrial Development, Merseyside

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he will make to further industrial development in the area of the Merseyside development corporation.

Mr. Robin Squire: MDC has a substantial programme of encouraging industrial development, through the creation of business parks, formation of industrial associations and strategy to secure inward investment. MDC's policies are discussed with the Department regularly, at the ministerial meeting on the corporate plan and with officials at the Merseyside task force throughout the year.

House Building

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration his Department has given to the access committee for England's publication, "Building Homes for Successive Generations: Criteria for Accessible General Housing"; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have seen a copy of this publication and will consider it together with other information, in order to establish how best to improve access for disabled people in new housing.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses in the network installer area which contains the constituency of East Edinburgh have been improved under the home energy efficiency scheme since the scheme's inception.

Mr. Maclean: Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 3,534 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

Poll Tax

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of adults in the city of Southampton registered for the poll tax for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: The latest information available to the Department relates to the financial year 1991-92 when there were 156,600 people registered as subject to a personal community charge in Southampton.

Fraud

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many pregnant single women were prosecuted for fraud related to obtaining council house accommodation in each of the last five years and in the current year to the most recent practicable date.

Mr. Baldry: Such information is not held centrally.

Somerset House

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made in opening up Somerset house to wider public access.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made in opening up Somerset house to wider public access.

Mr. Howard: I have invited Mr. Trevor Osbourne, chairman of Speyhawk, in conjunction with the Prince of Wales' Institute of Architecture and with Kings college, to prepare within six months detailed proposals for possible future uses for Somerset house, involving, amongst others, the organisations and individuals, who have written to me and my Department with their ideas. I have stressed that the proposal should not incur any extra public expenditure.

Methane

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the contributions to the United Kingdom total methane emissions from landfills in Scotland and Northern Ireland will be.

Mr. Maclean: Direct estimates of total methane production from landfills in Scotland and Northern Ireland have not been made. An estimate based on population and waste arising statistics suggests that the figure is likely to be between 10 per cent. and 15 per cent. of the total for England and Wales, or between 100,000 and 150,000 tonnes per annum.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Judges' Pensions

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will bring forward proposals to enable judges to purchase additional years for pension purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor announced during the Report stage of the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Bill in another place that it is his intention to bring forward further amendments to that Bill in order that members of either the present judicial pension schemes, or of the new scheme, may make voluntary contributions within Revenue limits toward the cost of benefits in addition to those otherwise obtainable under those schemes.

Consumer Credit Act 1974

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the number of orders granted under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 for all London courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mortgage Arrears

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, (1) if he will publish for each of the county courts in London the usual length of the reasonable period in the allowance of time for mortgage borrowers to pay arrears;

(2) how many possession orders have been suspended but have not yet been enforced in each of London's county courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps he will take, as part of his civil justice system review, to ensure that all county courts in London have a duty adviser scheme for home owners facing repossession.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are no plans to ensure that all county courts in London have a duty adviser scheme for home owners facing repossession. From early next year, courts will send out a list of sources of free advice with each possession summons.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the county courts in London which have duty adviser schemes for home owners.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The London county courts which have duty adviser schemes for home owners provided by advice agencies are Lambeth, Bow, Clerkenwell and West London.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list, for each county court in London, the percentage figure that suspended possession orders represent as a total of the number of actions issued in each county court for home owners, the percentage figure for adjournments as part of the total number of actions entered for home owners, and the percentage figures as part of the total of absolute possession orders issued.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what guidance he gives county court judges in defining the reasonable period and in the issue of time orders for payment of arrears of mortgage.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The guidance given is that there is no set period. Sometimes a period of 24 months should be considered; often a longer period will be appropriate, particularly where the equity is substantial or the remaining life of the mortgage long.

TRANSPORT

Public Service Vehicles

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to tighten up the driving hours regulations for public service vehicles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Both the current EC regulations and our domestic legislation on drivers' hours were designed to give drivers and operators flexibility, whilst retaining proper regard for road safety. We have no plans at present to propose changes.

Investment

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to stimulate new investments by British vessel owners.

Mr. Norris: Proposals for fiscal measures to stimulate investment are for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Department is considering with the Chamber of Shipping and within the EC what other measures might be taken to encourage the growth of the British and other European fleets. We have also been taking forward action on the recommendations of the report of the joint working party, "British Shipping: Challenges and Opportunities", which will help the general climate for investment.

Cyclists

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, as part of his quality of service objectives, he will require the publication of all reports relating to the safety of cyclists commissioned using public money.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is our general policy to publish all road safety research reports commissioned by the Department unless there is a particular reason for not doing so—for example, the need to respect commercial confidentiality.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on *(a)* the degree of concentration and *(b)* the likely effect of poisonous gases if Halon 1301 is used in the channel tunnel to suppress fire.

Mr. Freeman: The use of halon gas in the channel tunnel was reviewed by the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority in its paper "Non-segregation of drivers and passengers from their vehicles", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. In agreeing to the use of Halon 1301 the authority accepted evidence showing that halon is not harmful at the concentrations used to extinguish fires. Studies also show that the decomposition products of halon do not reach harmful concentrations if it is released before the fire has attained large proportions. But in view of possible irritant effects, the authority concluded that halon should not be released in the compartment of a tunnel shuttle wagon unless it had been evacuated or as a last resort if the lives of passengers were threatened.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will require the channel tunnel safety authority to publish information about the safety tests conducted on the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: The safety authority propose to publish a commentary on the fire safety and evacuation tests being undertaken by Eurotunnel.

Shipping

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to meet the chairman of British Shipping to discuss the future of the British merchant fleet.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Caithness meet the president of the Chamber of Shipping and other industry representatives periodically to discuss a wide range of shipping issues.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of international shipping was carried by British-owned ships in 1991; what were the comparable figures for 1971 and 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is not available. However, figures showing the proportion of United Kingdom international seaborne trade carried in United Kingdom registered vessels are published annually. The latest is a Department of Transport Statistics Report, "Seaborne Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom 1991", available in the Library.

Emergency Vessels

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision has been made for fire protection legislation for those vessels which have been converted to emergency standby vessels operating in offshore oil and gas fields, whose keels were laid between September 1984 and October 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The legislative provisions for fire protection on standby vessels as described are contained in the Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection) Regulations 1984 (Statutory Instrument 1984 No. 1218) as amended by Statutory Instruments 1985 No. 1193 and 1986 No. 1070. Further measures are contained in the joint Health and Safety Executive/Department of Transport publication "Assessment of the suitability of standby vessels attending offshore installations" (ISBN 0-11-551024-9).

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to extend the orange badge scheme to include the profoundly deaf.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* I have no plans to extend the orange badge scheme to include the profoundly deaf.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Voluntary Schools

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in his consideration of the level of capital grant rate for voluntary schools in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The question of an increased capital grant rate to voluntary schools in Northern Ireland was raised during consultations on the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) told the House in December 1989, our view has been that an increase in capital grants could be considered but would have to be accompanied by significant changes in management structure. Subsequently, in its sixteenth annual report presented to the House in July 1991, the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights recommended a review of the grant rate and accompanying administrative arrangements.

Discussions have taken place with the voluntary school authorities and it is clear from these that there are some voluntary schools which are having difficulty in meeting their share of the capital cost of necessary school developments. They have told me that these schools would welcome an opportunity for 100 per cent. capital funding; and that they would be content to operate under different management structures. I have also been mindful of the facts that the education reform process has in many cases increased the need for capital expenditure, and that grant-maintained status is not available in Northern Ireland.

At the same time, it is equally clear that parents, teachers, and the voluntary school authorities themselves would not wish to see any change in the distinctive ethos of the existing schools, including the denominational nature of many of these schools, and that any changes in grant rates and management structures would therefore have to be without prejudice to that distinctive ethos. It has been common ground throughout the discussions that parental rights of conscience in matters of education should not be affected or diminished in any way.

Against this background, I am pleased to say that we have identified in discussion an approach which I believe will meet the legitimate concerns both of the voluntary school authorities and of the Government. This will be to allow maintained schools and voluntary grammar schools to opt for designation as a new category of voluntary school which will be eligible for 100 per cent. capital grant. Such schools would, however, be managed by a board of governors on which no single interest group will command a majority of nominees. Similar management principles apply to controlled schools, and grant-maintained integrated schools which already have their capital costs met in full from public funds.

For example, in the case of a voluntary maintained school or voluntary grammar school with nine governors, only four would be appointed by the school trustees or foundation governors. The balance would be composed of representatives of parents, teachers, the relevant area education and library board, and the Department of Education for Northern Ireland. In the case of Catholic maintained schools, the DENI nominee would be chosen after consultation with the Council for Catholic maintained schools, which has a statutory duty to advise DENI on matters relating to Catholic maintained schools. I should emphasise that this would create a new additional category of voluntary school and existing schools will be able to decide to retain their present management structure and remain eligible for capital grant rate of 85 per cent.

Legislation proposals to give effect to these arrangements will be contained in a proposal for a draft Education (Northern Ireland) Order which I hope to publish early in 1993. The detail of the proposed new arrangements will be the subject of consultation in the normal way.

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Mates: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the following Agencies under their respective Chief Executives.

Agency	*Chief Executive*
Training and Employment Agency	Mr. J. Crozier
Rates Collection Agency	Mr. D. Gallagher
Social Security Agency	Mr. A. Wylie
Ordnance Survey Agency	Mr. M. Brand
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency	Mr. B. Watson
Compensation Agency	Mr. J. Robinson

I have asked them to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. Crozier to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

You asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he would list by grade the numbers of staff and their costs for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each Executive Agency for which he is responsible.

As Chief Executive of the Training and Employment Agency (T and EA) (Northern Ireland), I provide at attached Table 1, the figures for 1991-92 and at Table 2 the estimated figures for 1992-93 for the T and EA.

Table 1—1991-92

Grade	*Number*	*Cost (£)*
Under Secretary (G3)	1	58,720
Unified Grade 4 (G4)	1	50,768
Assistant Secretary (G5)	4	167,409
Principal (G7)	22	677,745
Deputy Principal	47	1,221,601
Staff Officer	71	1,291,740
Executive Officer 1	108	1,721,228
Executive Officer 2	199	2,623,320
Administrative Officer	306	3,056,993
Administrative Assistant	133	1,058,221
Careers Adviser	4	73,341
Senior Careers Officer	18	301,826
Careers Officer	95	1,295,736
Trainee Careers Officer	28	399,956
Catering Manager 3	1	15,474
Deputy Principal Statistician	1	14,181
Senior Instructional Officer	41	884,905
Higher Instructional Officer	52	1,150,179
Instructional Officer 1	301	5,060,712
Training Service Manager	35	906,674
Deputy Principal Information Officer	1	21,336
Nurse	4	50,286
Support Grade Band 1	8	70,757
Support Grade Band 2	43	548,293
Psychologist (Grad Trainee)	2	17,373
Senior Psychologist	1	20,618
Senior Systems Analyst	1	26,588
Senior Personal Secretary	2	19,260
Typist	5	51,432
Management Training Advisor	1	25,884
Industrial Grades	118	1,035,317
Support Manager 3	1	9,414
Administrative Trainee	1	4,689
Total	1,656	23,931,976

Table 2
Estimated costs 1992-93

Grade	*Number*	*Cost (£)*
Under Secretary (G3)	1	57,269
Unified Grade 4 (G4)	1	53,015
Assistant Secretary (G5)	4	176,120
Senior Principal Officer (G6)	1	41,115
Principal (G7)	21	696,759
Deputy Principal	51	1,389,750
Staff Officer	70	1,355,620
Executive Officer 1	104·5	1,744,837
Executive Officer 2	193	2,702,193
Administrative Officer	288·1	3,138,273
Administrative Assistant	143	1,223,788
Careers Adviser	4	77,780
Senior Careers Officer	17	301,818
Careers Officer	102·6	1,594,712
Trainee Careers Officers	17	241,383
Catering Manager 3	1	16,662
Senior Instructional Officer	46	988,724
Higher Instructional Officer	55	1,088,890
Instructional Officer	286	5,274,126
Training Services Manager	36	981,000
Nurse	10	110,326
Support Grade Band 1	9	97,362
Support Grade Band 2	47	446,421
Psychologist (Grad Trainee)	2	28,846
Senior Psychologist	1	22,456
Senior Personal Secretary	1	15,724
Typist	5	51,955
Management Training Adviser	1	27,308
Industrial Grades	120	1,090,407
Support Manager 3	1	13,326
Total	1,639	25,047,965
Overtime and performance pay		119,462
		25,167,427

Letter from D. Gallagher to Mr. Martin Redmond dated 2 November 1992:

As I am responsible for the Northern Ireland Rate Collection Agency (RCA), the Secretary of State has asked me to reply to a Parliamentary Question recently put down by you. This related to the numbers of staff, by grade, and their cost for 1991-92 and estimated figures for 1992-93.

I attach a table summarising the numbers of RCA staff by grade for 1991-92 and a corresponding estimate for 1992-93. Salary costs (excluding superannuation) for 1991-92 totalled £3,399,372 and the estimated salary costs for 1992-93 are £3·6 million.

Rate Collection Agency—Staffing figures
The staffing figures given below reflect the position as at 29 October 1992

Staff Grade	*Number of staff 1991-92*	*Estimated number of staff 1992-93*
Chief Executive (Grade 6)	1	1
Principal	1	1
Deputy Principal	4	4
Staff Officer	11	12
Executive Officer I	22	23

Staff Grade	*Number of staff 1991-92*	*Estimated number of staff 1992-93*
Executive Officer II	37	38
Administrative Officer	170	168
Administrative Assistant	10	11
Support Grade 1	1	1
Support Grade 2	9	9
Security Officer	1	0
Typist	2	2
Total number of Staff	269	270

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

Your recent Parliamentary Question asking for the numbers of staff by grade and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each Executive Agency in Northern Ireland has been passed to me for reply as regards the Social Security Agency as I am its Chief Executive.

I enclose the information you request but there are some points I should bring to your attention. Firstly, the figures cover not only work related to payment of social security benefits in Northern Ireland but also work undertaken on behalf of the Benefits Agency in Great Britain at our Paid Order Unit and Belfast Benefits Centre and work in connection with the collection and enforcement of National Insurance contributions.

Secondly, I should also explain that, inevitably, the numbers of staff in the Agency fluctuate throughout the year so I have provided figures as at 31 March 1992 and the estimated figures for 31 March 1993.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Social Security Agency: Manpower and Costs

	Number
Staff numbers by grade at 31 March 1992	
Grades 3 to 6	7
Principal	26
Deputy Principal	63
Staff Officer	167
Executive Officer Grade 1	348·5
SSO Grade 1/EO2	958
SSO Grade 2/AO	2,323
Administrative Assistant	903
Secretarial/Support	315
TOTAL	5,110·5
Costs £000s	67,203
Estimated staff numbers by grade at 31 March 1993	
Grades 3 to 6	7
Principal	28
Deputy Principal	70
Staff Officer/Administrative Trainee	190
Executive Officer Grade 1	359
SSO Grade 1/EO2	964·5
SSO Grade 2/AO	2,449
Administrative Assistant	858·5
Secretarial/Support	316
TOTAL	5,242
Estimated costs £000's	73,906

Notes: Staff numbers quoted refer to full-time equivalent permanent staff.
Costs relating to overtime, casual staff and ERNI are included.

Letter from M. Brand to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

You have asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland was launched as a Next Steps Agency on 1 April 1992. The estimated figures for 1992-93 which are listed below are based on the average numbers of staff in each grade over the whole year.

Unified Grade 5	1
Unified Grade 6	1
Unified Grade 7	3
Senior Mapping & Charting Officer	6
Higher Mapping & Charting Officer	17
Mapping & Charting Officer	126
Mapping & Charting Technical Grade 1	37
Mapping & Charting Technical Grade 2	8
Staff Officer	1
Administrative Officer	2
Administrative Assistant	7
Personal Secretary	1
Typist	2
Support Band 1	1
Support Band 2	3

Staff Costs	
Salaries	£3,628,000
Superannuation	£574,200
Accommodation charges	£470,000
Total	£4,672,200

Letter from J. Watson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

I am responding directly on behalf of the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency to your recent Parliamentary Question in which you requested a list by grade of the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each Executive Agency.

The Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency was established on 1 April 1992 and figures for 1991-92 are not applicable.

The estimated figures for 1992-93 are as follows:

Grade	*Number of Staff*	*Costs (£K)*
6	1	47
7	2	75
Deputy Principal	2	61
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	2	60
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	17	396
Staff Officer	3	68
Supervising Examiners	2	45
Professional and Technical Officer	116	2,273
Senior Driving/Traffic Examiners	3	59
Driving/Traffic Examiners	6	[1]117
Executive Officer Grade I	2	[1]39
Executive Officer Grade II	3	[1]49
Administrative Officer	25	[1]322
Administrative Assistant	57	[1]593
Typist/Telephonist	3	[1]36
Industrial Staff	13	[1]202
Estimated Costs for Overtime and Casual Staff		282
		4,724

[1] These estimated costs are inclusive of Employers Related National Insurance Contributions and Superannuation.

Letter from J. Robinson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question about the numbers and cost of staff in executive agencies in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State has asked me to provide the information in respect of the Compensation Agency.

The Compensation Agency was launched on 1 April 1992. The current number of staff in post listed by grade is:

Grade	*Number in post*
Chief Executive	1
Principal	2
Deputy Principal	4
Chief Law Clerk	1
Staff Officer	6
Executive Officer I	16
Law Clerk I	2
Executive Officer II	29
Administrative Officer	32
Administrative Assistant	31
Personal Secretary	1
Typing Manager	1
Typist	7
Messenger	3
Receptionist	1
Senior Accountant	1
Accountant	1
Senior Quantity Surveyor	1
Quantity Surveyor	1
Assistant Solicitor	1
Senior Legal Assistant	7½
Legal Assistant	2½
Total	152

The estimated salary costs for 1992-93 are £2·7 million [running costs £3·4 million].

Holding Centres

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will appoint an independent commissioner for holding centres.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I shall make an announcement on the appointment of a commissioner shortly and place his terms of reference in the Library.

Iraq (Beef)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions have taken place between the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture and companies in the Province relating to the export of non-intervention beef to Iraq; and whether the question of health certificates has been resolved to the satisfaction of the Iraqi importers.

Mr. Hanley: The Department of Agriculture has discussions from time to time with companies in the Province about the health certification required for exporting beef to countries outside the European Community, including Iraq. The terms of a health certificate for Iraq has not yet been resolved to the satisfaction of Iraqi importers.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Power Generation

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what undertakings in power generation have been partly or wholly financed from the overseas aid budget during the last 10 years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Details of ODA's power sector financing over the 10 years 1981-1991 on an annual expenditure basis have been placed in the Libraries of the House. ODA does not directly finance undertakings, i.e. utility organisations, other than through the funding of capital projects or the provision of technical co-operation.

Debt

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to reduce debt burdens incurred by the poorest countries; and what progress has been made since the Earth Summit in Brazil to implement the financial and structural commitments made there.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1990, in Trinidad, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister put forward proposals to reduce significantly the debts of the poorest, most heavily indebted countries. The Paris Club of Government creditors began implementing Trinidad terms in December 1991. The terms currently reduce eligible payments due to governments by up to 50 per cent. Creditors also undertake to consider reducing the whole stock of a country's bilateral official debt after three to four years of economic reform. Ten countries have already benefitted, and we expect more to do so over coming months. We will continue to press for even greater relief to be made available to those low-income, heavily indebted countries that need it.

More than 150 countries signed the conventions on climate change and biological diversity at the Earth Summit. The interim funding mechanism for these two conventions is the global environment facility (GEF). We want to see the GEF established as the permanent funding mechanism for both conventions. We shall make a further contribution to the GEF once the level of its replenishment is agreed, and shall take part in discussions on its restructuring at the participants assembly in December.

Sustainable development is the central aim of our aid programme. We shall continue to focus our aid activities on the priorities set out in "Agenda 21", which lays out a comprehensive strategy for action on environment and development issues into the next century. The current United Nations General Assembly will establish the Sustainable Development Commission, which will have a key role in ensuring effective implementation of "Agenda 21".

EC Development Aid Budget

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 October, *Official Report*, column *708*, what is the draft 1993 EC development aid budget; what was the 1992 budget; and what is the change in constant price terms.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Commission established the preliminary draft budget for 1993 on 15 June 1992. This has a commitments provision for development assistance of 2,037 mecu. This was an increase of 15·11 per cent. over the 1992 approved budget aid commitment provision of 1,770 mecu. Subsequent amendments have raised the commitments provision further to 2,095 mecu, although a final figure is not expected until towards the end of the year. It is not yet possible to calculate a deflator for 1993 to allow a comparison in constant prices.

WALES

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish figures showing the number of instances in each local education authority in Wales where *(a)* services mentioned within statements have been withdrawn by the local education authority and *(b)* parents were informed by their local education authority that obligations outlined in a statement could not be fulfilled due to lack of resources;

(2) what is the estimated cost within each local education authority in Wales for providing specialist equipment in schools for disabled children who are integrated into mainstream education; and what is the average level per disabled pupil integrated into mainstream education of specialist equipment provided by each local education authority;

(3) how many children with special educational needs are currently being withheld from school within each local education authority area in Wales due specifically to disputes over statementing.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available centrally. Local education authorities have a duty to arrange that the special educational provision specified in a child's statement is made available.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to local education authorities to ensure that all special educational needs statements contain a clear definition of resource levels;

(2) if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to local education authorities to ensure that speech therapist and physiotherapist reports conducted as part of an individual's special educational needs statementing procedure are fully taken into account within the final statement;

(3) if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to local education authorities in Wales to simplify the current special educational needs statementing procedures.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Welsh Office circular 54/89 and its addendum, issued in March 1992, give detailed advice to local education authorities on assessment and statementing procedures. These make it clear that, in considering an assessment, a local education authority has to take into account all the advice it has received as part of the statutory process, including medical advice, and, if a statement is warranted, it has to refer to all special educational needs identified during the assessment.

Our new Education Bill contains proposals which will improve the current procedures and make them more responsive to the views of parents. These include the issue of further guidance for local education authorities on the criteria to be used for making assessments and issuing statements. This will be subject to consultation.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many applications have been made for special educational needs statements in each local authority area in Wales; and how many such applications have been successful;

(2) how many pupils with special educational needs there are between the ages of five and 18 years in each local education authority area in Wales; and how many such pupils have received a statement from their local education authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There is no specific system of applications for statements of special educational needs. Local education authorities do, however, have a duty to make and maintain statements if, following a formal assessment, they are of the opinion that they should determine the provision to be made for a child.

Information on the number of pupils between five and 18 in school with statements of special educational need for January 1992 is shown in the following table:

	Number
Clwyd	2,072
Dyfed	1,041
Gwent	1,890
Gwynedd	818
Mid Glamorgan	5,300
Powys	518
South Glamorgan	1,333
West Glamorgan	2,295
Wales	15,267

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average length of time taken between actual application and the granting of special educational needs statements within each local education authority area in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available. The Welsh Office has issued guidance to local education authorities that the period of time from the initial notification to the authority that an assessment might be necessary to the production of a draft statement should not exceed six months. Our Education Bill proposes legislation to ensure that the assessment procedures are conducted within prescribed time scales.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what efforts are currently undertaken by his Department to monitor the administration of special educational needs statementing procedures by local education authorities in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The statutory responsibility for identifying, assessing and making appropriate provision for children with special educational needs rests with local education authorities. If parents are dissatisfied with the decision or actions of the authority, or the special educational provision it has specified, there are rights of complaint and of appeal to my right hon. Friend, or a local appeals committee, as appropriate.

Cadw

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by grade and number employed, the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and the estimate for 1992-93, for Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments).

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments Executive Agency under its chief executive, Mr. E. A. J. Carr. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. Carr to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 November 1992:

As Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State for Wales has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about the grade and number employed and the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and the estimate for 1992-93 for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments. This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The information you have requested is shown in the table below in which specialist grades have been assimilated into the equivalent administrative grade:

Grade	*1991-92 Actual Number*	*Cost £*	*1992-93 Estimate Number*	*Cost £*
Chief Executive	1	48,907	1	53,510
Grade 6	4	131,929	4	158,520
Grade 7	8	225,278	8	233,720
Senior Executive	13	298,568	13	327,947
Higher Executive	14	282,603	15	333,404
Executive	31	376,484	30	421,976
Administrative	32	347,583	38	449,136
Custodial	50	651,599	51	649,063
Industrial	99	920,535	95	1,009,845
	252	3,283,486	255	3,637,121

Education Authorities

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what measures are being taken to ensure that education authorities in Wales spend all of their capital allocation for the purpose for which it was intended;

(2) which Welsh education authorities did not spend their capital allocation during each of the past three years; and if he will give details of the underspend.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Welsh local education authorities do not receive specific capital allocations for education services. County councils receive resources within their annual basic credit approvals which are unhypothecated to particular services. Spending priorities are a matter for them.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his decision concerning the opencast mining application at Bannell Bridge, Buckley, Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: As soon as possible.

Research and Development

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total amount spent on research and development by his Department in each of the last five years; and how much research and development money has been allocated to health and social care research in each instance.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is shown in the following table:

	Total Welsh Office expenditure on research and development £ million	*Of which: expenditure on health and social care research £ million*
1987-88	1·9	0·4
1988-89	1·9	0·4
1989-90	2·4	0·5
1990-91	3·0	0·5
[1]1991-92	3·6	0·5

[1] Provisional.

The figures do not include NHS monies spent on research and development as an integral part of policy evaluation and service development, which are not separately identifiable; nor do they include research and development supported under the joint England and Wales programme managed by the Department of Health.

River Dee

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to eliminate pollution of River Dee waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is a matter for the National Rivers Authority. The River Dee is a class 1 good quality river, and the authority regularly reviews discharge consent conditions to achieve higher standards where practicable. In addition, it is undertaking a catchment management plan for the Dee estuary to identify existing problems and propose solutions.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make an additional transport supplementary grant allocation to Clwyd county council to enable them to build the new River Dee crossing.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Some £2·75 million has so far been provided towards the cost of the scheme. Clwyd county council's application for further transport grant support is being considered as part of the 1992 public expenditure survey.

Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the availability of housing to rent in Alyn and Deeside; and if he will make a supplementary housing capital allocation to Alyn and Deeside council for the current year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Such an assessment is principally a matter for the local authority acting as enabler, and working in partnership with Housing for Wales, voluntary groups and the private sector. We have no plans to supplement the substantial resources made available to Alyn and Deeside in the current financial year.

Head Injuries

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the average annual cost of referrals for psychiatric/psychological counselling for patients referred as a result of head injuries sustained in serious road traffic accidents;

(2) what was the average annual cost of community care for people disabled due to severe head injuries *(a)* resulting from road traffic accidents and *(b)* from all causes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not collected centrally.

National Parks

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures will be taken to safeguard the national parks from over-exploitation by commercial enterprises.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Planning policy guidance note 7, "The Countryside and the Rural Economy", stipulates that conservation of the natural beauty of the countryside should be given great weight in planning policies and decisions in the national parks. Moreover, major development in the national parks should not take place save in exceptional circumstances and must be subject to the "most vigorous examination".

Planning Consents

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to local authorities encouraging the review of all current planning consents.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Epilepsy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent on medical care and supervision from sufferers from epilepsy in Wales annually between 1989 and 1991.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Seven-year-olds Test

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the percentage of seven-year-olds in Powys reaching level 2 in the compulsory tests; what was the comparable average percentage in England; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the achievements of seven-year-olds in the 1992 national curriculum assessments is published by local education authority in table 4 (Aggregated Subject Outcome Scores by LEA), in the Welsh Office publication "National Curriculum Monitor: Key Stage 1 1992 Assessments". A copy is available in the Library of the House. Information on the achievement of pupils in England is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

Student Assessment

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evaluation he has made of the results of the national curriculum key stage 3 assessment of students in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The key stage 3 assessment results arising from this summer's voluntary national pilot exercise in mathematics and science were published at the all-Wales level by the Minister of State on 20 October. Copies of the results were sent to all LEAs in Wales. The results were not published from the much smaller number of schools included in trials of test material in English, Welsh, Welsh second language and technology.

The 1992 pilot and trial assessment arrangements are being evaluated by the School Examinations and Assessment Council in preparation for the introduction of the first statutory assessment of pupils in all these subjects during the summer term 1993.

Hazardous Sites

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sites in Powys are considered serious environmental or health hazards; what was the comparable number of sites in 1971 and 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Surveys of possibly contaminated land in Wales were undertaken on behalf of the Welsh Office in 1982-83 and 1987-88. The 1982-83 survey assessed two sites in Powys as posing a potentially serious environmental or health hazard. The later survey downgraded the risk assessment of both sites and identified no other sites. The Department holds no comparable information for 1971.

TECs

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what element in the last full year's budget for training and enterprise councils in Wales was top-sliced before the balance was negotiated between individual training and enterprise councils.

Sir Wyn Roberts: For 1992-93, a total of £700,000 was retained for contributions towards developments, systems and initiatives on an England and Wales basis, before negotiations were conducted with TECs in Wales.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much the private sector currently contributes to the funding of training and enterprise councils in each training and enterprise council area in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The financial arrangements in the contracting chain between Welsh Office, training and enterprise councils, training providers and employers do not facilitate estimates of the private sector contribution towards training activities. Direct contributions to TECs are not centrally recorded.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of training and enterprise councils' budgets in Wales is allocated for purposes other than direct youth and adult training.

Sir Wyn Roberts: One third of the training and enterprise councils' budgets in 1992-93 is allocated for other purposes, including employment action, enterprise support, local initiatives and TEC administration costs.

Education and Business Partnerships

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many education and business partnership schemes there are in each training and enterprise council area in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There is one in each training and enterprise council area except for that covered by the West Wales TEC which has two schemes covering Dyfed and West Glamorgan local education authorities.

Health and Safety

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* enforcement notices occured under the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The available information is provided in the tables:

Prosecution action taken by the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) factory and agricultural inspectorates[1] for breaches of Health and Safety at Work Legislation[2] in Wales 1986-87 to 1990-91

Date of hearing[3]	*Number of informations laid[4]*
1986-87	156
1987-88	167
1988-89	100
1989-90	113
[5]1990-91	137

Enforcement notices issued by HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates[1] for breaches of Health and Safety at Work Legislation[2] in Wales, 1986-87 to 1990-91

		Type of notice		
Date of issue[3]	*Improvement*	*Deferred prohibition*	*Immediate prohibition*	*Total*
1986-87	626	24	150	800
1987-88	695	26	159	880
1988-89	661	14	220	895
1989-90	659	14	262	935
[5]1990-91	624	31	234	889

[1] Regional analysis of enforcement action taken by other enforcement authorities is not generally available (but see note (5) below).

[2] All action taken under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and subordinate regulations and other legislation.

[3] Years commencing 1 April.

[4] Number of individual breaches of legislation laid before Magistrates.

[5] Includes action taken by HSE's quarries inspectorate.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many full-time equivalent staff specialised in health and safety at work in Wales in each of the last five years; and what was the ratio of premises per member of staff in each year.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The number of inspectors medical staff and scientists employed by the Health and Safety Executive in Wales was:

	Number
1 April 1988	67
1 April 1989	66
1 April 1990	68
1 April 1991	70
1 April 1992	78

Available information about the ratio of premises to full-time equivalent staff is:

	Factory	*Agricultural*	*Quarries*
1989-90	910:1	3,110:1	229:1
1990-91	784:1	3,228:1	192:1
1991-92	682:1	3,059:1	204:1

Services Industry

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* injuries in general and *(b)* serious injuries have occurred in the services industry sector in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

Occupational injuries[1] in the services sector[2] in Wales reported to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates and to local authorities are provided in the table.

Year[3]	*Fatal*	*Major[4]*	*Over 3 days[5]*	*Total*
1986-87	13	883	3,290	4,186
1987-88	11	893	3,243	4,147
1988-89	6	971	3,107	4,084
1989-90	10	865	3,483	4,358
1990-91[6]	10	874	3,296	4,180

[1] Injuries at work to employers, self-employed persons and members of the public injured as a result of someone else's work activity reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR).

[2] As defined by Standard Industrial Classification 1980 divisions 6-9.

[3] Years commencing 1 April.

[4] As defined under RIDDOR.

[5] An injury causing incapacity for normal work for more than three days and reportable for employed persons only.

[6] Includes reports made to the HSE's quarries inspectorate.

EDUCATION

Education Expenditure

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what is the expenditure per pupil on primary education for each local education authority in England; (2) what is the expenditure per pupil on nursery education for each local education authority in England.

Mr. Forth: Information on nursery and primary pupils is not collected separately. The latest year for which information on actual expenditure is available is 1990-91. In that year, school-based funding per full-time equivalent pupil in nursery and primary education for each local education authority in England was as given in the table. These figures include unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management schemes. They do not include the costs of services provided centrally by local education authorities such as home to school transport, school meals, local education authority central administration and financing costs of capital expenditure.

LEA	*Net institutional funding per pupil (£)*
City	1,950
Camden	1,710
Greenwich	1,720
Hackney	1,900
Hammersmith	1,970
Islington	1,770
Kensington	2,060
Lambeth	1,840
Lewisham	1,710
Southwark	1,850
Tower Hamlets	1,940
Wandsworth	1,820
Westminster	2,110
Barking	1,460
Barnet	1,550
Bexley	1,260
Brent	1,670
Bromley	1,410
Croydon	1,440
Ealing	1,690
Enfield	1,430
Haringey	1,840
Harrow	1,480
Havering	1,290
Hillingdon	1,540
Hounslow	1,510
Kingston-upon Thames	1,430
Merton	1,750
Newham	1,490
Redbridge	1,350
Richmond-upon Thames	1,530
Sutton	1,360
Waltham Forest	1,570
Birmingham	1,260
Coventry	1,300
Dudley	1,230
Sandwell	1,450
Solihull	1,240
Walsall	1,510
Wolverhampton	1,390
Knowsley	1,390
Liverpool	1,290
St. Helens	1,210
Sefton	1,260
Wirral	1,280
Bolton	1,220
Bury	1,190
Manchester	1,320
Oldham	1,370
Rochdale	1,200
Salford	1,270
Stockport	1,260
Tameside	1,320
Trafford	1,170
Wigan	1,140
Barnsley	1,260
Doncaster	1,250
Rotherham	1,340
Sheffield	1,390
Bradford	1,500
Calderdale	1,440
Kirklees	1,300
Leeds	1,430
Wakefield	1,340
Gateshead	1,390
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,520
North Tyneside	1,310
South Tyneside	1,290
Sunderland	1,280
Avon	1,320
Bedfordshire	1,380
Berkshire	1,340
Buckinghamshire	1,320
Cambridgeshire	1,260
Cheshire	1,260
Cleveland	1,230
Cornwall	1,190
Cumbria	1,340
Derbyshire	1,370
Devon	1,310
Dorset	1,290
Durham	1,370
East Sussex	1,240
Essex	1,240
Gloucestershire	1,200
Hampshire	1,260
Herefordshire	1,360
Hertfordshire	1,340
Humberside	1,280
Isle of Wight	1,250
Kent	1,120
Lancashire	1,310
Leicestershire	1,290
Lincolnshire	1,210
Norfolk	1,280
North Yorkshire	1,230
Northamptonshire	1,230
Northumberland	1,320
Nottinghamshire	1,390
Oxfordshire	1,570
Shropshire	1,350
Somerset	1,230
Staffordshire	1,270
Suffolk	1,310
Surrey	1,340
Warwickshire	1,220
West Sussex	1,240
Wiltshire	1,260

Note: Net institutional funding covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, recurrent premises costs, books, equipment and other supplies and services, and unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management schemes. Figures are derived from LEAs' returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department of Education.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the expenditure per pupil on post-16 education on transport for each local education authority in England.

Mr. Forth: Information on post-16 pupils is not collected separately from that on other secondary pupils. Separate information is available for home to school transport only. The latest year for which information on actual expenditure is available is 1990-91. In that year, average expenditure on home to school transport per pupil in secondary education for each local education authority (LEA) in England was as given in the table.

LEA	*Expenditure per pupil (£)*
Camden	43
Greenwich	26
Hackney	41
Hammersmith	36
Islington	8
Kensington	0
Lambeth	17
Lewisham	1
Southwark	0
Tower Hamlets	30
Wandsworth	0
Westminster	12
Barking	2
Barnet	18
Bexley	5
Brent	12
Bromley	20
Croydon	0
Ealing	0
Enfield	0
Haringey	8
Harrow	4
Havering	23
Hillingdon	0
Hounslow	9
Kingston-upon-Thames	0
Merton	8
Newham	11
Redbridge	27
Richmond-upon-Thames	6
Sutton	21
Waltham Forest	9
Birmingham	8
Coventry	6
Dudley	10
Sandwell	8
Solihull	15
Walsall	9
Wolverhampton	9
Knowsley	6
Liverpool	14
St. Helens	25
Sefton	0
Wirral	34
Bolton	17
Bury	10
Manchester	2
Oldham	2
Rochdale	13
Salford	6
Stockport	0
Tameside	11
Trafford	18
Wigan	8
Barnsley	7
Doncaster	1
Rotherham	18
Sheffield	2
Bradford	16
Calderdale	36
Kirklees	13
Leeds	12
Wakefield	11
Gateshead	12
Newcastle Upon Tyne	6
North Tyneside	3
South Tyneside	2
Sunderland	4
Avon	47
Bedfordshire	60
Berkshire	44
Buckinghamshire	111
Cambridgeshire	76
Cheshire	44
Cleveland	9
Cornwall	75
Cumbria	79
Derbyshire	47
Devon	114
Dorset	57
Durham	70
East Sussex	35
Essex	70
Gloucestershire	79
Hampshire	45
Herefordshire	46
Hertfordshire	37
Humberside	45
Isle of Wight	58
Kent	71
Lancashire	35
Leicestershire	53
Lincolnshire	70
Norfolk	92
North Yorkshire	94
Northamptonshire	34
Northumberland	61
Nottinghamshire	29
Oxfordshire	76
Shropshire	70
Somerset	77
Staffordshire	54
Suffolk	87
Surrey	60
Warwickshire	66
West Sussex	46
Wiltshire	74

Note:

Figures are derived from LEA's returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department of Education.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the expenditure per pupil on secondary education for each local education authority in England.

Mr. Forth: The latest year for which information on actual expenditure is available is 1990-91. In that year, school-based funding per pupil in secondary education for each local education authority (LEA) in England was as given in the table. These figures include unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management schemes. They do not include the cost of services provided centrally by LEAs such as home to school transport, school meals, LEA central administration and financing costs of capital expenditure.

Net institutional funding per pupil

Local education authority	*£*
Camden	2,290
Greenwich	2,390
Hackney	2,710
Hammersmith	2,670
Islington	2,440
Kensington	2,900
Lambeth	2,580
Lewisham	2,430
Southwark	2,350
Tower Hamlets	2,490
Wandsworth	2,520
Westminster	2,580
Barking	2,300
Barnet	2,110
Bexley	1,970
Brent	2,360
Bromley	2,220
Croydon	2,080

Local education authority	£
Ealing	2,580
Enfield	2,080
Haringey	2,590
Harrow	2,320
Havering	2,140
Hillingdon	2,340
Hounslow	2,080
Kingston-upon-Thames	2,240
Merton	1,990
Newham	2,410
Redbridge	2,120
Richmond-upon-Thames	1,990
Sutton	2,080
Waltham Forest	2,650
Birmingham	2,050
Coventry	2,340
Dudley	2,100
Sandwell	2,300
Solihull	2,080
Walsall	2,260
Wolverhampton	2,120
Knowsley	2,230
Liverpool	2,250
St. Helens	1,960
Sefton	2,030
Wirral	2,110
Bolton	1,990
Bury	1,810
Manchester	2,150
Oldham	1,940
Rochdale	2,140
Salford	2,190
Stockport	2,030
Tameside	1,950
Trafford	2,080
Wigan	2,100
Barnsley	1,820
Doncaster	1,860
Rotherham	1,960
Sheffield	2,150
Bradford	1,780
Calderdale	2,090
Kirklees	1,920
Leeds	1,920
Wakefield	1,940
Gateshead	2,080
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,990
North Tyneside	1,940
South Tyneside	2,140
Sunderland	1,930
Avon	1,940
Bedfordshire	1,880
Berkshire	1,950
Buckinghamshire	2,050
Cambridgeshire	1,880
Cheshire	1,950
Cleveland	2,090
Cornwall	1,890
Cumbria	2,030
Derbyshire	2,110
Devon	1,950
Dorset	1,810
Durham	1,900
East Sussex	1,980
Essex	1,950
Gloucestershire	1,910
Hampshire	1,970
Herefordshire	1,840
Hertfordshire	2,070
Humberside	1,910
Isle of Wight	1,760
Kent	1,800
Lancashire	1,950
Leicestershire	2,090
Lincolnshire	1,910
Norfolk	1,990
North Yorkshire	2,020
Northamptonshire	1,800
Northumberland	1,810
Nottinghamshire	2,220
Oxfordshire	2,160
Shropshire	2,100
Somerset	1,850
Staffordshire	1,930
Suffolk	2,020
Surrey	2,100
Warwickshire	1,890
West Sussex	1,910
Wiltshire	1,890

Net institutional funding covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, recurrent premises costs, books, equipment and other supplies and services, and unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management schemes. Figures are derived from LEAs' returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department of Education.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the expenditure per pupil with special needs for each local education authority in England.

Mr. Forth: The latest year for which information on actual expenditure is available is 1990-91. In that year, direct expenditure per pupil in maintained special schools or receiving education otherwise than at school provided by each local education authority (LEA) in England was as given in the table. Expenditure on pupils with special needs attending primary and secondary schools is not collected separately. The figures do not include costs of services such as child guidance and educational psychology provided centrally by LEAs, nor of home to school transport, school meals, LEA central administratioin and financing costs of capital expenditure, as these costs were not apportioned between services in LEAs' expenditure returns.

LEA	*Expenditure per pupil* £
Camden	13,230
Greenwich	15,190
Hackney	7,920
Hammersmith	13,590
Islington	11,290
Kensington	15,300
Lambeth	9,120
Lewisham	11,370
Southwark	12,900
Tower Hamlets	11,090
Wandsworth	14,950
Westminster	8,390
Barking	16,800
Barnet	8,590
Bexley	7,330
Brent	11,170
Bromley	8,680
Croydon	6,820
Ealing	8,820
Enfield	10,510
Haringey	9,140
Harrow	14,120
Havering	6,500
Hillingdon	9,340
Hounslow	8,460
Kingston upon Thames	7,520
Merton	9,450
Newham	11,350
Redbridge	7,760
Richmond upon Thames	8,440
Sutton	6,020

LEA	*Expenditure per pupil £*
Waltham Forest	10,680
Birmingham	8,010
Coventry	9,040
Dudley	7,310
Sandwell	5,600
Solihull	12,080
Walsall	7,630
Wolverhampton	7,030
Knowsley	6,790
Liverpool	5,880
St. Helens	6,340
Sefton	5,370
Wirrall	6,750
Bolton	6,550
Bury	6,130
Manchester	8,670
Oldham	5,990
Rochdale	6,990
Salford	7,800
Stockport	7,140
Tameside	8,250
Trafford	6,550
Wigan	7,070
Barnsley	9,750
Doncaster	4,240
Rotherham	7,260
Sheffield	11,470
Bradford	9,950
Calderdale	6,480
Kirklees	8,200
Leeds	6,380
Wakefield	5,630
Gateshead	8,110
Newcastle upon Tyne	9,430
North Tyneside	8,520
South Tyneside	6,560
Sunderland	5,740
Avon	7,590
Bedfordshire	6,700
Berkshire	6,880
Buckinghamshire	6,450
Cambridgeshire	8,890
Cheshire	9,570
Cleveland	6,390
Cornwall	7,040
Cumbria	9,050
Derbyshire	8,860
Devon	5,590
Dorset	4,960
Durham	8,470
East Sussex	7,650
Essex	7,010
Gloucestershire	7,590
Hampshire	6,250
Hereford & Worcestershire	5,040
Hertfordshire	8,760
Humberside	12,310
Isle of Wight	4,270
Kent	5,360
Lancashire	7,760
Leicestershire	7,940
Lincolnshire	9,250
Norfolk	9,480
North Yorkshire	8,950
Northamptonshire	8,620
Northumberland	7,820
Nottinghamshire	6,310
Oxfordshire	8,420
Shropshire	7,880
Somerset	13,890
Staffordshire	6,720
Suffolk	6,170
Surrey	6,690
Warwickshire	8,120
West Sussex	5,740
Wiltshire	6,610

Note to table

Direct expenditure covers the costs of salaries and wages, recurrent premises costs, books, equipment and other supplies and services. Figures are derived from LEA's returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department of Education.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has to provide funds to continue to allow appropriate pupils to be referred to non-maintained special schools such as those which offer secondary and further education to the hearing impaired.

Mr. Forth: Under the proposals in the Education Bill, local education authorities will retain their responsibilities for identifying and assessing pupils with special educational needs and issuing and maintaining statements as required. They will continue to be funded to meet their statutory duty to make school placements appropriate to individual pupils' special educational needs, including placements in non-maintained special schools.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy in respect of an application for grant-maintained status by a school which has balloted in favour of becoming grant-maintained to commence on 1 April 1993, but which has subsequently been found to have overspent its budget under local management of schools so as to be unable to meet its financial commitments.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend takes account of a number of factors when considering an application for grant-maintained status: ability to manage an LMS budget effectively is one. However, we expect local education authorities to monitor their schools' expenditure and to assist their schools to manage their resources in such a way as to ensure that they do not overspend their budget share. Under LMS, governing bodies must live within their means and may not plan on the basis of a deficit budget.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of schools are grant-maintained in *(a)* the north-west of England and *(b)* the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Forth: As of 3 November, 1·9 per cent. of secondary schools and 0·1 per cent. of primary schools in the north-west have been approved for grant-maintained status. In England as a whole, 7 per cent. of secondary schools, 1·2 per cent. of middle schools and 0·3 per cent. of primary schools have been approved.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland have responsibility for grant-maintained schools in those countries.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines he has given to the Education Assets Board with regard to the funding and control of facilities that are treated as the responsibility of the school once it becomes grant-maintained.

Mr. Forth: The Education Assets Board does not deal with matters of funding for facilities. Every grant-maintained school's articles of government state that the occupation and use of school premises shall be under the control of the governing body.

GCSE

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what criteria he used in devising the new compulsory code of practice for the General Certificate of Secondary Education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has asked the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) to prepare the code in consultation with the Joint Council for the GCSE. Its purpose will be to increase the transparency of the examining process in order to secure standards and maintain public confidence in the GCSE. It will cover the matters identified in SEAC's advice on quality and standards in the GCSE, published on 20 October.

Student Assessment

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what evaluation he has made of the results of the national curriculum key stage three assessment of students in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: A national analysis of the results of those schools which participated in the national pilot of the national curriculum assessments of 14-year-olds in England will be published shortly.

Administrative Expenditure

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, in table form, the percentage of each local education authority's budget spent on administration.

Mr. Forth: The latest year for which information on actual spending is available is 1990-91. The table shows, for each local education authority in England, expenditure on administration expressed as a percentage of its total net recurrent spending on education.

Administration as a percentage of net recurrent spending on education

LEA	*Per cent.*
City	10·2
Camden	12·4
Greenwich	12·1
Hackney	14·4
Hammersmith	13·3
Islington	14·3
Kensington	11·5
Lambeth	9·5
Lewisham	11·3
Southwark	6·9
Tower Hamlets	7·3
Wandsworth	12·5
Westminster	9·9
Barking	7·6
Barnet	5·8
Bexley	7·2
Brent	5·5
Bromley	5·7
Croydon	6·1
Ealing	6·2
Enfield	7·0
Haringey	9·6
Harrow	3·0
Havering	6·8
Hillingdon	7·9
Hounslow	5·9
Kingston-upon-Thames	7·0
Merton	7·8
Newham	7·1
Redbridge	5·8
Richmond-upon-Thames	9·4
Sutton	11·5
Waltham Forest	6·7
Birmingham	5·0
Coventry	7·1
Dudley	5·5
Sandwell	4·9
Solihull	4·5
Walsall	4·1
Wolverhampton	5·9
Knowsley	4·2
Liverpool	4·0
St. Helens	6·1
Sefton	5·2
Wirral	3·7
Bolton	6·3
Bury	4·7
Manchester	4·8
Oldham	10·9
Rochdale	3·3
Salford	10·4
Stockport	4·1
Tameside	4·3
Trafford	3·8
Wigan	3·4
Barnsley	4·6
Doncaster	3·5
Rotherham	3·2
Sheffield	4·3
Bradford	4·1
Calderdale	4·8
Kirklees	7·1
Leeds	4·7
Wakefield	3·9
Gateshead	6·1
Newcastle upon Tyne	6·7
North Tyneside	4·3
South Tyneside	4·8
Sunderland	3·3
Avon	5·7
Bedfordshire	4·9
Berkshire	4·6
Buckinghamshire	6·3
Cambridgeshire	6·4
Cheshire	5·1
Cleveland	5·1
Cornwall	5·9
Cumbria	6·4
Derbyshire	4·3
Devon	2·9
Dorset	4·8
Durham	3·0
East Sussex	4·0
Essex	5·3
Gloucestershire	4·9
Hampshire	3·9
Herefordshire	3·9
Hertfordshire	3·7
Humberside	4·1
Isle of Wight	7·6
Kent	5·6
Lancashire	3·4
Leicestershire	3·9
Lincolnshire	5·1
Norfolk	4·8
North Yorkshire	3·8
Northamptonshire	4·5
Northumberland	3·5
Nottinghamshire	4·6
Oxfordshire	6·4

LEA	Per cent.
Shropshire	3·4
Somerset	4·6
Staffordshire	4·1
Suffolk	4·7
Surrey	6·8
Warwickshire	5·1
West Sussex	4·3
Wiltshire	3·9

Note: Administration includes net recurrent expenditure on administration of the education department, and costs of central departments recharged to education in accordance with the authority's accounting practice. Net recurrent expenditure includes total expenditure other than capital financing charges, less income other than from Government grants. Information is taken from local authorities' returns of their actual spending to the Department of the Environment.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Servants

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, column *389*, how many members of the civil service have retired early since the beginning of 1992, on terms comparable to those mentioned in his answer.

The Prime Minister: These terms are payable to civil servants who are retired early by reason of redundancy or in the public interest. The number shown in Civil Service Statistics (1991 edition, table 7) as leaving for these causes in 1990-91 was 1,582. Figures for 1991-92 will be published on 27 November.

Coal Industry

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister what is his response to the petition presented on 23 October to No. 10 Downing street by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey on behalf of Liberal Democrats calling for a fully independent review of the coal industry before any pits are closed.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has announced a moratorium until early in the new year on the closure of 21 of the pits proposed for closure by British Coal, unless the work force at a pit concerned agrees otherwise, and a full and wide ranging review of the prospects for these pits. The Government will publish a White Paper early in the new year setting out the results of the review in the context of our energy policy. There will be a full debate in the House of Commons.

British Coal is carrying out the statutory consultation process in relation to the other 10 pits before any closure takes place.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

HIV Infection

Dr. Strang: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the EC-approved network of co-operation agreements between the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, the Medical Research Council, University College, London, and the United States research foundation Southwest, for research and development of a vaccine to combat HIV infections.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Medical Research Council, University College, London, the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research are all shareholders of HIVER Limited which is a research driven healthcare company located in the United Kingdom. HIVER Limited focuses on developing vaccines, therapies and diagnostics for AIDS and other immunological disorders.

Since 1987, more than £4 million has been committed to the research programme. Research is currently underway at The MRC clinical research centre, University College London, The London hospital medical school and St. Georges hospital medical school. The research is coordinated from the HIVER executive office.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Lloyd's

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax he expects to repay in the current year and 1993 for losses at Lloyd's.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1992-93, to the end of September, repayments to Lloyd's underwriters have amounted to £143 million. These relate almost entirely to losses incurred in 1988-89.

The Lloyd's market declared net trading losses of £509 million for the 1988-89 tax year. Lloyd's underwriters are entitled to set their shares of these losses against their other income which has been subject to tax.

No separate forecasts are made of the eventual amount of such repayments.

Cross-border Shopping

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what study has been made of the opportunities for cross-border shopping for people living in coastal areas following the abolition of EC frontier controls; and what steps he proposes to take to ensure that people in inland areas are able to take advantage of the lower prices for goods on which duty will no longer be paid available in other member states of the Community.

Sir John Cope: Agreement has been reached for intra-EC duty free sales to continue after 1992, but all other purchases by private individuals for their personnel use will be subject to VAT and excise duty in the member state where they are sold. It is difficult to anticipate the extent to which these opportunities will be taken up.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what forecast has been made of the increase in each country in the amount of cross-border shopping between the United Kingdom and France, in respect of goods which will be free of duty from January 1993.

Sir John Cope: No increases are expected in cross-border shopping from the continuation of intra-EC duty free sales after 1992. All other purchases by private individuals for their personal use will be subject to VAT and excise duty in the member state in which they are sold.

Housing Loans

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals for a code of practice for all lenders of house purchase loans covering the regulation of *(a)* interest rates on all loans, *(b)* lending practices and *(c)* recovery and repossession practices and proceedings.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to do so.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Sir John Cope: The following provides the information requested for all current appointments to public bodies for which the Chancellor is responsible except for VAT tribunals on which, because of the numbers involved, I will write separately to the hon. Member.

Annex A

Public appointments by the Chancellor's Department

	Baseline 1991			*Appointments 1992*			*Reappointments 1992*			*Position 1992*			*Goals 1996*		
	Total	*M*	*F*	*Total*	*M*	*F*	*Total*	*M*	*F*	*Total*	*M*	*F*	*Total*	*M*	*F*
1. Building Societies Commission	4	4	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3	0	4	3	1
2. Friendly Societies Commission	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	3	1
3. Crown Estate Commission	8	8	0	—	—	—	2	2	0	8	8	0	8	8	0
4. Public Works Loan Board	12	10	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	12	10	2	12	9	3
5. Retail Price Index Advisory Committee	14	14	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	[1]20	16	4	20	13	7
6. Securities and Investments Board	15	13	2	—	—	—	5	5	0	13	12	1	13	11	2
7. Treasure Trove Reviewing Committee	4	4	0	—	—	—	1	1	—	4	4	0	4	4	0
8. Advisory Panel for Treasure Trove in Scotland	3	2	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	3	2	1	4	2	2
9. Treasury Academic Advisory Panel	12	12	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	12	0	12	12	0
10. National Savings Board	2	2	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	0	2	2	0
11. CSO Management Board	2	1	1	2	1	1	—	—	—	2	1	1	2	1	1
12. Royal Mint Management Board	2	2	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	0	2	2	0

	Baseline 1991			*Appointments 1992*			*Reappointments 1992*			*Position 1992*			*Goals 1996*		
	Total	*M*	*F*	*Total*	*M*	*F*	*Total*	*M*	*F*	*Total*	*M*	*F*	*Total*	*M*	*F*
13. VAT Tribunals	148	130	18	[2](3	2	1)	[2](61	52	9)	151	131	20	148	111	37
14. CSO Advisory Committee[3]	14	9	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	10	4	14	8	6
15. Royal Mint Advisory Committee	12	10	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	10	2	12	9	3
16. Financial Services Tribunal	17	16	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	16	16	0	17	15	2
17. Top Salaries Review Body	10	8	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	7	2	10	6	4
Totals	279	245	34	—	—	—	—	—	—	283	246	37	288	219	69
	12 per cent.									13 per cent.			24 per cent.		

Zero goal implies no firm target set.

[1] First committee appointed since 1990. No details on new appointments or reappointments. Size of committee varies depending on need.

[2] Proposed appointments/reappointment from 30 September 1992.

[3] Subsumes the CSO's Production Statistics Advisory Committee. No details as to whether members sat on previous committee. The CSO baseline figure was a projection.

Body	*Member*	*Appointment*		*Qualification*	*Remuneration*
		From	*To*		*£*
Building Societies Commission	Mr. M. R. C. Walden CBE	25 September 1986	24 September 1994	Building Society Director	17,500
	Mr. S. Procter CBE	25 September 1986	24 September 1993	Banker	17,500
	Mr. G. Sunderland	1 October 1992	30 September 1995	Banker	17,500
	Mr. F. E. Worsley	1 May 1991	30 June 1994	Accountant	17,500
Friendly Societies Commission	Mr. A. Wilson	25 September 1992	24 September 1995	Lawyer	12,500
	Mr. J. A. Geddes	1 October 1992	30 September 1995	Actuary	12,500
	Mr. P. E. Couse	1 October 1992	30 September 1995	Accountant	12,500
	Dr. J. Dine	1 October 1992	30 September 1995	Barrister	12,500
Securities and Investments Board	Mr. A. Large (Chairman)	1 June 1992	31 May 1997	The Financial Services Act 1986 requires that the members of the governing body must include persons with experience of investment business of a kind relevant to the functions of the agency; and other persons, including regular users on their own account or on behalf of others of services provided by persons carrying on investment business of any such kind; and the composition of that body must be such as to secure a proper balance between the interests of persons carrying on investment business and the interests of the public.	Matter for the Securities and Investments Board
	Mr. R. Quartano CBE (Deputy Chairman)	27 June 1985	31 July 1993		
	Lord Runciman CBE (Deputy Chairman)	8 August 1986	31 July 1994		
	Mr. J. Craven	1 August 1990	31 July 1993		
	Mr. R. Croft CB	8 August 1986	9 June 1994		
	Mr. J. Gardiner	1 August 1989	31 July 1995		
	Mr. N. Lessels	1 August 1989	31 July 1994		
	Mr. J. Manser	8 August 1986	31 July 1994		
	Mr. J. Palmer	1 August 1991	31 July 1994		
	Mr. G. R. Russell	1 August 1989	31 July 1993		
	Mr. L. Warwick	1 August 1989	31 July 1993		
	Mr. B. Williamson CBE	8 August 1986	31 July 1993		
	Lady Scott CBE	1 August 1991	31 July 1994		
Financial Services Tribunal	Mr. K. A. Blundell	4 May 1988	30 April 1994	The Financial Services Act 1986 requires that there be a panel of persons to serve as members of the Tribunal. The panel shall include persons who appear to be qualified by experience or otherwise to deal with the cases that may be referred to the Tribunal	per diem free
	Mr. W. M. Carson	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Mr. P. G. Green	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Mr. G. C. Grover	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Mr. J. L. Kirkpatrick CBE	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Mr. A. F. Lamb	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Mr. H. G. Littlefair	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Sir J. McKinnon	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Mr. A. W. Mallinson	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Mr. W. O'Farrell	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Mr. J. B. Page	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Mr. J. C. Ritchie	1 May 1991	30 April 1994		
	Mr. R. P. Wilkinson	1 May 1991	30 April 1994		
	Mr. G. Willetts	4 May 1988	30 April 1994		
	Mr. P. D. Williams	1 May 1991	30 April 1994		
	Mr. H. Woods	1 May 1991	30 April 1994		
National Savings Board	Mr. M. St. Giles	1 October 1991	30 September 1993	Marketing	10,000
	Mr. R. Heape	1 October 1991	30 September 1993	Financial Services	10,000
Royal Mint Management Board	Mr. J. Burnett-Stuart	17 June 1992	16 June 1993	Industry	3,120
	Mr. S. Cameron	17 June 1992	16 June 1993	Industry	3,120
Treasure Trove Reviewing Committee	Professor J. Evans	5 years	—	Archaeologist	Nil
	Mr. D. Sellwood	5 years	—	Numismatist	Nil
	Mr. C. Lyon	1 year	—	Numismatist	Nil
	Mr. J. Och	5 years	—	Auctioneer	Nil
Advisory Panel on Treasure Trove in Scotland	Mr. M. Jones	No set period	—	Museum Keeper	Nil
	Mrs. M. Buchanan	2 years	—	Museum Keeper	Nil
	Mr. J. Murray	2 years	—	Museum Keeper	Nil
Retail Price Index Advisory Committee	Mr. J. Astin	March 1992	—	Eurostat	Nil
	Mr. S. Brittan	March 1992	—	The Financial Times	Nil
	Professor D. Currie	March 1992	—	London Business School	Nil

Body	Member	Appointment From	To	Qualification	Remuneration £
	Professor M. C. Fleming	March 1992	—	Loughborough University	Nil
	Mr. K. H. B. Frere	March 1992	—	Nominated by the National Federation of Consumer Groups	Nil
	Mr. S. G. B. Henry	March 1992	—	Bank of England	Nil
	Mr. T. J. Hoyes	March 1992	—	Nominated by Age Concern	Nil
	Mr. J. Hughes	March 1992	—	Nominated by the National Consumer Council	Nil
	Mr. D. Lea OBE	March 1992	—	Nominated by the Trades Union Congress	Nil
	Miss R. Lea	March 1992	—	The Mitsubishi Bank Ltd.	Nil
	Miss R. J. Maurice	March 1992	—	—	Nil
	Mr. C. J. Mowl	March 1992	—	HM Treasury	Nil
	Dr. J. Muellbauer	March 1992	—	Nuffield College, Oxford	Nil
	Professor J. F. Pickering	March 1992	—	Portsmouth University	Nil
	Professor D. G. Rhys OBE	March 1992	—	Cardiff Business School	Nil
	Mrs. B. Rosewell	March 1992	—	Business Strategies Ltd.	Nil
	Dr. P. Rowlatt	March 1992	—	National Economic Research Associates	Nil
	Dr. A. Sentance	March 1992	—	Nominated by the Confederation of British Industry	Nil
	Professor R. Turvey	March 1992	—	London School of Economics	Nil
	Mr. R. G. Ward	March 1992	—	Central Statistical Office	Nil
Central Statistical Management Board	Mrs. M. Berg	February 1992	February 1994	Economist	2,000
	Mr. P. Thornton	February 1992	February 1994	Marketing	2,000
Central Statistical Office Advisory Committee Members	Mr. A. Armstrong	July 1991	July 1994	Economics	Nil
	Mr. S. Brittan	July 1991	July 1994	Economics	Nil
	Mr. R. Brown	July 1991	July 1994	Commerce	Nil
	Mr. A. Chantraine	July 1991	July 1994	Eurostat	Nil
	Dr. C. Cosgrove	July 1991	July 1994	Economic and Export	Nil
	Mr. H. L. Cousins	July 1991	July 1994	Commerce	Nil
	Mr. S. Jukes	July 1991	July 1994	Economics	Nil
	Mr. M. King	July 1991	July 1994	Economist, Bank of England	Nil
	Professor D. Lievesley	July 1991	July 1994	Economic and Social Research	Nil
	Professor D. Mayes	July 1991	July 1994	Economic and Social Research	Nil
	Mrs. B. Rosewell	July 1991	July 1994	Economics	Nil
	Dr. A. Sentance	July 1991	July 1994	Economic	Nil
	Dr. J. Whitley	July 1991	July 1994	Economic	Nil
	Mrs. A. Wright	July 1991	July 1994	Overseas Development	Nil
Treasury Academic Panel	Professor C. Bean	1991	—	Academic	125 per diem
	Professor D. Begg	1982	—	Academic	110 per diem
	Professor S. Holly	1983	—	Academic	110 per diem
	Professor M. Miller	1976	—	Academic	110 per diem
	Professor P. Minford	1976	—	Academic	110 per diem
	Professor K. Wallis	1980	—	Academic	110 per diem
	Mr. M. Weale	1990	—	Academic	110 per diem
	Mr. P. Westaway	1990	—	Academic	110 per diem
	Professor M. Wickens	1981	—	Academic	110 per diem
	Professor S. Wren-Lewis	1987	—	Academic	110 per diem
	Professor D. Vines	1985	—	Academic	110 per diem
TSRB	Sir D. Nickson KBE DL	1988	End March 1995	Not held	Nil
	Ms. L. Botting	1987	End March 1993	Not held	Nil
	Mr. J. Pope OBE	1986	End March 1993	Not held	Nil
	Sir P. Cazalet	1988	End March 1993	Not held	Nil
	Sir A. Wilson	1988	End March 1995	Not held	Nil
	Mr. H. Pigott	1988	End March 1994	Not held	Nil
	Sir C. Clothier KCB QC	1989	End March 1993	Not held	Nil
	Ms. A. Burdus	1990	End March 1993	Not held	Nil
	Mr. A. Gormly CBE	1990	End March 1993	Not held	Nil
Royal Mint Advisory Committee	Mr. J. Porteous MA	1968	—	Numismatist	Nil
	Sir H. Casson CH, KCVO, PPRA, RDI, RIBA	1971	—	Royal Academy	Nil
	Sir J. Hale D. Litt, FBA	1979	—	Professor of History	Nil
	Mr. V. Duggleby	1985	7 years	Financial Journalist	Nil
	Mr. N. D. Cadbury	1985	7 years	Chief Executive of Cadbury	Nil
	Miss M. Warner	1985	7 years	Writer	Nil
	The Most Hon. The Marchioness of Anglesey	1991	7 years	Chairman of the British Council	Nil
	Dr. C. E. Challis	1991	7 years	Numismatist	Nil
	Mr. M. H. Harvey	1991	7 years	Lettering expert	Nil
	Professor B. Kneale RA	1992	7 years	Master of Sculpture	Nil
	Professor E. A. Bell CB, Ph.D	1992	7 years	Former Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew	Nil
Public Works Loan Board	Mr. R. J. Dent (Chairman)	1991	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil
	Miss F. M. Cook (Deputy Chairman)	1992	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil
	Miss V. J. di Palma	1990	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil
	Mr. G. R. Russell	1991	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil
	Mr. P. Brackfield	1990	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil
	Mr. D. Adams	1992	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil

Body	*Member*	*Appointment*		*Qualification*	*Remuneration*
		From	*To*		*£*
	Mr. R. A. Chapman	1989	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil
	Mr. A. Morton	1989	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil
	Mr. I. C. Wilson	1989	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil
	Mr. G. G. Williams	1990	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil
	Mr. R. G. Tettenborn	1991	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil
	Mr. J. B. Scotfield	1992	4 years	Finance/Local authorities	Nil

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to ensure that housing loans lenders should not have the automatic right of repossession in arrears cases.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to do so.

House Renovations

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that house renovation costs are not liable to value added tax charges.

Sir John Cope: VAT at the standard rate has been applied to house renovation costs since 1973 when the tax was first introduced. Our obligations under the EC Sixth VAT Directive prevent us extending the scope of our present zero rating.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for legislation under which the auditors of banks would be required to detect and report fraud to the regulators.

Mr. Dorrell: On 22 October, the Chancellor announced that the Government accepted all the recommendations of Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry into the supervision of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, including the recommendation that there should be a statutory duty on auditors of banks to report to the Bank of England. A similar recommendation had been made in the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's fourth report for 1991-92. Consultation with the accounting profession and with the banks on the formulation of such a duty and its enforcement will begin shortly.

Housing Loans

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to amend the Building Societies Act 1986 to enable mortgage lenders to transfer shortfall suffered when redeeming the mortgages from sale proceeds to new mortgage accounts.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to do so.

We recently announced two new measures which will help borrowers with a shortfall to move house (*Official Report*, 20 October 1992, column *243*).

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to require housing loan lenders to explore alternative legal remedies for debt recovery before repossession is considered.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to do so.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to extend the business expansion scheme to include assured shorthold tenancies.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to do so; the business expansion scheme will not be available for new investment after the end of 1993.

Cohesion Funds

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the United Kingdom will benefit from the cohesion funds of the Maastricht agreement; what was the gross domestic product per capita in the United Kingdom, expressed in ecus, at 15 September; and what it is now.

Mr. Lamont: The cohesion fund envisaged in the Maastricht treaty will be a structural fund; and the usual method of calculating relative wealth for these funds is to use purchasing power parities. On that basis the United Kingdom would not qualify for any assistance from the cohesion fund.

The latest forecast of money GDP at market prices for financial year 1992-93 is £619·2 billion, or £10,721 per head. This would be equivalent to 14,810 ecus per head at the exchange rates on 15 September; and 13,191 ecus per head at the exchange rates on 29 October.

Visual Handicap

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultation took place with organisations representing visually handicapped people before the design of the new £10 and £20 notes was approved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: The Bank of England's consultations with organisations representing the visually handicapped, regarding the new series of banks notes, began in March 1984. Regular meetings, approximately annually, have taken place since then with the Royal National Institute for the Blind, which co-ordinates communication between the bank and other organisations representing the visually handicapped.

Unemployment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what have been the additional costs to the Exchequer of benefit payments and lost income tax and national insurance contributions arising from the increase in unemployment since April 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: Figures for benefit expenditure on the unemployed are set out in figure 9 on page 8 of the DSS departmental report (Cm. 1914). The effect of the increase in unemployment on tax revenues and national insurance contributions cannot be estimated reliably.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated annual cost of maintaining the current number of people on the unemployment register in each region in terms of benefits payments and lost tax and national insurance contributions.

Mr. Dorrell: Figures for benefit expenditure on the unemployed people are set out in figure 9 on page 8 of the DSS departmental report (Cm. 1914). A regional breakdown for this expenditure is not available. The effects on tax revenues and national insurance contributions cannot be calculated reliably.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 3 November 1992]*: There are currently 35 civil servants in the Treasury whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Football

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with the Football Association regarding unfair practices in football; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: None. But I deplore unfair practices in all sports. The United Kingdom has taken the lead in developing the Council of Europe's code of sports ethics, the basic principle of which is that ethical considerations and fair play are integral elements of all sports activities. The enforcement of discipline is a matter for the governing bodies of sport.

National Lottery

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Eltham of 28 October, *Official Report*, column *690*, whether the national lottery and football pools are to be regarded as equivalent forms of gambling; and whether controls will be the same.

Mr. Brooke: No. Lotteries are a game of chance, while football pools are a game of skill and judgment which depend on the outcome of a sporting event. The national lottery will need its own system of regulation. Details of the control regime for the national lottery will be announced when the Bill is published.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in the Lancashire, West constituency qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

Mr. Scott: The administration of social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Colin Pickthall, dated 3 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many households in the West Lancashire constituency qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

Lancashire West constituency is covered by the Agency's South West Lancashire District. It is not possible to give an exact figure of how many customers would qualify for a Cold Weather Payment except at disproportionate cost. However, based on figures for those claiming Income Support in November 1991, it is estimated that approximately 15,000 customers in the South West Lancashire District may qualify for a Cold Weather Payment should the area be triggered. The constituency and District boundaries do not, however, correspond and a proportion of these will live outside the constituency.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what dates cold weather payments were made in Lancashire, West in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and what was the period taken for payments to be made once the system had been triggered.

Mr. Scott: The administration of social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Colin Pickthall, dated 3 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking on what dates cold weather payments were made in West Lancashire in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and what was the period taken for payments to be made once the system had been triggered.

Neither of the weather stations which give information for the area covered by the constituency declared a forecast period of cold weather from 1 November 1991 to date. Details of dates where payments were made in response to a recorded period of cold weather are available in the Library.

It is not possible to give the exact time taken for payments to be made. However, the average time taken to identify all eligible customers is 6·5 days. The preparation of payments starts immediately after identification, but it may take a few days further before they are posted depending on the volumes.

A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report.

Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in the Meirionnydd Nant Conwy constituency qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, dated 3 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many households in the Meirionnydd Nant Conwy constituency qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

The Meirionnydd Nant Conwy constituency is covered by Gwyneddigion, Mid Wales and Maelor, and North Wales Coast Districts. It is not possible to give an exact figure of how many customers would qualify for a Cold Weather Payment except at disproportionate cost. However, based on figures for those claiming Income Support in November 1991, it is estimated that approximately 36,200 customers claiming from those Districts may qualify for a Cold Weather Payment, should the area be triggered. Parliamentary constituencies and District boundaries do not correspond however and therefore a proportion of these will live outside the constituency boundaries.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are being placed in the Library.

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in the Falkirk, East constituency qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Michael Connarty, dated 3 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many households in the Falkirk East constituency qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

Falkirk East constituency is covered by the Forth Valley District. It is not possible to give an exact figure of how many customers would qualify for a Cold Weather Payment except at disproportionate cost. However, based on figures for those claiming Income Support in November 1991 it is estimated that approximately 11,900 customers in the Forth Valley District may qualify for a Cold Weather Payment should the area be triggered. The constituency and District boundaries do not correspond, however, and a proportion of these will live outside the constituency boundaries.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) when the chief executive of the Benefits Agency acknowledged case MOB/172/8898 pursued by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (ref. DB102919); when a reply was received; and what was the reason for the time taken;

(2) when the chief executive of the Benefits Agency will send an acknowledgement and reply to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East to a letter sent on 14 September concerning the case of the person with the national insurance number JE 54 08 98 C;

(3) when the chief executive of the Benefits Agency will send acknowledgements and replies to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East for letters sent on 7 August, 14 and 16 September concerning the case of the person with the national insurance number ZT 349 447A;

(4) when the chief executive of the Benefits Agency will reply to the letter sent to him by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East on 6 July concerning case NM 139 765A and acknowledged by the Benefits Agency on 27 July under its reference DB 103229; when there will be a follow up to his Department's reference 86/3193/5 of 5 August on this case; and what record he holds of the number of telephone calls that have been made by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East in connection with this matter.

Mr. Scott: Correspondence about operational matters is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Harry Barnes, dated 3 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security relating to the replies to letters you had sent about individual constituents.

All four letters relate to disability benefits processed at the Fylde Benefits Directorate. Regrettably because of the heavy workload at the Directorate following the introduction of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and the volume of correspondence this has generated there have been some delays in replying to Members' letters about these benefits. I can assure you that all the cases are receiving urgent attention but replies are sometimes delayed whilst the individual case is resolved. Once the backlog of claims has been cleared it will be possible to respond to correspondence much more promptly. In the meantime I apologise for the delays on the cases referred to in your questions.

The situation on each of these is as follows:—

Case MOB/172/8898

An acknowledgement is not normally sent by the Benefits Agency when a Minister has written to the Member confirming a letter has been passed to me to reply. In this case an interim reply was sent on 10 June explaining that a full reply was not yet possible. A final reply was sent on 19 August. The delay in replying was due to the heavy workload at the DLA Unit.

Case JE540898C

I apologise that your letter to me of 14 September was not acknowledged. I replied to you on 28 October with full details of the award made to this customer.

Case ZT349447A

Again I am sorry that your letters were not acknowledged. This was a mistake on the part of my correspondence section. I replied to your letter on 2 November.

Case NM139765A

I replied to your letter on 2 November with full details of the award made to this customer. The DLA Unit has a record of five telephone calls from your office about this case.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Earnings

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish estimates of the number of part-time and full-time employees earning *(a)* below the PAYE threshold and *(b)* below the national insurance lower earnings limit, in (i) 1989, (ii) 1990, (iii) 1991 and (iv) the current year, respectively.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the table.

	Estimated numbers (millions) earnings less than	
	PAYE threshold	*National insurance lower earnings limit*
1989	3·50	3·00
1990	3·50	3·00
1991	3·50	3·25
1992	3·75	3·25

Notes:

1. Figures are broad estimates based on the annual New Earnings Survey and estimates of the number of employees in employment.

2. It is estimated that around one tenth of these employees are full-time, most of whom fell below the thresholds because their earnings were affected by absence in the survey period.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if it is his policy that retirement pensions shall continue to be uprated annually in line with the retail prices index.

Miss Widdecombe: The plans for the uprating of benefits will be announced to the House in due course.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if it is his policy that retirement pensions shall continue to be free of a means test.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes.

Drug and Alcohol Problems

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the expected total expenditure on allowances towards the cost of residential rehabilitation services for persons with drug or alcohol problems during the current financial year.

Mr. Burt: The estimated income support payable in the current financial year to people in independent residential care and nursing homes claiming the drug or alcohol abuse limit is about £20 million.

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount of money discovered to have been fraudulently claimed from his Department by benefit claimants in 1991 and the current year to the most recent practicable date.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 27 October 1992, at column *640*. The Benefits Agency's estimated fraud savings for 1991-92 were £427 million. For the first half of 1992-93 the estimated savings were £268 million.

Contributors Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, as part of his quality service objectives, he will require the publication of the responses of all bodies consulted in the preparation of the contributors charter and the employers charter.

Miss Widdecombe: The responses received from organisations during consultations with service users in the course of production of the contributor's and employer's charters is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Miss A. Chant to Ms. Marjorie Mowlam, dated 4 November 1992.

As Chief Executive of the Contributions Agency, Miss Ann Chant is responsible for answering questions about relevant operational matters. However, in her absence I, as Deputy Chief Executive, have been asked to reply to the points raised in your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State about the publication of responses from service users following consultations undertaken during the course of preparation of the Charters.

You will recall from the answer to your previous question on our consultations about the proposed Contributor's Charter and Employer's Charter that we approached 36 organisations with whom we are in regular contact for their comments, advice and assistance. Nineteen of them replied some in writing.

They were very helpful and constructive in their responses, but it had never been suggested to them that our exchanges would be publicised. I think it would be quite inappropriate for me to do so now.

I do not see any connection between publicising all the details of this consultation exercise and quality service objectives. But if you have any specific concern in mind, or would like to know the gist of some of the suggestions that were made, please let me know and I will be pleased to try and help.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Office Costs

Mr. Steen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what assessment he has made of the effect of the increase in office costs allowance on the working practices of hon. Members.

Mr. Newton: No such assessment has been made.

SCOTLAND

Retirement Flats

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from owners of retirement flats concerning uncontrolled increases in service charges imposed by development companies after sale; and what response he has made.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Office has received a number of representations, particularly in recent months, from owners, and persons or bodies representing owners, about the management of private sheltered housing, including increases in service charges. Our general view has been that it would be inappropriate for the Government to intervene in contracts freely entered into between buyers and sellers of retirement flats. However, the Scottish Law Commission is engaged in a comprehensive review of property law in Scotland and we shall shall study carefully any recommendations that the commission makes for legislative or other action in this area.

Scottish Borders Enterprise

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the reasons for the £15,000 reduction in the grant to Scottish Borders

Enterprise for employment training and youth training programmes in the region; and what has been the subsequent reduction in available training places.

Mr. Lang: In Scotland, responsibility for management of youth training and employment training and for allocation of funds to the local enterprise companies for their delivery lies with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairman of Scottish Enterprise to write to the right hon. Member with the information he has requested.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Fishermen

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of *(a)* the number of professional fishermen who will have to conform to the regulations contained in the Salmon (Definition of Methods of Net Fishing and Construction of Nets) (Scotland) Regulations 1992 and *(b)* in which rivers and estuaries they fish; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I have made no estimate of the number of professional fishermen who will be required to conform to the new regulations. Salmon net fisheries are, or could be, operated on most of Scotland's rivers and estuaries, and on the open sea coast. The regulations will apply to all salmon nets, except landing nets; every person who fishes for salmon by net will have to conform to them.

UV-B Monitoring Systems

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce regional UV-B monitoring systems; what initiative he has undertaken to encourage Scottish industry to switch to non-ozone depleting substances; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* Plans are under way to extend the monitoring network set up by the National Radiological Protection Board in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the terrestrial solar UV levels over United Kingdom latitudes.

As part of an awareness-raising strategy, a series of booklets entitled "Protecting the Ozone Layer and Safeguarding your Business" has been produced. These urge industry to take immediate action to reduce dependency on ozone-depleting substances and provide information about the main alternative technologies currently available. Regular meetings with representatives of United Kingdom producers and users of ozone-depleting substances are also held to ensure that the implications of international negotiations on the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances and the options for switching to alternatives are as widely understood as possible.

Timber (Tariff Rebates)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the forestry or paper and pulp industry concerning the reinstatement of the tariff rebate which was withdrawn from the movement of goods by ship in July 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* Consideration is at present being given to a proposal for support, under the tariff rebate subsidy scheme, of a new project for the shipment of timber from remote and relatively inaccessible locations. An announcement will be made in due course once a decision has been reached.

Mentally Ill Patients

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many mentally ill patients are in secure institutions referred there by the courts; and how many were released in each of the past five years back into the community;

(2) how many female mentally ill patients are in secure institutions referred there by the courts; and how many were released in each of the past five years back into the community.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* There are currently 115 patients—eight of them female—in the state hospital at Carstairs who have been referred by the criminal courts and a further 30 patients, all male, who have been transferred from Scottish prisons for treatment.

At any given time, there will also be individuals in prison suffering from various forms of mental disorder but not requiring treatment in hospital. Numbers are not recorded centrally.

Most detained patients moving from state hospital are transferred first to local mental illness hospitals for further rehabilitation and, if appropriate, discharge. However, the numbers discharged direct to the community with appropriate support and supervision were as follows:

	male	*female*
1987	3	1
1988	3	1
1989	5	1
1990	4	3
1991	3	3

Prisoners

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women are serving life sentences in Scottish prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* As at Thursday 29 October 1992, there were six women, all adult prisoners, serving life sentences in Scottish prisons.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the average time spent in prison of *(a)* male and (*b*) female prisoners convicted of the crime of murder and all other serious offences giving details of the offence and the time served in each category.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: I regret that the information is not readily available in the form requested, but the average time spent in prison by prisoners serving life sentences who were released from prison in the five years 1987 to 1991 was as in the table:

	Years detained in custody								
Year of release	*6-7*	*7-8*	*8-9*	*9-10*	*10-11*	*11-12*	*12-13*	*13-14*	*Over 14*
1987	—	—	1	4	6	2	—	1	1
1988	—	—	—	—	5	3	1	1	1
1989	—	—		2	2	4	8	5	4
1990	—	—	—	3	7	6	4	2	4
1991	—	—	—	1	5	4	2	1	10
Total	—	—	1	10	25	19	15	10	20

The source of this information is the report of the Parole Board for Scotland 1991.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. Gummer: Responsibility for this matter is delegated to ADAS, the Central Science Laboratory, the Central Veterinary Laboratory, the Intervention Board Executive Agency and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. I have asked their respective chief executives to write to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Letter from P. Stanley to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Central Science Laboratory (CSL) I confirm that during the last 12 months I have carried out fact finding visits to the Universities of Reading, Leeds, Lancaster and York, to explore their scientific capabilities and to establish whether CSL should develop longer-term relationships with these Universities. The outcome is that CSL will continue to be associated with all four Universities and will seek to develop closer links with Leeds, Lancaster and York in relation to the move of CSL to York in 1996/97.

In addition, I have carried out fact finding visits to other agencies, including the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency, Central Veterinary Laboratory, Laboratory of the Government Chemist, and the Defence Research Agency, to identify how they are progressing and to gather information about the services offered by other research-based agencies. My findings were that CSL has a clearly identified role in providing statutory support and R & D to MAFF, but needs to be competitive in terms of cost, quality and delivery of services.

Letter from B. Mills to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

As you know the Minister has asked that Chief Executives of executive agencies for which he is responsible write to you direct with their answer to your question.

Dr. Little our Chief Executive is away at the moment. I know that he has made visits to a number of organisations during this period, but in particular to offices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who are our parent Department, and for whom about 85 per cent. of our work is undertaken.

Letter from J. Rutter to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, if he will list the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

In his reply to the above question about Executive Agencies in MAFF, the Minister said that as this was a matter which was the direct responsibility of Chief Executives, he would ask them to write to you direct. I am doing so as Chief Executive of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

I maintain frequent contact throughout the year with representatives of the animal health industry, the veterinary profession and the veterinary pharmaceutical companies. During the last 12 months I have also spoken at national and international meetings on matters related to veterinary medicines, held regular meetings with the National Office of Animal Health and the British Veterinary Association, and initiated meetings with consumer representatives to discuss matters of common interest.

These visits and meetings are particularly useful in increasing the transparency and understanding of the licensing arrangements for veterinary medicines in the UK. They help maintain good relations with our customers and provide valuable feedback on the work of the Directorate to help improve the quality of service we offer to our customers.

Letter from J. Walsh to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

The Chief Executive of ADAS, Dr. Julia Walsh, makes on average two fact finding visits to customers and staff per month. It is considered by Dr. Walsh essential to conduct these visits to ensure the provision of quality services to ADAS customers and to transmit ideas from staff through the organisation to Director level.

Letter from G. Stapleton to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

You asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he would list the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he was responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit. Although the Intervention Board is a separate Government Department, I am responsible to the four Agriculture Ministers, and as this matter falls within the operational responsibility of this Agency, he has asked me to reply.

Between October 1991 and September 1992 I had a considerable number of discussions with the Agency's customers and with organisations with whom we work, both on and off the Agency's premises. The only ones which might be described as fact-finding visits were two I made in May, to a scientific establishment providing services to the Agency and to a firm deboning beef for intervention storage. In each case the visit enabled me to familiarise myself with the processes involved.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Library of the House.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Gummer: Responsibility for this matter is delegated to ADAS, the Central Science Laboratory, the Central Veterinary Laboratory, the Intervention Board Executive Agency and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. I have asked their respective chief executives to write to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Letter from G. Stapleton to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

You asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he would list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible. Although the Intervention Board is a separate Government Department, I am responsible to the four Agriculture Ministers, and as this is a matter within the operational responsibility of this Agency, he has asked me to reply.

As a layman, I have published no scientific papers. The Intervention Board, however, published the following material between October 1991 and September 1992:

Corporate Plan 1992-93 to 1996-97		July 1992
Annual Report 1991-92		July 1992
Scheme Leaflets:		
CD 2	Flax Subsidies (revise)	March 1992
CD 15	Support Buying of Cereals (revise)	October 1991
ET 11	Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (revise)	December 1991
ET 12	Processed Fruit and Vegetables (revise)	November 1991
ET 15	Wine (revise)	November 1991
ET 17	Processed Goods (revise)	December 1991
ET 19	Community Victualling (revise)	December 1991
FD 2	Securities and Guarantees	October 1991
LP 12	Aid for the Private Storage of Butter (revise)	February 1992
LP 18	Subsidy on Butter Supplied to Non-Profit-Making Organisations	November 1991
LP 43	Milk Coresponsibility Levy Disbursement	November 1991
LP 46	Surplus Food Scheme	May 1992

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Library of the House.

Letter from J. M. Rutter to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992:

To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Chief Executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

In his reply to the above question about Executive Agencies in MAFF, the Minister said that as this was a matter which was the direct responsibility of Chief Executives, he would ask them to write to you direct. I am doing so as Chief Executive of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

All papers published by the staff of the VMD, including myself, are recorded in the Annual Report and Accounts of the Directorate. That for the financial year 1991-92 was published on 29 July 1992 as House of Commons paper 174 and a copy placed in the Library. I enclose a further copy for your information. Details of publications are given in Appendix IX, with those by staff listed on pages 64 and 65.

In the period since 1 April 1992, I have had two further letters published in the Veterinary Record:

Rutter, J. M. (1992) Availability of medicines. *Veterinary Record, 130*, 335.

Rutter, J. M. (1992) Availability of medicines. *Veterinary Record, 130*, 478.

Letter from J. Walsh to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992

The Chief Executive of ADAS, Dr. Julia M. Walsh was appointed in June 1991. Dr. Walsh has not personally published any papers in the ensuing period. However, the nationally and internationally recognised Research and Development branch of the ADAS Executive Agency regularly publishes scientific papers and could supply specific details if required.

Letter from T. Little to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

As you know the Minister has asked that Chief Executives of executive agencies for which he is responsible write to you direct with their answer to your question.

During the period in question I have published only one paper and that is:

Little, T. W. A., Hathaway, S. C., Broughton, E. S., Seawright, D. Control of Leptospira hardjo infection in beef cattle by whole herd vaccination.

Veterinary Record (1992) Volume 131, Issue 5, Pages 90-92.

Letter from P. Stanley to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Central Science Laboratory, I confirm that I have not personally had any paper published during the past 12 month period. The Central Science Laboratory, however, has published a number of papers and I enclose for your information a copy of CSL's listing of Scientific Publications 1985-91, together with an update covering publications since the launch of the Agency in April 1992.

Food Labelling

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to complete his consideration of the need for comprehensive food labelling.

Mr. Soames: The Government issued on 4 August 1992 their final response to the recommendations arising from the Food Advisory Committee's report of its comprehensive review of food labelling legislation and practices. Most of the recommendations were accepted and most will require action at EC level. Proposals to amend the EC Food Labelling Directive are currently before the Council of Ministers and would introduce requirements concerning quantitative declaration of ingredients, ingredient listing of alcoholic drinks and revised provisions on the name of the food. We expect the Commission shortly to make proposals to control claims made in food labelling and advertising. On nutrition labelling, the Government have recently issued for consultation draft regulations implementing the EC Nutrition Labelling Directive. These are due to take effect in October 1993.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and what was the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: This information is not readily available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Food Premises

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is currently undertaken by his Department to monitor the quality of inspections carried out by local enforcement authorities to food premises under the Food Safety Act 1990 code of practice.

Mr. Curry: I obtain quarterly returns from local enforcement authorities of the inspections and other actions that they have undertaken in connection with their responsibilities under the Food Safety Act. My officials examine those returns to see whether the requirements set out in the codes of practice issued under section 40 of the Act are being met.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the most recent research available to him on the possibility of vertical transmission of BSE.

Mr. Gummer: A formal study comparing the incidence of BSE in over 300 offspring of confirmed BSE cases with an equal number of controls has not yet produced any results. All the evidence continues to suggest that feed is the mechanism of infection.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 11 May, *Official Report*, columns *29-30*, if he will list the number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in each county, in each month from January to May.

Mr. Gummer: The number of cases confirmed for England, Wales and Scotland for the periods requested is as follows. Many of these cases will have a date of clinical onset of disease and date of report before 4 January (18 January for Northern Ireland).

Country/Region	*January (4 January to 31 January)*	*February (1 February to 28 February)*	*March (29 February to 27 March)*	*April (28 March to 1 May)*	*May (2 May to 29 May)*
England					
Avon	**49**	**37**	**55**	**63**	**46**
Bedfordshire	**6**	**3**	**2**	**13**	**8**
Berkshire	**16**	**13**	**5**	**20**	**10**
Buckinghamshire	**18**	**24**	**18**	**28**	**23**
Cambridgeshire	**7**	**14**	**4**	**8**	**10**
Cheshire	**82**	**76**	**98**	**101**	**176**
Cleveland	**5**	**1**	**4**	**3**	**4**
Cornwall	**167**	**190**	**172**	**212**	**258**
Cumbria	**91**	**84**	**53**	**103**	**103**
Derbyshire	**71**	**67**	**60**	**60**	**109**
Devon	**177**	**277**	**227**	**267**	**343**
Dorset	**176**	**180**	**174**	**198**	**164**
Durham	**9**	**10**	**12**	**4**	**19**
Essex	**6**	**8**	**14**	**24**	**6**
Gloucestershire	**52**	**38**	**42**	**56**	**49**
Hampshire	**57**	**60**	**31**	**78**	**42**
Hereford and Worcestershire	**31**	**26**	**40**	**57**	**56**
Hertfordshire	**5**	**4**	**4**	**9**	**5**
Humberside	**7**	**10**	**12**	**3**	**15**
Isle of Wight	**13**	**8**	**8**	**16**	**11**
Kent	**45**	**33**	**15**	**37**	**38**
Lancashire	**70**	**89**	**68**	**120**	**103**
Leicestershire	**64**	**45**	**43**	**35**	**58**
Lincolnshire	**13**	**15**	**13**	**22**	**11**
London	**2**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Manchester	**3**	**6**	**3**	**4**	**0**
Merseyside	**3**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**2**
Norfolk	**73**	**64**	**21**	**81**	**75**
Northamptonshire	**28**	**26**	**10**	**30**	**24**
Northumberland	**7**	**11**	**11**	**21**	**34**
Nottinghamshire	**12**	**21**	**7**	**10**	**24**
Oxfordshire	**55**	**52**	**24**	**45**	**42**
Shropshire	**48**	**40**	**70**	**65**	**81**
Somerset	**232**	**250**	**213**	**251**	**209**
Staffordshire[1]	**37**	**64**	**58**	**100**	**95**
Suffolk	**32**	**32**	**11**	**34**	**27**
Surrey	**19**	**27**	**14**	**29**	**22**
Sussex East	**37**	**35**	**18**	**43**	**24**
Sussex West	**66**	**57**	**36**	**74**	**52**
Tyne and Wear	**2**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**1**
Warwickshire	**19**	**20**	**18**	**23**	**30**
West Midlands	**1**	**0**	**4**	**0**	**3**
Wiltshire	**117**	**111**	**121**	**142**	**104**
Yorkshire North	**95**	**97**	**103**	**96**	**152**
Yorkshire South	**4**	**6**	**11**	**10**	**6**
Yorkshire West	**12**	**10**	**18**	**11**	**24**
Wales:					
Clwyd	**28**	**34**	**26**	**68**	**52**
Dyfed	**140**	**148**	**126**	**151**	**199**

Country/Region	*January (4 January to 31 January)*	*February (1 February to 28 February)*	*March (29 February to 27 March)*	*April (28 March to 1 May)*	*May (2 May to 29 May)*
Glamorgan Mid	7	2	1	5	2
Glamorgan South	10	7	11	9	11
Glamorgan West	2	0	1	2	2
Gwent	15	16	21	27	21
Gwynedd	7	6	7	14	14
Powys	27	20	23	34	59
Scotland:					
Borders	11	8	5	6	10
Central	4	4	1	1	1
Dumfries	67	40	36	26	22
Fife	3	4	6	4	5
Grampian	15	14	14	26	14
Highland	4	2	6	5	4
Lothian	6	0	2	4	7
Orkney	0	3	0	2	2
Shetland	0	0	0	2	0
Strathclyde	41	34	21	22	25
Tayside	3	11	4	7	6
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0
(18–31 January)					
Northern Ireland:					
Antrim	1	11	9	12	8
Armagh	0	1	2	2	0
Down	1	6	3	5	1
Fermanagh	0	0	3	2	2
Londonderry	1	4	4	3	3
Tyrone	2	4	6	4	3

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[1] The total number of cases in Staffordshire given in the earlier reply for the period 3 January to 1 May 1992 should have read 259 not 482.

Beef Premiums

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his answer of 28 October, *Official Report*, column *684*, by what date he expects to announce the transitional arrangements for payment of beef premiums.

Mr. Curry: I will announce the transitional arrangements for the new beef special premium scheme when they have been agreed by the European Commission.

HEALTH

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in the inquiry into the events surrounding the illegal obtaining and export of RU486 from this country to the United States of America about which the hon. Member for Congleton wrote to her; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The alleged RU486 tablets illegally imported into the USA and purporting to come from the United Kingdom are not the strength licensed for use in the United Kingdom. Nor are they the tablets used for clinical trials in the United Kingdom. It is unlikely these tablets originated from the United Kingdom but investigations are continuing in collaboration with the US Food and Drug Administration.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all of the reports her Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the past three years; for each of the past three years, how many reports from external consultants to her Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department let 229 contracts for external management consultancies in 1990-91, 174 in 1991-92 and 82 so far in the current year. We do not keep a record centrally of which consultancies resulted in reports and which led to further consultancy work being commissioned. The Department's purchasing and supply manual, which has been issued to all who commission consultants, stated that goods and services should be acquired by competition unless there are convincing reasons to the contrary. Details of the consultancy contracts have been placed in the Library.

Patients' Records (Carers)

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration is being given to encouraging general practitioners to ensure that patients' records indicate whether a patient is also a carer.

Dr. Mawhinney: Every general practitioner needs to use professional judgement to decide what his or her patient's medical records need to contain to help with diagnosis, treatment and health care. We have no plans to intervene in these professional decisions.

AIDS/HIV

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the total sums spent on publicity and information to combat the spread of AIDS/HIV in the national health service every year since 1984 and the percentage of the total budget for health promotion that these figures represent.

Mr. Sackville: Between 1985-86 and 1992-93 the Government have allocated over £73 million to the development of the national AIDS public education campaign.

The table shows the Department of Health and Health Education Authority spend for the development of the national HIV and AIDS public education work including the running costs of the national AIDS helpline and related telephone information services. Not shown in the table are the sums spent by other Government Departments on HIV prevention work within their own spheres of interest.

HIV/AIDS public education

Year	*Department of Health £ million*	*Health Education Authority £ million*
1984-85	Nil	—
1985-86	0·52	—
1986-87	7·60	—
1987-88	6·74	4·47
1988-89	—	10·00
1989-90	—	12·00
1990-91	—	10·00
1991-92	—	11·00
1992-93	—	11·225

Since 1989-90 contributions have also been made towards the costs incurred by regional and district health authorities in the development of local HIV prevention initiatives. Regional AIDS (Control) Act reports since 1989-90 record expenditure on local HIV prevention initiatives as follows:

1989-90—£13·4 million
1990-91—£23·4 million
1991-92—£27·95 million

Figures for 1992-93 are not yet available though they are expected to reflect a steady increase in the development of district based HIV prevention work.

Figures recording the total spend on all aspects of health promotion are not collected centrally. However, the Government continue to spend more on HIV and AIDS education than on any other single health promotion programme.

Private Hospital Beds

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the expenditure by each London health authority per year on private hospital beds since 1983.

Mr. Sackville: The annual accounts of health authorities do not separately identify expenditure incurred specifically with private hospitals and the information is not otherwise collected centrally.

Ambulance Response Time

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the list of ambulance response times over the past six months; and on what occasions they have breached Orcon standards.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is collected on a financial year basis. The latest figures, covering the year 1991-92, are currently being assembled for publication. I will arrange for a copy of the summary tables to be sent to the hon. Member and placed in the Library as soon as these are available.

Air Ambulance Services

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *71*, who is evaluating the air ambulance services; what account is being taken of local fund raising in the terms of reference; and when she expects the evaluation to be completed.

Mr. Sackville: The long-term evaluation of the costs, performance and benefits of air ambulances is being undertaken by Professor Williams of the university of Sheffield medical school. An interim report is expected towards the end of this year, with the final report following in early 1994. The source of funding for air ambulance services does not form part of the study.

Dentistry

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family health services authorities have now given direct employment to dentists, and how many individual dentists are involved.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are currently 66 salaried dentists employed in 14 family health services authorities.

Community Care

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Health, what steps she is taking to strengthen the process of consultation on community care plans and to ensure that the independent sector providers of community care services are fully consulted.

Mr. Yeo: Independent sector providers, voluntary sector organisations and users and carers have a great deal of knowledge and experience to contribute to the development of community care. Authorities must form strong partnerships with all three if they are to develop services which are best suited to meeting people's needs and which provide a real choice. Community care planning is an important part of that process.

We have today issued for consultation with local authorities and other interested parties a draft statutory direction under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and accompanying guidance. Copies are available in the Library. Local authorities are already required to consult a wide range of people including voluntary sector organisations representing the interests of users and carers as well as statutory bodies in preparing their community care plans. The proposed direction extends that requirement to include representatives of independent sector providers. It will also require authorities to include in their plans a statement on how they intend to conduct the process of consultation in the next round.

The direction and guidance are intended to ensure that the consultation process allows all concerned to make their views known as effectively as possible and in a way which is helpful both to the authority and those being consulted. They will also ensure that independent sector providers are properly involved in community care planning. There are obvious problems for authorities in seeking to consult many separate individual providers. To have an effective voice independent sector providers must make their views known collectively through representatives rather than individually. The direction encourages them to do this.

Information Technology

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many members of regional authorities who were appointed between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 1991 were employees or directors engaged in the supply of, or consultancy related to, information technology; and if she will list them.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will reply to the letters she has received, dated 7 May and 12 August, from Mr. F. Wilcox, consultant gynaecologist, regarding the purchase of computer systems in the national health service; and if she will place a copy of her reply in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: I have no record of receiving the letters to which the hon. Member refers. If he will furnish me with copies, I shall arrange for a full reply.

Free Treatment

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will outline the criteria for who is eligible for free treatment under the national health service;

(2) if she will estimate how much money is lost each year through treating patients who are not eligible for free national health service treatment;

(3) if she will make a statement on the safeguards to minimise the number of people using the national health service who are not eligible for free national health service treatment.

Mr. Sackville: Eligibility for free national health service hospital treatment is based on United Kingdom residence. Patients who are not ordinarily resident are liable for payment unless exempted, for example, by reciprocal arrangements. In 1990-91 non payment of £765,000 (England) was written-off. Comprehensive guidance on entitlement to free national health service treatment makes it clear that where there is doubt, subject to immediate clinical need, evidence to support eligibility or a full deposit should be sought.

Alcohol and Drug Services

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate she has made of the implications of the decision not to ring fence specific funding for residential alcohol and drug services within the community care funding available from next April;

(2) what advice she proposes to give to local authorities concerning the priority to be given to the funding of residential alcohol and drug services within the ring fenced community care funding available from next April.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend announced on 2 October that we are proposing to make available to local authorities next year a special transitional grant for their new responsibilities for community care. This will give them the freedom to determine the appropriate level of funding for all services, including residential care for alcohol and drugs misusers. Guidance to local authorities reminding them of the need to give proper weight to the provision of alcohol and drug services is being prepared and will be issued shortly.

NHS Management Guidance

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will place in the Library a copy of the guidance issued to the NHS by the NHS management executive on 9 September regarding the standards of management and conduct.

Dr. Mawhinney: The letter issued on 9 September advised the national health service that revised guidelines on standards of business conduct for national health service staff would follow. This guidance will be issued shortly and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Population Statistics

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of adults in the city of Southampton identified in the census return for 1991.

Mr. Sackville: The number of people aged 18 or over recorded by the census on 21 April 1991 as usually resident in Southampton was 152,921. The number of residents meeting the definition of adult used in census statistics (people aged 16 or over who are not dependent children) was 151,947.

Tomlinson Report

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to visit Bart's hospital as part of her follow-up to the Tomlinson report; and what proposals she has to give Bart's hospital time and facilities to prepare their case before making her visit.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that at least two ministerial visits are made to the Smithfield site of St. Bartholomew's hospital during the period of consultation on the Tomlinson report.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall be visiting St. Bartholomew's hospital shortly including the Homerton Hospital and St. Mark's hospital, which form part of the Bart's acute unit. There will be ample opportunity for St. Bartholomew's and other hospitals to make known their views on Sir Bernard Tomlinson's recommendations before we bring forward detailed proposals.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the 10 minutes isochrone for Bart's hospital was calculated by Professor Tomlinson; who calculated it; and at what time of the day it was calculated.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand that this analysis was undertaken by Sir Bernard Tomlinson by a firm of consultants, Centre for Analysis and Modelling Ltd., that it was based upon standard computerised geographical and transport data, and that it assumed road transport at Monday to Friday daytime off-peak road speeds. I have asked Sir Bernard to write directly to the hon. Member giving a more detailed explanation of the methodology, and shall ensure that a copy of his letter is placed in the Library.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the dates so far arranged for ministerial visits to hospitals proposed for closure or merger in the Tomlinson report.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall ensure that hon. Members are informed in the normal way prior to any ministerial visits to hospitals in their constituencies.

Sex Offenders

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the recent case in Nottingham where a child sex offender was unable to continue treatment at Gracewell clinic because of lack of funds; and what proposals he has to fund such treatment in future.

Mr. Yeo: The funding of such services is a matter of local determination and I understand that local arrangements have been made to fund the person concerned at the Gracewell clinic.

EMPLOYMENT

Work Noise

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the visits to Wales by the Health and Safety Executive's roadshow on noise at work.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive's roadshow on noise at work has yet to visit Wales. However, a number of visits are scheduled for November. The roadshow will be in the city centre, Cardiff from 2 to 7 November; in St. John's Street, Newport from 9 to 11 November; and in St. John's Forest square, Ebbw Vale from 12 to 14 November. It will also visit Wrexham in March 1993.

Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether trainees on European social fund training courses are treated as employees for the purposes of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; what statutory health and safety obligations ESF providers have with respect to their trainees; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: For the purposes of health and safety legislation, trainees—including those on courses funded by the European social fund—are treated as employees if they engage in relevant training, as defined by the Health and Safety (Training for Employment) Regulations 1990. Relevant training is defined as work experience provided as part of a training course or programme, or training for employment, or both.

Where instruction is provided to trainees in an educational establishment or technical institute, employers have responsibilities towards this group as laid down under sections 3 and 4 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974.

These arrangements apply irrespective of whether the course in question is in receipt of support from the European social fund.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether trainees on European social fund training courses are covered by her Department's analogous industrial injuries compensation scheme; what statutory benefits a trainee who suffered an industrial injury whilst participating in an ESF course may claim; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Unemployed people on Government-sponsored training courses such as youth training and employment training are covered by the analogous industrial injuries scheme.

Trainees on other courses are covered by statutory arrangements. Their entitlement to statutory industrial injury benefit depends upon their status and in particular on whether the trainees are classed as "employed earners".

These arrangements apply irrespective of whether the course in question is in receipt of support from the European social fund.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate she has made of the likely increased demand for training programmes over the next six months; and if she will make a statement on the proposals for meeting this demand.

Mr. McLoughlin: The provision of training programmes and demand for them are kept under constant review. Potential colliery closures may lead to increased demand. Up to £75 million will be made available to the areas affected. The training and enterprise councils concerned have been asked to co-ordinate action plans for new measures to alleviate the effects of the closures.

A statement about overall resources for training from April 1993 will be made when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announces this year's public expenditure settlement.

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to extend the use of training credits.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on the Floor of the House on 3 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns 130-31.

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the lowest legal rates of pay for adults in wages councils covering more than 10,000 people and what are the lowest agreed rates of pay in *(a)* the civil service, *(b)* in local government service, *(c)* in nationalised industries and *(d)* in military service.

Mr. McLoughlin: The lowest legal rates of pay in wages councils covering more than 10,000 people are shown in the table:

	£ per hour
Clothing manufacture	2·6375
General waste materials reclamation	2·60
Hairdressing undertakings	2·78
Laundry	2·91
Licensed non-residential	2·91
Licensed residential and licensed restaurant	2·92
Retail food and allied trades	3·08
Retail trades non-food	3·06
Toy manufacturing	2·63
Unlicensed place of refreshment	2·92

An administrative assistant in the civil service on adult rates is paid £6,483 a year. In the military service, a private committed to less than six years service is paid £7,774·50 a year.

The lowest agreed rates of pay in local government and nationalised industries is not readily available. There is no agreement covering all local authorities and each nationalised industry negotiates its own agreements.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *825*, if she will list the studies or other evidence that illustrate or quantify the link asserted between pay and jobs at statutory minimum rates.

Mr. McLoughlin: Among the studies considered are the following:

(i) United Kingdom studies on the link between pay and jobs at national level.

—Her Majesty's Treasury, (1985). "The relationship between employment and wages", London: HMSO. [This is the most comprehensive survey of the evidence on the link between pay and jobs at national level].

—Wells, W. (1983). "The relative pay and employment of young people", Department of Employment research paper No. 42.

(ii) United Kingdom studies on the employment effects of proposals for a national minimum wage.

—Bazen, S. (1990). "On the employment effects of introducing a National Minimum Wage in the UK", *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1990.

—Dennison, S. R. and Forrest, D. (1984). "Low pay or no pay; a review of the theory and practice of minimum wage laws" Institute of Economic Affairs, Hobart paper No. 101.

—Gregg, P. (1992). "National minimum wage", in the *National Institute Economic Review*, February 1992.

—Minford, P. (1989). "The effects in the UK of EEC wage proposals in the social charter", in the *Liverpool Quarterly Economic Bulletin*, December 1989.

—UBS Phillips and Drew (1991). *Economic Briefing*, June 1991.

(iii) Studies of the employment effects of the wages boards and councils.

—Canning, D. and Tarling, R. (1985). "A report on the Department of Employment's study 'Wages floors in the clothing industry 1950-1981'", Department of Applied Economics, Cambridge, 1985.

—Craig, C. and Wilkinson, F. (1986). "Pay and employment in four retail trades", Department of Employment research paper No. 51.

—Kaufman, R. (1989): "The effects on statutory minimum rates of pay on employment in Great Britain", *Economic Journal*, December 1989.

—Lund, P., Morris, T., Temple, J. and Watson, J. (1982). "Wages and employment in agriculture 1960-1980", GES working paper No. 52.

—Machin, S. and Manning, A. (1992). "Minimum wages, wage dispersion and employment: evidence from the UK wages councils", LSE working paper No. 221.

—Morgan, P., Paterson, D. and Barrie, R. (1986). "Wage floors in the clothing industry 1950-81", Department of Employment research paper No. 52.

—Neuburger, H. (1984). "From the dole queue to the sweatshop", London: Low Pay Unit.

(iv) Studies on the employment effects of the United States minimum wage.

—Brown, C., Gilroy, C., Kohen, A. (1982). "The effect of the minimum wage on employment and unemployment." *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol.XX. [This contains a survey of the US evidence]

—Card, D. (1991). "Do minimum wages reduce employment? A case study of California, 1987-89." NBER working paper No. 3710.

—Castillo Freeman, A and Freeman, R.B. (1991). "Minimum Wages in Puerto Rico." NBER working paper No. 3759.

—Katz, L, and Krueger, A. (1991). "The effect of the new minimum wage law in a low wage labour market." Princeton university working paper No. 280.

—Neumark, D, and Wascher, W. (1991). "Evidence on employment effects of minimum wages and subminimum wage provisions from panel data on state minimum wage laws". NBER working paper No. 3859.

—Report of the Minimum Wage Study Commission (1981), Vol. 1. [This report contains an assessment of the employment effects of the federal minimum based on a large number of studies]

—Walsh, K. (1991). "A comparative review of minimum wage systems" in "Minimum Wage—An analysis of the Issues". Institute for Personnel Management.

(v) References to International evidence of the employment effects of minimum wage legislation in work conducted by the ILO and the OECD.

—ILO (1992). "Minimum wages, wage fixing machinery, application and supervision", International Labour Office.

—OECD (1991), "1990-91 OECD Economic Surveys, France".

—OECD (1989), "1988-89 Economic Surveys, Netherlands".

—OECD (1990), "Labour market policies for the 1990s".

—Starr, G. (1981). "Minimum wage fixing", International Labour Office.

(vi) Other articles and correspondence concerning the debate about the employment effects of the wages councils. For example, a recent Fabian Society pamphlet by Fred Bayliss; and various publications by the Low Pay Unit.

Toxic Substances

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will bring forward proposals to ensure in relation to industrial major accident hazard sites situated within 25 km of international airports *(a)* that all vessels containing scheduled toxic substances stored under pressure are constructed so as to prevent rupture in the event of direct impact by a large aircraft and *(b)* that off-site emergency plans fully address the consequences of catastrophic failure of pressure vessels consequent on direct impact by large aircraft.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to introduce requirements for such pressure vessels to withstand this kind of impact. Installations which are assessed by the Health and Safety Executive as representing a potential major hazard are constructed and operated within a strict legislative regime. The probability of such impacts is assessed as being very small.

Local authorities with installations governed by the Control of Major Accident Hazards (CIMAH) Regulations 1984 within their boundaries are required to prepare detailed emergency off-site plans which would take account of the catastrophic failure of pressure vessels.

Departmental Staff (Wages)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the minimum equivalent rate of hourly pay for her Department's staff aged 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 years; and the numbers employed at each age.

Mr. McLoughlin: The table shows minimum basic hourly rates of pay for industrial and non-industrial staff in the Employment Department group:

	Non-industrial National Rate	*Non-industrial London Rate*	*Industrial National Rate*
Age 16	2·39	2·63	2·00
Age 17	2·56	2·82	2·66
Age 18	3·14	3·45	3·33
Age 19	3·36	3·69	3·55
Age 20	3·36	3·69	3·89
Age 21	3·36	3·69	4·00

The number of ED group staff in post at 1 October 1992, at ages 21 and below, is in the table.

Age	*All staff*	*Permanent staff only*
16	10	2
17	114	54
18	389	230
19	1,078	732
20	1,481	1,091
21	1,560	1,222

Pit Closures

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the amounts being given to each training and enterprise council as part of the recently announced pit closure programme.

Mr. McLoughlin: An additional sum of up to £75 million will be made available in areas affected by potential colliery closures depending on the scale of the job losses in prospect. The TECs concerned have been asked to coordinate action plans for new measures to alleviate the effects of closures. The actual amount available to each TEC will depend on the action plan that is finally agreed.

Work Sites (Tap Water)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provisions are laid down regarding requirements of access to tap water at work sites under health and safety regulations.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no requirements for tap water as such in health and safety legislation. The Factories Act 1961 and the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963 require drinking water and running water for washing to be provided at conveniently accessible places in premises subject to those Acts. Separate legislation covering construction work, mines and quarries, agriculture, and work with asbestos, lead and ionising radiations contains similar provisions.

Vehicle Building

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the number of jobs lost in the vehicle building industry in the current year.

Mr. McLoughlin: Between August 1991 and August 1992, the number of employees in the manufacture of motor vehicles and parts in Great Britain fell by 1,000.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about the change in the number of people employed in manufacturing industry, by standard planning region, in the past 13 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is shown in the table.

Employees in employment in manufacturing[1]
Change June 1979 to June 1992

Region	*Thousands*
South East (including Greater London)	−756
East Anglia	−41
South West	−117
West Midlands	−416
East Midlands	−161
Yorkshire and Humberside	−248
North West	−399
North	−156
England	−2,285
Wales	−95
Scotland	−236
Northern Ireland	−48
United Kingdom	−2,664

[1] Not seasonally adjusted.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have sought and been granted dispensation from the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 4 November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question, about Training and Enterprise Councils and the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944. The day to day administration of the procedures which flow from the 1944 Act is something which falls within the responsibility delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

You asked how many training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) have been granted dispensations from the Act. I regret that data is not collected centrally on the extent to which permits are issued, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, to particular kinds of employer.

As you may know, the 1944 Act established the Quota Scheme for the employment of registered disabled people, under which employees who have twenty or more workers have a duty to employ a quota of registered disabled people. The standard quota is currently 3 per cent. of an employer's total workforce. Employers not meeting the quota have a further duty under the Act, to engage suitable registered disabled people, if any are available, to fill vacancies which arise. A below quota employer must not engage anyone other than a registered disabled person without first obtaining a permit to do so, and must not discharge a registered disabled worker without reasonable cause. The issue of a permit does not grant the employer exemption from their duties and obligations under the Act.

My placing Assessment and Counselling Teams (PACTs) do monitor the extent to which employers in their areas are complying with the requirements, including keeping details of permits issued by my Disability Employment Advisers to below quota employers. Each year PACTs provide a statistical return on quota compliance in their areas. These, in turn, are used by my Head Office to produce national data. However this geographical information does not enable data to be extracted centrally in respect of particular sectors or types of employer. Therefore, I am not able to provide the information you have asked for in relation to TECs.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Radiation Emergencies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has in regard to the number and source of comments submitted to the Health and Safety Commission in response to the HSC draft on proposed United Kingdom regulations developed pursuant to EC directive 89/618/EEC on public information and radiation emergencies.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The Health and Safety Executive is in the process of producing a publication entitled "A Guide to the Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations". The draft guidance was sent out to approximately 180 organisations and individuals inviting comments. There were some 36 replies received of which 13 said that they had no comments to offer. The majority of replies came from nuclear operators, local authorities or their associations, organisations representing emergency service personnel and Government Departments.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Assisted Areas

12. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to complete his review of the assisted areas map.

23. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to alter the assisted area boundaries.

28. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to complete his review of the map of assisted areas.

Mr. Sainsbury: The consultation paper on the assisted areas review stated that the Government's aim was to implement a revised map early in 1993, following the necessary clearance with the European Commission. This remains our intention.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what will be the effect upon the current review of assisted area status of his announcement that certain coal mining areas will receive assisted area status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government have made a specific commitment that Barnsley, Doncaster and Mansfield will be given enhanced status. This will not affect the careful consideration that will be given to other areas in the light of the extensive process of consultation.

National Energy Strategy

13. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to respond to the call for a national energy strategy in the Energy Committee's fifth report of Session 1990-91 on clean coal technology and the coal market after 1993, HC 208.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend announced on 26 October the scope of the review which we will be conducting of the proposed closure of 21 pits, within the context of the Government's energy policy.

Single European Act

14. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects all of the directives relative to the European Single Act to be completed.

Mr. Needham: A total of 257 out of the 282 measures in the Commission's White Paper "Completing the Internal Market" have been agreed. The Single European Act will continue in force as a basis for legislation.

Investment

15. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the percentage of investment by Japanese companies in the European Community which has been made in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information published by the Japanese Ministry of Finance, indicates that the United Kingdom has almost 41 per cent. of the stock of Japanese foreign direct investment in the European Community.

20. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with international companies on the subject of inward investment into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Officials of my Department, and of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, are in constant contact with a large number of companies in all the major investing countries.

Firework Safety

16. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the current year's firework safety campaign.

Mr. Leigh: This year's firework safety campaign was launched on 15 October. The aim of the campaign is to make sure that all those handling fireworks, whether as retailers or as users, are aware of their legal obligations and of the precautions that they should take to make sure of an accident-free Guy Fawkes night.

21. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the effect that a European standard for fireworks will have on British safety standards.

Mr. Leigh: It is not certain at this stage what effect a European standard for fireworks will have on British safety standards. Negotiations will continue for some considerable time as our aim is to ensure that any European standard for fireworks is consistent with standards of safety in the United Kingdom.

Coal

17. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent inquiries he has received from the private sector about buying coal waste.

Mr. Heseltine: None. This is a matter for the owners of coal waste, including British Coal.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his statement of 19 October, if he will set out a disaggregated breakdown of the £18 billion investment he stated has been made in the British coal industry since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: Financial assistance made available to the coal industry from 1979-80 to 1991-92 inclusive was as follows:

	£ million
Deficit grant	4,748
Deficiency grant	6,153
Operating grant	95
Social and restructuring grants	4,414
Redundant Mineworkers Payments Scheme	2,477
Total	17,887

The Government have approved capital expenditure by British Coal of nearly £8 billion over this period.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many tonnes of coal were sold by British Coal to customers other than the Central Electricity Generating Board, National Power and PowerGen in each of the last five years, giving a separate figure for exports in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Figures for sales to the United Kingdom market, excluding power stations and exports are as follows:

million tonnes

	United Kingdom Consumption, excluding Power Stations	*Exports*
1987-88	29·3	2·2
1988-89	28·3	1·8
1989-90	26·7	2·6
1990-91	26·8	2·1
1991-92	24·5	1·4

Requirements for coal in United Kingdom sectors other than electricity generation have been declining steadily for many years and have fallen by 16 per cent. in the past five years alone.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what tonnages of coal were imported by *(a)* the electricity authorities and *(b)* private generators in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of coal imported by the major electricity generators in the United Kingdom in 1991 was 7,260,000 tonnes. Figures for coal imports by small, private, industrial generators are not available.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what amounts of coal, and from which countries, have been imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 30 October 1992, *Official Report*, column 956.

Fuel Prices

18. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the current prices of coal, gas and nuclear-generated electricity; and what are the projected costs of these fuels over the next 10 years.

Mr. Eggar: My Department will be assessing the relative costs of coal-fired and other sources of generation as part of the Government's coal review.

As far as electricity purchased by the regional electricity companies is concerned, it is for the Director General of Electricity Supply to ensure that the companies comply with their economic purchasing obligations.

Pit Closures

Mr. Fisher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on the financial viability of Trentham colliery and the other nine pits marked for closure.

Mr. Eggar: I have received a number of representations of that kind. Such representations are, however, best made to British Coal since it is currently engaged in the statutory consultation process relating to the 10 pits.

27. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the considerations which led to the Point of Ayr colliery being added to the original closure list of 31 pits at a late stage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend and I accepted British Coal's advice that, in order to meet its estimate of its potential market economically, it needed to reduce its present levels of production urgently and substantially. We also accepted British Coal's advice as to the particular pits that should be closed.

29. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the latest position over pit closures.

Mr. Eggar: Subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process, British Coal is proceeding with the closure of the 10 pits which it told my right hon. Friend are currently loss making and have no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future.

The other 21 pits originally proposed for closure by British Coal remain the subject of a moratorium until early in the New Year, during which time we shall be carrying out a full and wide-ranging review of its prospects.

Civilian Aircraft

22. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what incentives he is providing to the British civilian aircraft industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since 1979, the Department of Trade and Industry has provided over £1·5 billion in support to the United Kingdom aerospace industry.

Business Failures

24. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the number of business failures in 1992 to date.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The number of company and individual insolvencies in England and Wales in the first six months of 1992 totalled 29,204—on a seasonally adjusted basis. This represents a 12 per cent. increase over the previous six months. These figures should be considered in the context of some 3 million United Kingdom businesses in total and the large number of business start-ups and closures each year.

Petrochemical Industry

25. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department is taking to assist the petrochemical industry through the present recession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government are committed to helping British industry to succeed in world markets. They are doing this by creating a climate within which industry can thrive and by ensuring that the policies of both DTI and the rest of Government take the needs of business into account. Our chemicals and biotechnology division, which was set up in July, is in close touch with the petrochemical industry.

Swan Hunter

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will agree to intervention funding from the European Commission being made available to Swan Hunter Shipbuilders to enable it to diversify into the merchant shipbuilding sector.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our agreement with the Commission prevents us from providing a subsidy to those companies which were privatised as warship builders.

Parcelforce

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the programme for Parcelforce privatisation.

Mr. Heseltine: I am discussing with consultants' their advice on the best method and timing for the sale of Parcelforce. I look forward to seeing Parcelforce in the private sector at the earliest possible opportunity.

Manufacturing

Mrs. Roche: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to announce new proposals to improve manufacturing output; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: We will continue to announce new proposals as and when we reach appropriate decisions.

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he is taking to support the supply side of the economy with particular regard to manufacturing and the drive for exports.

Mr. Needham: The Government are committed to strengthening the supply side of the economy by the control of inflation, by tax rates that provide real incentives, by reducing the burden of Government, by providing high-class advisory services, and by keeping markets, both at home and abroad, fair and competitive.

Private Industry (Secondees)

33. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many secondees to his Department from private industry have been appointed; how many applied; and when he expects to have 100 secondees in place.

Mr. Eggar: There are 37 inward secondees from the private sector currently working in the DTI. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has announced his intention to increase substantially that number by recruiting additional secondees to help in the Department's new industry sector divisions and a further 100 secondees to assist with the promotion of United Kingdom exports.

My right hon. Friend is inviting companies to identify suitable people for these secondments and his aim is to have them in place quickly.

Electricity

34. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the electricity prices charged to heavy industry bulk users of electric power.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in dialogue with large electricity users concerning electricity prices.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of electricity consumption was produced by sources other than *(a)* gas, *(b)* coal, *(c)* oil and *(d)* nuclear power, in the United Kingdom in each of the last three years.

Mr. Eggar: The proportion of electricity consumption in the United Kingdom that was produced by sources other than gas, coal, oil and nuclear power was about 2 per cent. in each of the last three years. This figure includes generation by hydro-electric power, wind power and other renewable energy sources.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what study has been made of the relationship between fuel prices and the price of electricity supplied to British industry; and if he will publish a table, for each of the past 10 years, of the average price charged by the United Kingdom and the German electricity supply industries to major users.

Mr. Eggar: It is for the Director General of Electricity Supply to ensure the proper functioning of the market for electricity. In addition, my Department is in dialogue with large electricity users concerning electricity prices.

The information requested is as follows:

Industrial electricity prices

pence per kwh excluding VAT

Year	*United Kingdom*	*Germany*
1982	3·44	2·96
1983	3·40	3·37
1984	3·46	3·53

Year	*United Kingdom*	*Germany*
1985	3·58	3·67
1986	3·63	4·49
1987	3·52	5·00
1988	3·70	4·70
1989	3·73	4·82
1990	3·83	5·10
1991	4·05	4·99

Source: International Energy Agency: "Energy Prices and Taxes".

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what quantities of uranium and plutonium would be produced by reprocessing spent fuel from United Kingdom nuclear power stations under existing contracts with the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: Under its existing contracts for operating the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield up to the year 2002, British Nuclear Fuels plc estimates that some 2,000 tonnes of uranium and some 8,000 tonnes of plutonium will arise from the reprocessing of spent fuel from nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom.

Correspondence

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidelines are issued to his Department for the processing of correspondence from hon. Members; and what is the average delay between receipt of correspondence from, and the date of response to, an hon. Member.

Mr. Heseltine: The Department of Trade and Industry has an explicit performance target for all ministerial correspondence as set out by the citizens charter unit. When DTI Ministers themselves reply to letters from Members of Parliament or members of the public, they aim to do so within ten working days of receipt of the incoming letter. This target was met, in the year ending 31 December 1991, in 91·5 per cent. of cases.

Maxwell Communications Corporation plc

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress of the inquiry into the Mirror Group Newspapers prospectus; what is the expected date for publication of the report; and what consideration the inspectors are giving to statements made by the directors in the prospectus about the Maxwell Communications Corporation plc works pension scheme.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The inspectors have commenced interviewing witnesses, but it is too early to give a realistic estimate as to when they will complete their investigation. I am sure that they will consider all aspects of the company's affairs relevant to their task. It is the policy to publish reports on the affairs of public companies, but a decision cannot be made until the report is received and its contents have been studied.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress of the inquiry into the interests in and ownership of shares in Maxwell Communications Corporation plc and the expected date for publication of the report; and whether the report will include sections concerning breach of trust where shares were acquired by or funded by pension funds without proper authority.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department is not carrying out any inquiry into Maxwell Communication Corporation plc.

Gas

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate, on the basis of available known reserves of gas on the United Kingdom continental shelf, how long United Kingdom gas reserves would last if all the proposed gas-generated electricity stations were to come into operation using domestic reserves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: For details of the Department's most recent estimate of UKCS gas reserves I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) on 28 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns *680-81*.

As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade told the House on 21 October, he will be producing for the House the conclusions we draw from our estimates of reserves, and will report on the scale of gas-generated power stations in production, in build and in the planning process.

Insurance Exhibition

Mr. Tracey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Association of British Insurers to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I understand that, under the procedures agreed with the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 9 to 13 November.

Guinness (Report)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will publish the inspectors' report relating to Guinness.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The inspectors have submitted an interim report. This has not been published because of the possibility of prejudice to the criminal proceedings. The inspectors will submit their final report following the conclusion of these proceedings. Consideration of publication of that report must await its receipt.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the cost of preparing the inspectors' report relating to Guinness; and when payout was made.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The investigation into the affairs and membership of Guinness plc has cost £1,793,000 to date. Payments have been made to the inspectors against invoices issued from time to time.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the accountancy firms which have been criticised in his Department's inspectors' reports since 1990.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Since 1990, six inspectors' reports have been published containing criticism of accountancy firms:

Name of Company	*Date of Publication of Report*	*Name of Accountancy Firm*
Minet Holdings plc and WMD Underwriting Agencies Ltd.	29 August 1990	Black Geognegan and Till Jocelyne Layton-Bennett & Co. Arthur Young McClelland Moores & Co.
Alexander Howden Holdings plc	29 August 1990	Jocelyne Layton-Bennett & Code Paula Turner Lake & Co Peat Marwick Mitchell & Co Bermuda Arthur Young McClelland Moores & Co
Aldermanbury Trust plc	20 March 1991	Levy Gee Spicer & Pegler Gibraltar
Sound Diffusion plc	1 May 1991	Arthur Young McClelland Moores & Co
Rotaprint plc	24 July 1991	Arthur Young Ernst & Whinney
The Milford Docks Company	16 January 1992	Coopers & Lybrand

British Coal (Privatisation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the accountancy firms which are advising him on privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: Touche Ross was appointed as accountancy adviser on the privatisation of British Coal on 12 June 1991.

Company Accounts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce departmental investigations of a sample of company accounts whenever the auditors issue a major qualification.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department's investigatory powers can only be exercised when there is good reason to do so, primarily when there are grounds to suggest fraud, misfeasance, or serious misconduct; or where shareholders have been denied reasonable information.

Companies Acts Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names and the business connections of the individuals who are currently acting as inspectors under the Companies Acts.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

D. Donaldson QC
I. Watt FCA of KPMG Peat Marwick, Chartered Accountants
Miss E. Appleby QC
P. Foss FCA of Moores Rowland, Chartered Accountants
L. Ziman of Nabarro Nathanson, Solicitors
W. Hoffman FCA of Baker Tilly, Chartered Accountants
P. Heslop QC
R. Lewis FCA of Kidsons Impey, Chartered Accountants
E. W. Hamilton QC
J. A. Scott FCA of BDO Binder Hamlyn, Chartered Accountants
C. P. F. Rimer QC
J. White FCA of KPMG Peat Marwick, Chartered Accountants
W. M. Gage QC
A. H. Gilroy FCA of BDO Binder Hamlyn, Chartered Accountants
R. G. B. McCombe QC
J. K. Heywood LLB FCA of Price Waterhouse, Chartered Accountants
A. H. S. Robertshaw of DTI
C. K. B. Mayhew of DTI
M. Crystal QC
V. B. A. Temple, Barrister
D. L. Spence of Grant Thorton, Chartered Accountants
R. J. L. Thomas QC
R. T. Turner FCA of Neville Russell, Chartered Accountants

Financial Reporting Council

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much finance he has provided to the Financial Reporting Council for each of the years since its inception.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The amounts of grant in aid paid to the Financial Reporting Council have been:

	£
1990-91	886,317
1991-92	907,793
[1]1992-93	254,000

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[1] To date.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans to appoint inspectors to investigate the role of auditors in the collapse of the BCCI.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The accountancy profession's joint disciplinary scheme announced in April that it had appointed a committee of inquiry at the request of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales to look into the conduct and competence of members and member firms in relation to the collapse of BCCI. The committee is chaired by Sir John Bailey KCB. I have no plans to appoint inspectors.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total cost of the liquidation of Bank of Credit and Commerce International in terms of *(a)* liquidators' fees and *(b)* legal fees.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 3 November 1992]*: My Department does not have this information; this is a matter for the liquidators.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many loans have been written off by the liquidators of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* My Department does not have this information; this is a matter for the liquidators.

Insurance Companies

Mr. Cann: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many captive insurance companies have been created under the supervision of the Department of Trade and Industry during 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department authorised one captive insurance company in 1990 and none in 1989 and 1991.

Libya

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect of United Nations sanctions against Libya on British trade.

Mr. Needham: United Kingdom exports to Libya were just under £90 million from April—when limited sanctions came into force—to August 1992. It is impossible to say what additional trade might have occurred if United Nations sanctions had not been in force during that period.

Toyota

Mrs. Currie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with Toyota Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd., to discuss further investment programmes.

Mr. Sainsbury: Toyota Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd. has already committed £840 million to its current investment programme in the United Kingdom. There are no current discussions with the company regarding further investment.

Municipal Mutual Insurance Company

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning the affairs of the Municipal Mutual Insurance company.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have been made aware of the concerns of policyholders, including private individuals and local authorities, and employees of Municipal Mutual Insurance Ltd. I have their interests very much in mind when considering the discharge of my Department's responsibilities under the Insurance Companies Act 1982.

Paper Production

Mr. Paice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what investigations his Department has conducted to establish the environmental energy balance through a cradle-to-grave analysis of paper production from virgin fibre and paper production using recycled materials; and what conclusions have been drawn.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* Warren Spring Laboratory, an agency of my Department, carried out a review of the environmental impact of recycling processes calling on known, available, published cradle-to-grave analysis data and reported its findings in July 1992. The report, entitled "A Review of: The Environmental Impact of Recycling" concludes that, taking into account the whole lifecycle, there are very significant savings in energy consumption—ranging from 28 per cent. to 70 per cent.—and reductions in emissions to be gained by recycling paper. It notes, however, that there will always be a need for virgin fibre to replace shortened fibres lost as fines and that, in certain situations, there is a case for incineration with energy recovery of waste paper, particularly when in mixed, contaminated form. It also highlights the imbalance between United Kingdom consumption and production of paper and board as a major barrier to increased levels of recycling. I will arrange for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

Further work on the environmental impacts from cradle-to-grave of a range of paper products, both virgin and recycled fibre based, is being carried out on behalf of the EC Commission by the Danish National Agency of Environmental Protection. The results of this work, which have yet to be published, will be used in the preparation of criteria for the EC ecolabelling scheme.

Coal Faces (Visits)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those coal faces which he has visited since taking office as President of the Board of Trade; on what dates those visits took place; and what estimate had been made in each case at that time of the probable life and potential tonnage of that coal face.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* I have not visited any collieries since taking up my present office. However, my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy visited Ollerton and Rufford collieries on 13 May and Whitemoor colliery on 17 July. My noble Friend Baroness Denton, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms, visited Silverwood colliery on 28 August. They had wide-ranging exchanges with local managers and members of the work force about the particular pits and issues affecting the industry more generally.

Coal and Cereals

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the percentage increase in coal and cereal production since 1968 and in the amount imported and exported.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* Figures for the production, imports and exports of coal and cereals in 1968 and 1991, and the percentage changes of each over the intervening period, were:

Million tonnes

	Coal *1968*	Coal *1991*	Coal *Per cent. change*	Cereal *1968-69*[1]	Cereal *1991*	Cereal *Per cent. change*
Production	169·9	96·1	−43	13·1	22·6	+72
Imports	—	19·5	(+)	8·6	2·5	−71
Exports	2·7	1·7	−39	0·1	6·0	(+)

Percentage changes have been calculated from unrounded figures.

[1] Data on crop year basis, 1 July 1968 to 30 June 1969.

Sources: Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* My Department has 59 officials wholly engaged in work related to the European Community. There is no central register of officials mainly or partially engaged in such work.

EC Perifra Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the projects approved for submission to the EC Perifra programme together with the dates he expects approval to be given and work under the programme to commence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* On 5 June 1992, the United Kingdom sent 12 proposals to the European Commission for funding under the Perifra scheme. On 7 August 1992, the European Commission announced the approval of eight of them. These are as follows:

Region/project

Borders Regional Council
Textile design and innovation centre.

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Todmorden area regeneration initiative.

Chorley Borough Council/Lancashire Enterprises
Technology centre to support redeployment of defence jobs.

Dyfed/West Wales Task Force
Employment/training initiative.

Fife Regional Council
Product Innovation Centre.

Hertfordshire TEC/Hertfordshire County Council
Development of alternative employment through support and training.

Leeds City Council
Clothing Resource Centre.

Royal British Legion, Wiltshire
Design and construction of a training centre.

The timing of the start of work on the projects is a matter for the sponsors.

Pharmaceutical Industry

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the output in financial terms of the United Kingdom's pharmaceutical industry *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1991;

(2) what were the export earnings of the pharmaceutical industry in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1991.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* The information available is shown in the table.

United Kingdom Pharmaceutical Industry — *£ million*

	[1]*1979*	[2]*1991*
Total sales of pharmaceutical products	1,705	6,167
Exports of pharmaceutical products	599	2,716

Source: Business Monitor 2570.

[1] 1979 figures are based on SIC 1968.

[2] 1991 figures are based on SIC 1980.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 5 November 1992

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Pit Closures

Mr. Redmond: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what discussions the Church Commissioners have had with the management of the electricity companies in connection with the pit closure programme, under the Commissioners' investment policy guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Alison: The Commissioners take an active interest in those businesses in which they invest and this includes regular discussions with the chairmen of companies in which they have substantial holdings, primarily to discuss a range of ethical questions. From time to time, on matters where the Church has expressed concern, they can use their position as shareholders to reinforce that concern with these chairmen and this is what they are doing in the case of the proposed pit closures.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime, Northumbria

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet representatives of the Northumbria police authority to discuss the continuation of urban crime fund resources.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 22 October, at column *553*. My right hon. and learned Friend is currently considering a request from Northumbria police authority for a meeting.

Le Trong Khai

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to reply to the letters of 19 February and 22 April from the hon. Member for Sunderland, South regarding the family of Le Trong Khai (ref. L301037/PO4731/92).

Mr. Charles Wardle: This case is one of about 30 cases involving Vietnamese boat people raised with hon. Members by Ms. Frances House, all of which are being considered together. We are awaiting further information from Ms. House on some of the cases, but I hope that this will be forthcoming and that I will be able to send the hon. Member a substantive reply to his letters shortly.

Mrs. Zarqa Begum

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he received the application for indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom by Mrs. Zarqa Begum (Ref. IMP B490251/2/S) submitted to him by the hon. Member for Bradford, West; when the application was refused; when the hon. Member for Bradford, West was notified of the refusal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The application was received on 22 January 1992. My hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd) wrote to the hon. Member on 11 March explaining that inquiries were being made and that the compassionate circumstances would be taken into account when a decision was reached. The application was refused on 21 July; it was subsequently reconsidered but again refused on 10 September. I have agreed to meet the hon. Member to discuss this case on 5 November.

Immigration and Nationality Department

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department after what interval a right hon. or hon. Member can expect a substantive reply to letters concerning the immigration and nationality department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In most cases 35 days.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to establish an independent complaints procedure for the immigration and nationality department.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The arrangements for dealing with complaints are currently under review in the light of the principles in the citizens charter. The arguments for introducing an independent element, which have not hitherto been found persuasive, will be considered in the course of that review.

Fire Regulations

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations 1992 and associated guidance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering the many comments on the proposed regulations and guidance received during the consultation period which ended on 1 September. He is concerned to give proper consideration to those comments before deciding on the form which the regulations and guidance should take.

Terrorist Suspects (Interviews)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning the tape recording of interviews with terrorist suspects.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The full tape recording of interviews with terrorist suspects will begin, on a trial basis, on Tuesday 1 December 1992. All forces in England and Wales will tape record interviews with terrorist suspects in line with current practice for other criminal suspects under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. These trials, which will run for up to two years, will be carefully evaluated before any decision is taken to extend formally the code of practice on tape recording under the 1984 Act to cover terrorist cases.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will name each of the asylum seekers who have died in detention since 1990; what public reports were made on the circumstances of their deaths; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Two asylum seekers have died in detention during this period. On 16 June 1990, Mr. Kimpua Nsimba died in the Harmondsworth detention centre. The coroner's inquest into his death recorded on 4 March 1991 a finding of suicide by asphyxia and hanging. On 8 October 1991, Mr. Omasase Lumumba died in Her Majesty's prison Pentonville. I understand that the coroner's inquest is due to take place on 8 February 1993.

Duty Psychiatrists

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made towards using the funds announced in the "Autumn Statement 1991" to finance the establishment of duty psychiatrist schemes.

Mr. Jack: Arrangements for administering the financial provision designated for local, court-based duty psychiatrist schemes have been worked out in consultation with the Department of Health, and we hope shortly to be in a position to invite bids for funding to support the operation of such schemes.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the change in numbers of each serious crime since 1979.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* The information is contained in the table:

Changes in the number of notifiable offences recorded by the police by offence group

England and Wales *Number of offences*

Offence group	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
					Change in numbers compared with previous year								
Violence against the person	7,887	2,286	2,961	8,488	2,647	2,845	7,544	3,768	15,543	17,206	18,714	7,703	5,674
Sexual offences	−524	−736	−1,683	305	681	−188	1,234	1,228	2,470	1,375	3,204	−689	379
Robbery	−668	2,524	5,276	2,555	−718	2,771	2,573	2,557	2,613	−1,196	1,726	3,032	9,128
Burglary	−16,072	74,353	99,991	87,008	2,952	84,582	−26,226	64,923	−31,516	−82,312	8,138	180,883	212,651
Theft and handling stolen goods	−25,110	47,326	139,682	152,702	−49,929	102,057	76,088	119,804	48,132	−120,731	81,486	361,649	386,710
Fraud and forgery	−4,134	−12,787	1,425	16,430	−1,310	4,302	8,674	−1,336	−455	897	617	13,419	26,833
Criminal damage	14,197	38,981	27,277	31,087	25,502	54,524	41,124	44,624	5,373	4,962	36,161	103,361	87,696
Other notifiable offences	−338	−449	597	86	4,783	1,184	1,765	−41	2,631	3,365	4,935	3,505	3,491
Total notifiable offences	−24,762	151,498	275,526	298,661	−15,392	252,077	112,776	235,527	44,791	−176,434	154,981	672,863	732,562

Public Houses (Violence)

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (i) how many prison sentences were imposed on persons found guilty of physical violence against landlords or landladies of public houses in 1991;

(2) how many orders of exclusion from public houses have been enforced on persons found guilty of physical violence against landlords or landladies in 1991.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* Information is not held centrally on the number of offenders convicted of offences of violence against landlords or landladies of public houses.

Data held centrally show that in 1990 there were 101 exclusion orders made excluding offenders from licensed premises. This information may be under-recorded, because police forces are not always able to supply us with the relevant details. Provisional data for 1991 will be available before the end of 1992.

Accommodation Agencies Act 1953

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of prosecutions under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953 each year since 1962.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* Information is given in the table. Data for 1962 to 1974 and 1990 are not available. Information collected centrally for 1990 does not identify offences committed under this specific Act from other summary offences. This will also apply to 1991 data when available.

Number of prosecutions under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, 1962-90 England and Wales

Year	*Prosecutions*
1962-74	[1]—
1975	2
1976	2
1977	9
1978	2
1979	—
1980	4
1981	3
1982	5
1983	4
1984	5
1985	3
1986	[2]21
1987	5
1988	2
1989	5
1990	[1]—

[1] Not available.

[2] 12 of these cases were heard on the same day in Sheffield.

Smoking and Drinking (Young People)

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many publicans have been prosecuted over the last 10 years for selling alcohol to persons under the age of 18 years;

(2) how many shopkeepers have been prosecuted over the last 10 years for selling cigarettes to children under 16 years.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* The table shows the information held centrally on the number of prosecutions for the illegal sale of alcohol on licensed premises to persons under the age of 18 and for the sale of tobacco to children under the age of 16. We are unable to distinguish the number of publicans and shopkeepers involved.

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts for illegal sales of alcohol and tobacco to children 1981-90
England and Wales. Number proceeded against

Year	*Alcohol*[1]	*Tobacco*[2]
1981	410	17
1982	323	7
1983	307	29
1984	314	45
1985	274	28
1986	296	17
1987	333	18
1988	673	29
1989	747	66
1990	574	83

[1] Licensing Act 1964, Section 169(1); Licensing (Occasional Permissions) Act 1983, Schedule (Section 3) para 4(1).

[2] The Children and Young Persons Act 1933, Section 7.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Bus Lanes

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration is being given to providing bus priority designated lanes with priority at traffic signals on main routes in Belfast.

Mr. Atkins: An experimental scheme was introduced on Ormeau road earlier this year and a further scheme is planned for 1993.

Irish Republican Army

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representation has been made by him and his predecessors to eastern European states and the former Soviet Union to obtain information on the supply of weapons and explosives to the Irish Republican Army.

Mr. Mates: Discussions have taken place with several eastern European Governments and with the Government of Russia. Concern about the supply by Libya of Czechoslovak-made Semtex explosive to PIRA led to the conclusion of the convention on the marking of plastic explosives. The Government will continue to pursue all leads about the supply of weapons and explosives to the Provisional Irish Republican Army.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Community Charge

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish a table showing for each county court, and in total, the costs incurred by his Department since 1990 in actions taken recovering community charge arrears.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The enforcement of community charge is dealt with by the magistrates courts. The estimated cost of community charge enforcement in magistrates courts from 1 April 1990 to 30 June 1992 was £8·2 million. It is not possible to break this figure down between individual magistrates courts.

Terrorist-related Crimes

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many bail applications for terrorist-related crimes were lodged in Northern Ireland in each of the past two years; how many were successful; and what was the total cost to the Exchequer for each year of these applications.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of bail applications made in respect of scheduled offences in 1990 and in 1991; and the number of such bail applications which were successful were as follows:

Applications for bail in respect of scheduled offences

	1990	*1991*
Applications made	1,035	1,573
Applications successful	562	746

The cost to the Exchequer of these applications is not available and could not be made available except at disproportionate cost.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the past three years; for each of the past three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. I will not make a statement.

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is responsible for two agencies,—the Public Record Office and Her Majesty's Land Registry. Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the chief executives of both agencies and I have asked them to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from W. Arnold to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

The Chief Executive is presently absent from the Office and, as Principal Establishment Officer of the Public Record Office, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question as set down below, since this is a matter delegated to the Office under the terms of the Agency's Framework Document.

I enclose tables giving the information you seek in respect of the Public Record Office.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to ask me.

Public record office
Staff in post: 1 April 1992

	Number
Grade 3	1·0
Grade 5	3·0
Grade 6	6·0
Grade 7	21·0
Grade 8	20·0
Grade 9	20·5
Grade 10	44·5
Grade 11	48·5
Grade 12	4·5
Senior Personal Secretary	1·5
Typing Manager	1·5
Personal Secretary	3·0
Typist	6·5
Conservation Officer D	1·0
Conservation Officer E	4·0
Conservation Officer F	13·0
Conservation Officer G	11·0
Museum Support Grade 2	1·0
Museum Support Grade 3	7·5
Support Manager 1	1·0
Support Manager 2	8·0
Support Manager 3	16·0
Support Grade Band 1	41·5
Support Grade Band 2	141·0
Total	426·5
Casual staff	
Typist	1·0
Support Grade Band 2	2·5
Staff costs 1991-92	£6·742 million

Public record office
Estimated staff in post: 1 April 1993

	Number
Grade 3	1·0
Grade 5	3·0
Grade 6	4·0
Grade 7	24·0
Grade 8	22·5
Grade 9	25·0
Grade 10	54·0
Grade 11	62·0
Grade 12	5·5
Senior Personal Secretary	1·5
Typing Manager	1·5
Personal Secretary	3·0
Typist	8·0
Conservation Officer D	1·0
Conservation Officer E	4·0
Conservation Officer F	16·0
Conservation Officer G	8·0
Museum Support Grade 2	1·0
Museum Support Grade 3	8·0
Support Manager 1	1·0
Support Manager 2	8·0
Support Manager 3	16·0
Support Grade Band 1	38·0
Support Grade Band 2	151·0
Total	467·0
Casual staff	
Support Grade Band 2	6
Estimated costs 1992-93	£7·200 million

Letter from John Manthorpe to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your question concerning staff numbers by grade and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figure for 1992-93 in the Land Registry.

The table attached indicates the permanent staff in post by grade at the beginning and end of 1991-92 and an estimate of the total at 1 April 1993. Costs, both inclusive and exclusive of superannuation expenditure, for permanent staff in 1991-92 and an estimate for 1992-93 are also shown in the table.

Her Majesty's Land Registry
1. Staff in post

	Actual staff in post		*Estimated staff in post*
	1 April 1991 Permanent	*1 April 1992 Permanent*	*1 April 1993 Permanent*
Grade 2	1·0	1·0	1·0
Grade 3	1·0	1·0	1·0
Grade 4	0·0	0·0	1·0
Grade 5 (legal)	14·0	17·0	17·0
Grade 6 (legal)	18·0	19·0	20·0
Grade 7 (legal)	89·5	84·0	81·5
Legal officer	7·0	4·0	2·5
Grade 5	4·0	4·0	3·0
Grade 6	20·0	23·0	23·0
Grade 7	45·0	46·0	47·0
SEO	295·0	290·5	282·0
HEO	601·0	592·5	580·0
EO	2,152·0	2,103·5	2,050·0
AO(SDP)	53·5	44·0	30·0
AO	3,236·0	3,137·0	2,996·0
AA(DP)	316·0	284·0	267·0
AA	1,158·5	966·0	865·0
Chief typing manager	12·0	11·0	11·0
Typing manager	73·0	72·5	72·5
Senior personal secretary	2·0	1·0	2·0
Personal secretary	8·0	7·0	8·0
Typist	786·0	776·0	770·0
Trainee typist	0·0	0·0	0·0
Support manager 1	1·0	1·0	1·0
Support manager 2	4·0	4·0	2·0
Support manager 3	51·5	54·5	53·0
Support grade band 1	204·0	188·0	166·0
Support grade band 2	890·0	822·0	783·0
Night watchman	4·0	3·5	3·5
TOTAL	10,047·0	9,557·0	9,139·0

Note: **These figures relate to permanent staff, part-timers are counted as half.**

2. Staff costs

1991-92 £ million	*1992-93 (estimate) £ million*
124·221 (144·031)	129·100 (149·450)

Note: **The figures in brackets include superannuation costs.**

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not held centrally and can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Citizens Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which organisations, in each principal sector, have been targeted to receive a copy of the citizens charter; and what progress has been made to date in ensuring that all public bodies affected by the charter's recommendations have a copy of Cm 1599.

Mr. Waldegrave: In July 1991 the head of the home civil service, Sir Robin Butler, wrote to permanent secretaries of civil service Departments about the citizens charter and its implementation. Copies of the White Paper were made available to them. In addition, agency chief executives, the chairmen of British Rail and London Regional Transport, the Association of District Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of County Councils, the London Boroughs Association, the Association of London Authorities and the Convention of Scottish Authorities were also sent copies.

Many other bodies were informed of the White Paper's availability including the general managers of the regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities, special health authorities, chief executives of national health service trust hospitals, the chief officers of police, the chief probation officers and the secretaries of clerks of magistrates courts committees. The White Paper was advertised widely. To date, 20,246 copies of the White Paper have been sold; 455,617 copies of the popular version—"A Guide to the Citizen's Charter"—have been distributed, free of charge.

TRANSPORT

M40

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been undertaken regarding congestion at junction 9 of the M40 motorway.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department has invited Oxfordshire county council to undertake a study to investigate and determine measures to improve traffic conditions at this junction.

M11

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the construction of a motorway services area by Trust House Forte at Birchanger on the M11.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The chief executive of Forte Restaurants wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State on 6 March to explain that his company had stopped work at Birchanger pending completion of the Government's review of motorway service area policy. My right hon. Friend announced the outcome of that review on 6 August, and my officials are to meet the company shortly to discuss a resumption of work at the site.

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Steve Norris: The numbers of staff for each of the Department of Transport's Agencies, by grade and their cost for 1991-92, and the estimated figures for 1992-93 are shown in the tables. TRL and DVOIT became agencies on 1 April 1992; the 1991-92 figures for DVOIT are included in DVLA's figures for that year. All staff costs shown include superannuation and earnings-related national insurance contribution provision.

Vehicle inspectorate staff numbers and costs 1991-92 and estimates for 1992-93

Grade	*1991-92* Numbers	*1991-92* Costs £	*1992-93* Numbers	*1992-93* Costs £
Grade 4	1	60,979	1	62,098
Grade 5	1	50,290	1	53,285
Grade 6[1]	4	275,143	4	188,081
Grade 7	24	820,042	25	877,616
Senior Executive Officer	9	243,497	11	304,923
Higher Executive Officer	17	379,147	23	530,432
Executive Officer	44	768,546	58	1,048,324
Administrative Officer	168	2,093,197	208	2,681,370
Administrative Assistant	270	2,569,375	251	2,570,298
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	43	1,194,976	40	1,182,348
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	106	2,412,859	101	2,377,924
Professional and Technical Officer	457	8,901,040	456	9,101,455
Assistant Vehicle Examiner	77	1,209,971	90	1,426,562
Enforcement Manager[2]	0	0	7	174,300
Senior Traffic Examiner[2]	0	0	31	694,418
Traffic Examiner[2]	0	0	175	3,046,378
Senior Personal Secretary	2	32,708	2	34,753
Personal Secretary	3	49,981	3	46,572
Typist	34	398,861	35	453,804
Support Grades	8	81,660	8	95,486
Industrials	345	4,826,892	314	3,806,833
Casuals	0	0	30	211,083
Total	1,613	26,369,164	1,874	30,968,343

[1] 1991-92 figures include Early Retirement costs

[2] The Traffic Examiner Organisation have been funded from the Inspectorate since 1 April 1992

Driving standards agency staff numbers and costs 1991-92 and estimates for 1992-93

Grade	1991-92 Numbers	1991-92 Costs £	1992-93 Numbers	1992-93 Costs £
Grade 5	1·0	53,233	1·0	56,496
Grade 6	2·0	90,844	1·3	58,746
Grade 7	6·0	217,608	6·0	225,040
Senior Executive Officer	14·0	380,407	13·0	384,706
Higher Executive Officer	25·0	523,385	25·0	552,171
Executive Officer	39·0	655,921	40·0	712,271
Administrative Officer	111·0	1,444,832	113·0	1,620,782
Administrative Assistant	201·0	1,910,364	168·0	1,763,372
Chief Driving Examiner	1·0	34,778	1·0	36,691
Deputy Chief Driving Examiner	2·0	59,083	2·0	62,332
Assistant Chief Driving Examiner	12·0	318,276	11·0	284,563
Supervising Examiner	108·0	2,370,956	105·0	2,342,088
Senior Driving Examiner	372·0	7,105,903	345·0	7,084,897
Driving Examiner	1,158·0	20,204,213	1,071·0	19,296,820
Personal Secretary	2·4	34,758	2·0	30,348
Typist	7·0	78,072	8·0	89,346
Telephonist	1·0	11,468	2·0	22,337
Paper Keeper	4·0	31,186	4·0	32,901
Support Grades	32·0	290,097	22·0	210,664
Industrials	2·0	20,616	2·0	20,880
Total	2,100·4	35,836,000	1,942·3	34,887,451

Transport research laboratory staff numbers and costs 1991-92 and estimates for 1992-93

Grade	1991-92 Numbers	1991-92 Costs £	1992-93 Numbers	1992-93 Costs £
Grade 3	1	59,237	1	81,504
Grade 4	1	55,354	1	59,668
Grade 5	6	292,719	5	269,082
Grade 6	23	1,000,564	23	1,087,824
Grade 7	80	2,800,284	81	3,036,259
Senior Executive Officer	4	126,557	3	105,490
Higher Executive Officer	9	209,587	10	225,796
Executive Officer	19	335,997	21	347,787
Administrative Officer	46	588,189	44	612,250
Administrative Assistant	5	61,885	4	52,507
Senior Scientific Officer	84	2,209,828	82	2,330,767
Higher Scientific Officer	69	1,477,665	72	1,651,953
Scientific Officer	80	1,301,621	79	1,395,699
Assistant Scientific Officer	12	163,398	15	211,476
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	10	265,760	11	315,238
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	11	219,678	10	233,630
Professional and Technical Officer	12	228,673	15	283,396
Senior Librarian	1	28,270	1	30,318
Librarian	4	79,598	4	85,932
Assistant Librarian	3	40,075	3	43,127
Senior Information	1	21,481	1	23,038
Senior Personal Secretary	2	35,166	2	38,237
Personal Secretary	20	302,429	19	315,976
Typing Manager	1	17,575	1	18,821
Typist	6	78,653	6	84,212
Telephonist	3	35,775	3	38,367
Support Grades	26	508,015	25	494,968
Industrials	97	1,188,111	84	1,177,610
Casuals	8	42,000	10	50,000
Total	644	13,774,144	636	14,700,932

Vehicle certification agency staff numbers and costs 1991-92 and estimates for 1992-93

Grade	1991-92 Numbers	1991-92 Costs £	1992-93 Numbers	1992-93 Costs £
Grade 5	1·0	48,509	1·0	49,623
Grade 6	1·0	42,560	1·0	43,900
Grade 7	4·0	138,546	4·0	140,981

Grade	*1991-92* *Numbers*	*Costs* *£*	*1992-93* *Numbers*	*Costs* *£*
Senior Executive Officer	0·5	12,136	0·0	0
Higher Executive Officer	3·0	58,711	2·0	44,486
Executive Officer	8·0	132,771	8·0	139,847
Administrative Officer	17·5	183,241	16·0	199,715
Administrative Assistant	4·0	51,126	3·0	38,899
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	10·0	232,035	11·0	277,858
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	25·0	520,122	21·0	495,578
Professional and Technical Officer	3·0	56,539	2·0	35,100
Personal Secretary	1·0	16,235	1·0	13,298
Typist	4·0	48,463	3·0	31,593
Support Grades	1·0	11,690	1·0	10,064
Industrials	1·0	9,995	1·0	9,525
Total	84·0	1,562,679	75·0	1,530,467

Driver and vehicle licensing agency staff numbers and costs
1991-92 and estimates for 1992-93
Vehicle inspectorate staff numbers and costs 1991-92 and estimates for 1992-93

Grade	*1991-92* *Numbers*	*Costs* *£*	*1992-93* *Numbers*	*Costs* *£*
Grade 3	1	61,557	1	64,729
Grade 4	1	59,023	0	0
Grade 5	5	252,521	4	213,071
Medical Officer	7	302,809	8	370,431
Grade 6	7	305,831	6	278,631
Grade 7	37	1,268,700	24	874,580
Senior Executive Officer	87	2,386,372	45	1,288,161
Higher Executive Officer	275	6,135,751	170	3,925,551
Executive Officer	683	11,862,833	437	7,905,676
Administrative Officer	1,735	23,014,092	1,676	23,257,112
Administrative Assistant	1,962	20,959,503	1,838	20,716,748
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	1	26,774	1	28,388
Professional and Technical Officer	2	43,653	2	43,475
Assistant Librarian	1	17,598	1	18,067
Senior Personal Secretary	1	17,484	1	18,229
Personal Secretary	21	327,518	18	297,515
Chief Typing Manager	1	22,340	1	23,290
Typing Manager	6	99,824	5	86,726
Typist	96	1,283,031	89	1,263,097
Telex Operator	1	13,213	1	13,774
Support Manager	17	263,926	16	266,223
Support Grades	243	2,822,448	226	2,771,040
Casuals	85	729,466	61	545,766
Stores Officer	4	75,733	4	79,720
Total	5,279	72,352,000	4,635	64,350,000

DVOIT staff numbers and costs estimates for 1992-93

Grade	*1992-93* *Numbers*	*Costs* *£*
Grade 4	1	61,928
Grade 5	1	55,269
Grade 6	3	142,444
Grade 7	14	510,125
Senior Executive Officer	39	1,240,394
Higher Executive Officer	93	2,478,383
Executive Officer	246	5,292,263
Administrative Officer	44	682,330
Administrative Assistant	42	555,744
Personal Secretary	4	65,592
Total	486	11,084,474

Marine Directorate

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many inspectors are employed by the Marine directorate; and if he will give details of the number of *(a)* United Kingdom-flagged vessels and *(b)* flag-of-convenience tonnage covered by inspectors of the Marine directorate in 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Norris: There are at present 190 marine surveyors employed within the marine directorate.

The numbers of inspections of United Kingdom vessels were:

	Numbers
1989-90	4,021
1990-91	3,503
1991-92	4,174

The numbers of foreign ships inspected were:

	Numbers
1989-90	1,782
1990-91	2,197
1991-92	2,397

Commuter Fares

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the level of commuter fares in London relative to other EC capital and major cities; and if he will make a statement on Government policy with regard to this situation.

Mr. Norris: It is difficult to compare fare levels internationally because each transport system has a different fare structure and few European cities are as large and complex as London. In 1991-92 fares on London Buses and the Underground were 17 per cent. and 7 per cent. higher in real terms than 10 years earlier; Network SouthEast fares were 19 per cent. higher. Over the same period, average real weekly earnings have increased by 40 per cent. in London. So fares increases have been more than matched by increased ability to pay. The Government believe that it is right to strike a balance between contributions from users, and subsidy from taxpayers. If one pays less, the other of necessity pays more.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what submissions his Department has made to the International Maritime Organisation on the subject of the maritime transport of plutonium.

Mr. Norris: None.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to both Wilton Park under its chief executive, Geoffrey Denton, and to the Natural Resources Institute under its chief executive, Anthony Beattie. I have asked them to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Geoffrey Denton to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 November 1992

Thank you for your question asking Wilton Park to list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93.

The answer to your question is as follows:

Listing of staff 1991-92

	Numbers
DS4	1
DS5	5
EO	3
AO	4
SPS	[1]1
PS	2
Cat Man III	2
Chef II	3
Industrial	[2]8
Total costs	£503,503

Forecast 1992-93

	Numbers
DS4	1
DS5S	1
DS5	4
EO	3
AO	4
PS	3
	[1]1
Cat Man III	2
Chef II	3
Industrial	[2]8
Total costs	£536,545
Increase year on year	3·76 per cent.

[1] Part time.

[2] Four part time.

Letter from Anthony Beattie to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

Lady Chalker has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about staff and their costs in executive agencies.

I enclose a table giving the information you require.

Natural Resources Institute staff numbers and costs by grade

Grade	1991-92 (actual) Man years	1991-92 (actual) Cost £	1992-93 (estimated) Man years	1992-93 (estimated) Cost £
Unified Grade 3	1·00	65,248	1·00	68,770
Unified Grade 5	4·00	204,697	3·51	188,438
Unified Grade 6	21·77	964,275	23·60	1,091,842
Unified Grade 7	96·21	3,327,165	100·59	3,645,976
Senior Scientific Officer	79·04	2,110,342	96·65	2,424,496
Higher Scientific Officer	68·51	1,377,374	66·63	1,406,194
Scientific Officer	45·50	697,428	41·65	673,708
Assistant Scientific Officer	20·59	253,641	21·20	273,289
Senior Research Officer	10·86	231,353	11·34	242,115
Research Officer	1·10	20,082	0·37	6,997
Librarian	0·20	6,733	—	—
Assistant Librarian	1·75	23,063	2·00	27,384
Higher Mapping and Charting Officer	1·00	22,004	1·00	23,020

Grade	*1991-92 (actual)* *Man years*	*Cost* £	*1992-93 (estimated)* *Man years*	*Cost* £
Mapping and Charting Officer	1·00	19,574	1·00	20,478
Professional/Technology Officer	2·00	32,555	2·00	34,055
Experimental Worker	17·34	156,074	7·53	72,674
Senior Information Officer	1·00	26,031	1·00	27,272
Information Officer	2·30	39,904	2·00	36,344
Assistant Information Officer	1·24	17,371	1·00	15,047
Higher Graphics Officer	1·00	21,527	1·00	22,521
Senior Executive Officer	3·00	84,547	2·41	69,721
Higher Executive Officer	7·68	164,872	10·12	226,023
Executive Officer	21·75	365,557	19·08	333,389
Administrative Officer	43·10	501,709	43·25	532,170
Administrative Assistant	3·02	22,414	2·27	17,350
Support Grade Band 1	5·61	63,882	7·50	91,896
Support Grade Band 2	10·76	92,238	14·24	143,029
Personal Secretary	12·14	177,530	14·14	214,957
Technical Grade 1	—	—	5·00	68,668
Typing Manager	2·00	32,999	2·00	34,324
Typist	7·94	99,077	9·39	121,963
College Sandwich Course Students	6·43	55,112	3·66	32,419
Graphics Officer	0·07	916	0·50	6,517
Mapping and Charting Technical Grade 1	0·58	8,559	1·00	15,125
Agricultural Advisory Officer I	19·21	795,323	17·80	770,215
Agricultural Advisory Officer II	7·36	217,088	5·00	153,611
Economic Adviser	1·00	33,602	0·51	17,532
Deputy Regional Veterinary Officer	2·00	105,881	2·00	111,111
Chargehand	0·87	10,163	0·17	2,209
Craftsman	5·03	55,505	0·84	10,531
TOTALS	537·04	12,503,415	535·95	13,273,280

Visiting Musicians (Visas)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when visas were issued by the United Kingdom post in Islamabad to five musicians, led by Qadi Muhammad Tufail, born on 10 July 1935, to tour the United Kingdom at the invitation of the Al Falah Youth Organisation of Bradford; when that post was notified that all members of the group had been issued with work permits by the overseas labour section of the Department of Employment; when visit visa applications were made on behalf of the group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about this case, we have asked the high commission in Islamabad for a full report. We shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to accommodate the request by Denmark for amendments to the treaty on European union.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As presidency, the United Kingdom will use the proposals submitted by the Danish Government as the basis for discussion with partners on agreeing the framework for a solution at Edinburgh.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether the International Atomic Energy Agency has the authority to conduct special investigations at facilities that have not been previously reported to the International Atomic Energy Agency; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment has been made by his Department of the effectiveness of the non-proliferation safeguards set out in the International Atomic Energy Agency document INFCIRO/153; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

An assessment of the effectiveness of IAEA safeguards is provided in the agency's annual report. The 1991 report stated:

> "it is considered reasonable to conclude that the nuclear material placed under safeguards remained in peaceful nuclear activities or was otherwise adequately accounted for".

Previous annual reports have recorded similar findings. The agency's report also recorded, however, that:

> "Inspection activities carried out pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 reveal that Iraq had not complied with the obligations under its safeguards agreement to declare certain nuclear activities and place all relevant nuclear material under safeguards".

In the light of the discoveries in Iraq and other recent developments, the board of governors has considered at length ways in which the agency's safeguards system might be further strengthened. As part of this exercise the February board of governors reaffirmed the agency's right, under safeguards agreements concluded under the non-proliferation treaty, to undertake special inspections including locations other than those declared by states. A proposal for the early provision of design information on new and modified facilities was also accepted.

At its June and September board of governors meetings, the IAEA examined proposals which would give the agency important additional information on exports and imports of nuclear material and on exports of certain relevant equipment and non-nuclear materials. The agency's member states are examining options for providing such information.

The agency's board will continue to examine improvements in the strength and cost effectiveness of the agency's safeguards activities from time to time. The United Kingdom attaches great importance to the subject and will continue to play a full part in these discussions.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications his Department has had with his counterparts in Russia and other states in the Commonwealth of Independant States relating to the funding of the International Atomic Energy Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Officials have frequent bilateral contact with counterparts from the Russian Federation and CIS states during meetings of the International Atomic Energy Agency's general conference and board of governors at which various matters are discussed including the funding of the IAEA.

PRIME MINISTER

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy that concessions to Denmark on citizenship in relation to the treaty on European union will be extended to the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom is committed to ratifying the treaty on European union as it stands.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the Government's policy in relation to the Danish Government's proposals relating to article 8 of the treaty on European union.

The Prime Minister: A Danish proposal was agreed by the Folketing on 30 October. This will now be discussed by EC member states. The presidency's task is to take forward this discussion, and to reach a framework agreement on a solution for Denmark at the Edinburgh European Council.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what tax advantages nationals of other member states resident in the United Kingdom who take advantage of the provisions of article 8b of the treaty on European union will continue to enjoy.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom tax position of nationals of other member states will continue to depend on their individual residence and domicile status. This status is not expected to be significantly affected by the provisions of article 8b of the treaty on European union.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy towards ratification by other member states of the treaty on European union in the absence of ratification by Denmark.

The Prime Minister: The Birmingham European Council reaffirmed the importance of concluding ratification of the Maastricht treaty as soon as possible. All member states, including Denmark, are working towards this. The treaty cannot, however, enter into force until all member states have ratified.

Citizenship

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received in favour of British citizens becoming European citizens.

The Prime Minister: None. European citizenship is supplementary to national citizenship and in no way replaces it. We in the United Kingdom remain responsible for deciding who shall be nationals of this country.

East Timor

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister if, as President of the European Council, he will make further representations to the Indonesian Government to stop all repressive actions in East Timor around the 12 November anniversary of the massacre in Santa Cruz cemetery.

The Prime Minister: The Indonesians are already fully aware of the views of the British Government and of our European Community partners.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister if, as President of the European Council, he will request the Indonesian authorities to allow a diplomatic mission to Dili, East Timor, for the period including 12 November.

The Prime Minister: No. Diplomatic Missions in Jakarta are able to visit East Timor and do so.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if the Government will ensure that the principle of subsidiarity is applied to fiscal and monetary policy.

The Prime Minister: The principle of subsidiarity is set out in article 3b of the treaty on European union and applies to all areas of Community competence.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the effect of minimum wages fixed by wages councils on the number of recipients of and sums spent on family credit in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Burt: It is not possible to identify families receiving family credit whose wages are covered by wages councils. The benefit is payable to any low-income family with children irrespective of whether or not their wages are fixed by wages councils. The biggest determinant of the size of a family credit award is the number and ages of the children rather than variations in the level of wages.

Compensation Recovery Unit

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the costs involved in setting up the compensation recovery unit; and what were the unit's running costs in 1991-92.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 15 June at column *387*.

Social Fund

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines are issued to local DSS offices in assessing victims of domestic violence when they seek access to social fund loans or grants.

Mr. Scott: National guidance on dealing with social fund applications is contained in the social fund guide, a copy of which is in the Library. Paragraphs 5400 to 5405 provide guidance on applications for community care grants to help an applicant move to different accommodation. Paragraph 5404 states that, where an applicant is moving out of the accommodation following a breakdown of a relationship, a higher priority may be given to cases where there has been domestic violence, if a payment will help to protect the applicant and any children from risk. No specific guidance is given in relation to budgeting and crisis loans.

District managers as area social fund officers are also required to give guidance to social fund officers on both the nature, extent and urgency of needs within the locality and the high, medium and low priority needs which may be met from the district budget. This guidance may include advice on the priority of applications from victims of domestic violence.

In addition, social fund officers, in determining applications, are required to consider the individual circumstances of each case. Where domestic violence is relevant to the application, this will be taken into account.

Cold Weather Payments

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in east Edinburgh have qualified, or do qualify, for payments under the cold weather payments scheme since its inception in 1991.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr. Gavin Strang, dated 4 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many households in East Edinburgh have qualified, or do qualify, for payments under the cold weather payments scheme since its inception in 1991.

Edinburgh East constituency is covered by the Agency's East Lowlands and Lothian Central Districts. During 1991, only customers of the Galashiels office, which forms part of the East Lowlands District, qualified for Cold Weather Payments. Details are available in the Library. It is not possible to give an exact figure of how many customers may have future entitlement except at disproportionate cost. However, based on figures for those claiming Income Support in November 1991, it is estimated that approximately 25,100 customers claiming from those Districts may qualify for a Cold Weather Payment should the area be triggered. Parliamentary constituencies and District boundaries do not correspond however and a proportion of these will live outside the constituency.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Treasury Solicitor's Department has commissioned two reports from external consultants in the last three years. In 1990, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock reported on a time recording and billing system for the department and in 1992, BDO Binder Hamlyn was commissioned to report on financial and accounting systems for the department.

The Crown prosecution service has commissioned six reports from external consultants in the last three years. In 1990, Scoll Ltd. reported on computer security policy and KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock reported on the training and development needs of CPS managers. In 1991, Yale Consulting reported on local area network strategy. In 1992, Infact Ltd. reported on the cabling specification for the new CPS headquarters building. This led to the further commissioning of the same consultants to provide technical monitoring of the cabling installation. Axsis Ltd. was commissioned to do a telecommunications strategy scoping study and this led to the further commissioning of a full telecommunications strategy study. Also in 1992, Energy Conscious Design performed an energy and environmental audit of the new headquarters building.

The Serious Fraud Office commissioned five reports from external consultants in 1992, and none in 1990 and 1991. They are as follows:

Information systems strategy scoping study: Hedra.
Information systems security study: Admiral plc.
Information systems architecture study: Systemhouse International (Europe) Ltd.
Accommodation space planning study: Morgan Lovall.
Analysis of system faults at Citygate House: Systemhouse.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hens

15. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to improve the welfare of laying hens.

Mr. Soames: Improved welfare standards need to be set on a European Community basis. We are currently expecting Commission proposals on the welfare of laying hens.

Fishing

16. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to protect the catch allocated to British fishermen from quota hoppers.

Mr. Curry: The United Kingdom's registration and licensing arrangements restrict access to our quotas.

Common Agricultural Policy

17. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much of the entire EC budget is spent on the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: The common agricultural policy accounts for approximately 60 per cent. of the EC budget.

Set-aside Land

18. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps the Government are taking to encourage the growing of alternative crops on set-aside land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The EC rules on the new arable area payments scheme allow a wide range of crops to be grown on set-aside land for specified non-food uses. Although member states are not required to implement these arrangements in full in the first year of the scheme, the United Kingdom has done so. I know that a number of growers will be taking advantage of this opportunity.

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to implement the revised set-aside arrangements in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: An explanatory booklet on the arable area payments scheme was published in early September and copies were placed in the House Library. The booklet contains detailed information about what growers must do if they wish to claim area payments in 1993 and about the related set-aside requirements, including the management conditions and the arrangements under which crops can be grown on set-aside land for non-food use. Claim forms will be available next year.

Dietary Supplements

19. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made to date on the preparation of the draft directive on dietary supplements.

Mr. Soames: We are still awaiting proposals from the Commission.

Marketing Boards

20. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to introduce his proposed legislation to reform marketing boards.

Mr. Gummer: We intend to introduce legislation to promote improvements in agricultural marketing when the parliamentary timetable permits.

Diversification

21. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what specific measures he has undertaken to assist Britain's farmers to diversify.

27. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken by his Department to encourage farmers to diversify their businesses.

Mr. Curry: Since the farm diversification grant scheme was introduced in 1988, farmers in England have received free advice and £7·6 million in grants to help them to diversify. Over 40 per cent. of farmers are now diversified. We are backing this up with a number of regional seminars to encourage planning authorities to follow through the revised planning guidance issued earlier this year by the Department of the Environment.

Ewe Premium

22. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the decision to investigate farm partnerships after the special ewe premium was due for payment.

Mr. Curry: Before making payments under the 1992 sheep annual premium scheme we are required by European Community regulations to examine claims from partnerships to establish that they satisfy the headage payment limit rules. This work is being done as quickly as possible.

Footpaths

23. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next plans to meet members of the Ramblers Association to discuss footpaths over agricultural land.

Mr. Gummer: I have no such plans at present, but I am always ready to meet the Ramblers Association to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Food Manufacturing

24. **Mr. Arness:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support his Department is giving to food manufacturing companies.

Mr. Gummer: We provide support for the food industry through financial assistance and by promoting its interests at home and abroad.

Sea Bass

25. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he has made with his studies into the stocks of sea bass.

Mr. Curry: Studies are well in hand to ensure a proper assessment of the effects of the new management measures introduced in 1990.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

26. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by what date he expects bovine spongiform encephalopathy to be eradicated from cattle.

Mr. Soames: I am confident that the measures taken by the Government should be sufficient to bring about the disappearance of BSE. There are already encouraging signs to support this view, but it is impossible to predict how long this process will take.

Farm Incomes

28. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on farm incomes.

Mr. Curry: Forecasts of 1992 income will be published in the new year, together with revised estimates for 1993.

Plant Health and Pesticides HQ

29. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent correspondence his Ministry has had with York city council, and property developers in York about the site for his Department's new plant health and pesticides headquarters.

Mr. Gummer: My Department received last week, and has already replied to, a general inquiry on this matter from York council development services. There has been no other recent correspondence between my Department and interested parties in York.

Wildlife Conservation

30. **Mr. Cann:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effects of the set-aside regulations on the conservation of wildlife, both flora and fauna.

Mr. Curry: We are currently funding a range of studies on the agronomic and environmental effects of short and longer-term set-aside, including changes in the botanical composition of set-aside land, the effects on wildlife habitats and the potential for conserving and restoring such habitats on set-aside land. This involves assessing a number of complex factors over time and final results are not yet available.

Imported Wild Birds

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information is available on mortalities in imported wild birds.

Mr. Gummer: The Department's latest report on mortalities in imported captive birds, relating to imports in 1991, is now available and copies are being placed in the Library of the House. The figures show a fall in the number of birds imported from 176,000 in 1990 to 129,000 in 1991, but the average mortality rate in transport and post-import quarantine rose from 12·3 to 14·8 per cent. Although variation in mortality rates is to be expected, this increase is unacceptable and urgent improvements are clearly needed.

There is a clear correlation between mortality and the size of individual consignments. We are therefore pursuing vigorously proposals for limiting the size of consignments with the International Air Transport Association, whose live animal regulations are to become mandatory under Community law. We are also opening consultations with interested organisations on the introduction of consignment limits in the United Kingdom. From this month new checks are being made on all commercial imports of birds into Great Britain. We are pressing the European Commission to introduce proposals for further specific measures for wild birds under the directive on protection of animals during transport. The United Kingdom presidency is also giving high priority to discussions in the Environment Council on a proposed new Community regulation on the wildlife trade which would provide for specific controls on species are particularly vulnerable to transport.

The Department will be discussing with interested parties a programme to recognise the competence of quarantine operators. In addition, further training courses will be held for veterinarians supervising quarantine premises.

The Government fully appreciate the concern about this issue and is determined that any trade in wild birds is conducted in humane conditions and in accordance with strict conservation safeguards.

Sheep and Goats

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the random slaughterhouse survey of blood samples from sheep and goats carried out under directive 91/68/EC was concluded; if he will publish the findings of the survey; if any samples taken as part of the survey under directive 91/68/EC were screened for maedi visna; and if he will publish the results.

Mr. Soames: The slaughterhouse survey for brucella melitensis and contagious agalactia in sheep and goats and for brucella ovis in sheep was concluded in June 1992. None of the diseases was confirmed. A total of 3,234 of the samples taken were screened for maedi visna, and these results will be made available to the sheep and goat health scheme advisory group.

Equines

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is being taken by his Department to check values of equines being submitted to his Department for export; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Department ensures that the valuations are determined by qualified valuers or the appropriate judges of breed societies.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to implement fully the EC directive on the welfare of animals in transit.

Mr. Soames: Proposals were issued for public consultation on 15 October 1992.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she expects to lay the regulations relating to the EC directive on health and safety in the workplace relating to *(a)* health and safety (general provisions), *(b)* provision and use of work equipment, *(c)* manual handling operators, *(d)* workplace (health, safety and welfare), *(e)* personal protective equipment at work and *(f)* health and safety (display screen equipment).

Mr. McLoughlin: The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations—previously referred to as the

Health and Safety (General Provisions) Regulations—were laid before Parliament on 8 September 1992. The other regulations relating to the EC directive on health and safety in the workplace are expected to be laid before Parliament by early next month.

European Community Funds

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much financial assistance has been given to *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Glasgow and *(c)* Strathclyde by way of each of the four objectives of the European Community's social fund in each of the past three years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available in the form sought, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Training

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what responses she has received to the proposals in the White Paper "People, Jobs and Opportunity", in respect of *(a)* giving employees information about company training policy and *(b)* making training contracts more easily enforceable; and what further action she intends to take.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has received some 75 responses from a range of organisations and individuals, including a number of firms. I am most grateful to all those who commented.

Many respondents saw the first proposition as an important adjunct to the "Investors in People" standard. They believed that employers would welcome guidance on effective policies for developing and training their employees, and communicating these policies throughout the work force. However, many replies pointed out that a major strength of the "Investors in People" standard is that it is voluntary, driven by business needs and by real commitment from top managers. It is also flexible enough to be relevant to individual circumstances. Accordingly, the Department plans to involve employers in drawing up detailed guidance on creating and communicating effective training policies. We do not propose to introduce legislation, as a clear majority of respondents opposed this.

The great majority of respondents did not support the idea of changing the law on the enforceability of training contracts. Most considered there was not a widespread problem and, even among respondents from the main sector where problems had been reported, there was no general agreement that legislation was required. Given the prevailing view, we propose not to take further action on this proposition.

EDUCATION

Special Needs

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children in Essex have had statements of special educational needs; and if he will make a statement on the situation in Essex.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992, Essex local education authority was responsible for 4,923 children with statements of special educational needs—around 2·3 per cent. of the county's school population.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children in special needs schools in Essex have not had statements.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992, there were 2,606 pupils registered at special schools in Essex local education authority. Approximately 7 per cent. of these pupils did not have statements of special educational needs, most of whom were undergoing formal assessment prior to a statement being issued.

Research

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to publish all research sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Forman: No; most research reports are published, but the Department needs to consider each case on its merits and no blanket undertaking to publish can be given.

Student Grants

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each education authority the number and proportion of mandatory student grants which had not been paid at 31 October.

Mr. Forman: This information is not collected centrally. I am, however, most concerned by any reports of delays in making payments, and my officials will investigate vigorously any complaints which are received.

Four-year-olds

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list in rank order the proportion of four-year-olds in each local education authority who start school at the beginning of the academic year.

Mr. Forth: Information is not available in the form requested, but details of pupils aged four admitted to infant classes between September and December 1990 are given in statistical bulletin 5/92 which is available in the Library.

LINC Projects

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the discussion papers prepared for the development of the LINC projects, 1989-92, which received a grant from his Department.

Mr. Forth: Proposals for the development of the language in the curriculum—LINC—project were set out under category XXIX in the education support grant circular sent to all local education authorities in England in July 1988, a copy of which is available in the Library. This followed publication of the Kingman report in March 1988 which recommended that an in-service training scheme be undertaken to increase teachers' knowledge about language.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state the number of pupils excluded from each grant-maintained school for the school years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Forth: Information on permanent exclusions from LEA and grant-maintained schools over a two-year period starting with the summer term 1990 has been collected under the national exclusions reporting system—NERS. The purpose of NERS is to provide a basis on which to review the working of the existing statutory procedures on exclusions. The information received is currently being analysed. NERS returns were made on a confidential basis and it would not be appropriate for me to disclose information on individual schools without the agreement of their governing bodies.

Open University

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice he has received from the Open university's visiting committee concerning the university's grant needs for 1993.

Mr. Forman: The visiting committee's advice is contained in a report which has been placed in the Library. A copy of the report has been passed to the Higher Education Funding Council for England, which will be responsible for determining the Open university's grants from 1 April 1993.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library the latest report of the visiting committee for the Open university.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the final report of the Open university's visiting committee.

Mr. Forman: A copy has been placed in the Library.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will update his answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, columns *722-23*, on principals of CTCs; and if he will list the colleges which have changed principals and the reasons for the departure of the original principals.

Mr. Forth: The names and dates of appointment of the current principal, or equivalent, of each CTC are as follows:

College	*Title*	*Name*	*Date of appointment*
Kingshurst	Principal	Valerie Bragg	January 1988
Macmillan	Principal	John Paddick	January 1989
Djanogly	Principal	Matt Andrews	September 1988
Dixon's	Principal	John Lewis	September 1989
Leigh	Principal	Virginia Waterhouse	January 1990
Emmanuel	Principal	Bill Smith	September 1992
Harris	Principal	Lyndon Jones	January 1990
Bacon's	Principal	Peter Jenkins	September 1990
Britschool	Principal	Anne Rumney	January 1990
Brooke	Principal	Gareth Newman	September 1990
Haberdashers'	Director	Roy Baldock	November 1990
Thomas Telford	Headmaster	Kevin Satchwell	January 1991
ADT	Chief Executive	Richard Painter	October 1990
Landau Forte	Principal	Peter Shackleton	September 1990

The only new appointment is that of the principal at Emmanuel college. The appointment or departure of a principal is a matter for the college itself.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the pupil-teacher ratios for each local education authority in England for *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools, in the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Forth: Pupil-teacher ratios for maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1991 are published in statistical bulletin 2/92 which is available in the Library. Information for January 1992 is not yet available.

HEALTH

Ozone

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account she has taken of the implications for health care of continuation of ozone depletion *(a)* at present rates for 20 years and *(b)* thereafter at an exponential rate.

Mr. Sackville: The possibility of long-term depletion of the ozone layer is of serious concern and Government policy remains the earliest possible phasing out of the production of ozone-depleting chemicals. The achievement of this will mean that depletion does not continue at present rates for 20 years.

Exposure to ultraviolet radiation—UV—is an important factor in the number of cases of skin cancer which develop and levels of UV at ground level are influenced by changes of levels of ozone in the stratosphere. However, these are only one factor influencing the numbers of skin cancers. Seasonal variations in solar UV levels and short term variations due to cloud cover and local weather conditions are far in excess of any variations anticipated as a result of ozone depletion. The main risk factor which is believed to account for the increase seen in the incidence of skin cancer is the increased extent to which people expose themselves to the sun. The programme of work following the publication of "Health of the Nation" in July includes work to halt the increase in skin cancers.

Hydrochlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect on human health of continuing production of HCFCs; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I am advised that while HCFCs do have some ozone-depleting potential, they cause less damage than CFCs even in the short term. Further, HCFCs are, of course, needed to ensure that they are only used where they are vital to replace CFCs. The European Community will therefore be seeking to bring HCFCs under strict control in this month's review of the Montreal protocol.

With regard to the health effects of ozone depletion, I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave him on 19 October 1992 and 30 October 1992 at columns *79-80* and *939* respectively.

Listeria

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to prevent imports of food products contaminated with listeria.

Mr. Sackville: The Food Safety Act 1990 and its subordinate legislation provide a statutory framework to protect the public from food which fails to meet food safety requirements, whatever its origin. We are not aware of any evidence of a problem with listeria contaminated food imports requiring special steps.

Broomfield Hospital

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the closure of a ward at Broomfield hospital; and what action can be taken to reopen the ward.

Mr. Sackville: Broomfield hospital is one of six hospitals which comprise the Mid Essex hospital services NHS trust. Through much greater efficiency, the trust exceeded its contract performance by more than 1,000 cases during the first six months of the current year. As a result ward B8, a general surgical ward, has been closed temporarily as it is not needed to maintain contracted levels of patient treatment.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide details of the reason for the delay in the joint trust application by Walsgrave and Coventry and Warwickshire hospitals; and what assessment he has made of the need to change the legal position in this regard.

Dr. Mawhinney: The decision on Walsgrave and Coventry and Warwickshire's application has been deferred along with two other applications because of the need for the Walsgrave national health service trust to undertake further internal consultation with its staff. Consideration is currenty being given to an amendment to the National Health Service Trusts (Consultation on Dissolution) Regulations 1991.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 18 May, *Official Report*, column *63*, if she will analyse the figures stated for expenditure on establishing NHS trusts into the different categories of expenditure linked in her answer.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave him on 26 October 1992 at columns *478-80* and on 3 November 1992 at column *180*.

Waterlogged Soils (Infant Mortality)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has available on links between waterlogged soils and variations in the infant mortality rate; if she will commission further studies into the theory of such a link; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has no plans to commission research in this area, although we are always willing to consider suitable proposals.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will suspend the chairman of the West Midlands health authority with immediate effect.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. Sir James Ackers has welcomed Sir Roy Griffiths' assistance in looking at management within West Midlands and is working closely with him to ensure arrangements are in place for the most effective management of the health services for the people of the west midlands.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the audits, reports and investigations commissioned by her Department concerning the West Midlands regional health authority or any of its component districts in the past two years; and if she will itemise *(a)* those whose final report has been received with dates, *(b)* those whose draft report has been received with dates and *(c)* those which have not yet reported.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department frequently receives a wide range of reports on health and management matters from West Midlands regional health authority, districts and family health services authorities.

Child Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on the application of the purchaser/provider split to local authority child care provision.

Mr. Yeo: It is for local authorities to determine the appropriate structure for the delivery of children's services having regard to their child protection duties and the general child care requirements imposed upon them by the Children Act 1989 and associated regulations and guidance.

Royal Northern Hospital

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received on the future of the Royal Northern hospital site in Islington; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None. The North East Thames regional health authority is currently in discussion with the

Bloomsbury and Islington district health authority regarding the future ownership and use of the Royal Northern site. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Chessels, the regional chairman, for further information.

Medical Audit Commission

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will state *(a)* the annual budget of the Medical Audit Commission for 1991-92 and 1992-93 and *(b)* the main categories of its expenditure.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* The medical audit initiative, which was introduced and funded by the Government as part of the national health service reforms, is funded by the NHS Management Executive, health care directorate.

Medical audit has received a substantial investment, which remains necessary to accomplish the major transformation in professional attitudes and working practices which it entails. The sums allocated in the years in question were:

(i) £60 million in 1991-92, and

(ii) £42 million in 1992-93.

A capital allocation was made for two years, ending in 1991-92 for comupters and software. Family health service audit funding has been built into normal allocations from 1992-93. The same will happen to HCHS funding when it has become firmly established, except for about £10 million retained centrally to fund work by the medical royal colleges and others to establish standards of best practice.

Most of the money is spent on employing medical audit support staff, a new profession within the NHS which is already demonstrating the potential to make a major contribution to improving patient care. Funds also pay for computers and doctors' time spent organising audit and continuing medical education. The above sums do not include the cost of doctors' time—about a half day a month—spent attending audit meetings.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he consulted with the charities in commissioning the consultants GAH Group to advise on aspects of a national lottery on charitable donations; when he proposes to meet them to discuss the advice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government do not as a rule consult third parties before commissioning research advice. I plan to meet representatives from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations next week for general discussions on the national lottery; and we are continuing consultations with other organisations in the charity and voluntary sector.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he consulted with the football pools companies, in commissioning the consultants GAH Group to advise on aspects of a national lottery on the football pools industry; when he proposes to meet them to discuss the advice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government do not as a rule consult third parties before commissioning research advice. I plan to meet soon representatives from the pools industry for general discussions on the national lottery.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 30 October, *Official Report*, column *914*, where the contract for the research work awarded to GAH Group was advertised; when it was advertised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Government competitive tendering procedures do not invariably require the advertising of invitations to tender. Selected firms were invited to tender for the contract. The invitation was issued on 24 July 1992, and the contract was let on 10 August.

Pitchford Hall

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will review the current position in relation to Pitchford hall.

Mr. Key: I do not propose to do so.

SCOTLAND

Murderers

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many individuals convicted for murder and sentenced to life imprisonment have been released and thereafter convicted for a further murder since 1985.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* A total of four individuals, having been convicted of murder and subsequently released from life imprisonment, have thereafter been convicted of a further murder since 1985.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* As the information sought is extensive, I shall provide the hon. Member with a list of those I have appointed since becoming Secretary of State for Scotland and who currently hold their appointments. I am also arranging for copies of the list to be placed in the Library of the House. It shows the body on which they serve, the length of the appointment and, where appropriate, the remuneration. Information on relevant qualifications held, and on appointments, other than those of chairmen and deputy chairmen, is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Home and Health Department

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment has been made of the extent to which the grants awarded by the Home and Health Department are giving value for money; and if projects are being vetted adequately.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* Grants are awarded by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department for many projects falling under that Department's areas of responsibility. In each case, strict guidelines and conditions are laid out relating to the use of grant aid and must be accepted in writing by prospective recipients prior to any funds being advanced. Thereafter, projects are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis throughout the life of the grant aid and, where appropriate, the annual accounts of the recipient bodies are required to be submitted to the Department. Increasingly, grant recipients are being required to produce business plans and are being set performance targets. All these measures serve to assist value-for-money examination and I am content that the projects are being vetted adequately.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Sir John Cope: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the chief executives of the Royal Mint, Central Statistical Office, and Valuation Office agencies. A copy of the question has been passed to each and they have been asked to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from A. D. Garrett to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has asked me to respond to your above Written Question concerning the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and estimates for 1992-93.

The information you require is set out on the attached sheet.

Royal Mint
Numbers Employed and Employment Costs

	1991-92 (Actual)	*1992-93 (Estimated)*
1. *Staff Costs*		
a. Wages/Salaries	£16,883,000	£17,595,000
b. Other employment costs	£3,274,000	£3,681,000
Total	£20,157,000	£21,276,000
2. *Staff Numbers*		
a. Industrial	656	647·5
b. Non-Industrial	384	379·5
Total	1,040	1,027·0

Non-Industrial Grade Breakdown

3. Grade	*Numbers*	*Numbers*
G3	1·0	1·0
G4/5/6	5·0	5·0
G7	11·0	11·0
SEO/SPTO/SSO	28·0	27·0
HEO	17·0	17·0
EO	50·0	53·0
AO	95·0	93·5
AA	16·5	13·5
SPS	1·0	1·0
PS	6·0	6·0
Typing Manager	1·0	1·0
Typists	8·0	8·0
Telephone Operator	1·0	1·0
Senior Messenger	2·0	2·0
Car Driver	3·0	3·0
Messenger	5·0	5·0
Cleaner	5·0	4·5
Curator 'F'	1·0	1·0
HPTO/HPO	19·0	21·0
PTO/PO	79·0	76·0
HSO	4·0	3·0
SO	15·0	15·0
TG1	1·0	2·0
P and GSD	3·0	3·0
Laboratory Assistant	0·5	0·5
Engraver 2	5·0	5·0
Engraver 3	1·0	0·0
Total	384	379·5

Letter from W. McLennan to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 November 1992.

As Chief Executive of the Central Statistical Office I have been asked to respond to your Parliamentary Question of 28 October to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about staff numbers and costs.

The attached gives numbers of staff for the CSO by grade and their salary costs for 1991-92, and estimates for 1992-93 as requested.

I also enclose a summary of the CSO financial account for 1991-92, and our provision for 1992-93, which show a breakdown of running and capital costs.

Central Statistical Office staff numbers and costs 1991-92

Grade	*1991-92 Average staff[1] in post (numbers)*	*1991-92 Salary costs[2] (£s)*
Grade 1A	1·0	78,665
Grade 2	1·0	59,434
Grade 3	3·0	157,748
Grade 4	1·0	46,908
Grade 5/6	22·0	950·157
Grade 7	69·0	2,012,780
Senior Executive Officer	35·5	886,350
Senior Assistant Statistician/ Assistant Statistician	23·5	446,252
Higher Executive Officer	139·5	2,661,887
Executive Officer	277·5	4,147,744
Administrative Officer	387·5	3,878,150
Administrative Assistant	65·00	581,052
Higher Graphics Officer	1·0	20,446
Graphics Officer	3·0	53,256
Senior Information Officer	1·0	23,582
Information Officer	1·0	19,301
Assistant Information Officer	1·0	12,411
Mapping and Charting Officer	1·0	18,588
Librarian	1·0	18,423
Assistant Librarian	1·0	10,092
Typing Manager	2·0	33,243
Senior Personal Secretary	3·0	51,799
Personal Secretary	22·0	327,706
Typist	16·0	158,073
Support Manager III	1·0	11,101
Support Grade Band I	6·0	64,690
Support Grade Band II	17·5	142,415
Proof Reader	—	3,439
Sandwich Students	—	48,644
Total	1,103	16,924,336

Central statistical office staff numbers and costs 1992-93

Grade	*1992-93 average staff[1] in post projected (numbers)*	*1992-93 salary costs[2] (£s)*
Grade 1A	1·0	81,375
Grade 2	1·0	63,106
Grade 3	3·0	165,992
Grade 4	1·0	49,588
Grade 5/6	25·0	1,097,079
Grade 7	75·5	2,291,149
Senior Executive Officer	46·0	1,098,966
Senior Assistant Statistician/ Assistant Statistician	725·5	433,386
Higher Executive Officer	156·5	3,062,872
Executive Officer	325·0	4,942,119
Administrative Officer	435·0	4,536,299
Administrative Assistant	66·0	553,072
Higher Graphics Officer	1·0	21,121
Graphics Officer	3·0	52,506
Senior Information Officer	1·0	24,403
Information Officer	1·0	20,388
Assistant Information Officer	1·0	13,358
Mapping and Charting Officer	1·0	18,328
Librarian	1·0	19,317
Assistant Librarian	1·0	15,582
Typing Manager	2·0	28,498
Senior Personal Sscretary	3·0	34,264
Personal Secretary	22·5	331,926
Typist	16·0	183,073
Support Manager III	1·0	11,668
Support Grade Band I	6·0	62,306
Support Grade Band II	19·0	164,363
Total	1,240	19,396,104

Notes:

[1] Part-time staff counted as 0·5

[2] Salary costs include:
- (i) basic salary
- (ii) allowances
- (iii) London weighting (where applicable)
- (iv) casual salaries
- (v) overtime/travel time

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 March 1992 and Provision for year ending 31 March 1993

	1991-92 Outturn £'000	*1992-93 Provision £'000*
Running Costs		
Staff Costs	18,995	23,020
Post and telecommunication	692	950
Accommodation	4,167	4,604
Computers and office machinery	1,746	1,556
Stationery and supplies	197	210
Printing and binding	224	203
Library and publicity	225	262
Consultants fees	300	676
Payments for statistical surveys	299	277
Payments to other government departments	4,892	5,724
Other expenses	32	108
Total running costs	31,769	37,590
Capital		
Computers	2,032	3,744
Telecommunications and office machinery	67	81
Furniture and supplies	297	939
Total capital	2,396	4,764
Payments to civil superannuation vote	79	114
Total gross payments	34,244	42,468
Less receipts appropriated in aid	1,151	2,231
Net cost of operation	33,093	40,237

Letter from R. R. B. Shutler to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

In your question to the Chancellor ref: 203 you ask for a list by grade of the number of staff within the Agency and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated 1992-93 details.

The information you have requested is detailed on the attached table.

Valuation Office Agency
Average staff in post by grade

	Actual 1991-92	*Estimated 1992-93*
Professional staff		
Chief executive	1·00	1
Grade 3	2·00	2
Grade 4	3·33	3
Grade 5	22·17	22
Grade 6	171·00	180
Grade 7	429·95	444

	Actual 1991-92	*Estimated 1992-93*
Senior valuer	629·83	671
Valuer	261·87	281
Graduate valuer	159·41	113
Assistant valuer	171·59	167
Cadet valuer	281·29	265
Sandwich course student	39·40	75
Vacation student	3·16	—
HEO technician (casual)	—	107
Total	2,176·00	2,331
Non professional staff		
Grade 6	5·00	5
Grade 7	15·08	12
Senior valuation executive	42·25	40
Staff officer	199·75	200
Valuation technician	937·41	930
Valuation clerk	870·04	850
Revenue assistant	1,045·33	1,384
Secretarial/typing posts	340·32	340
Support grades	21·82	23
Total	3,477·00	3,784
Grand total	5,653·00	6,115
	£ million	*£ million*
Staff costs		
Salaries, wages and allowances and social security costs	96·554	112·241
Other pension costs	14·406	15·200
	110·960	127·441

Inland Revenue (Headquarters)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the revised cost estimates of the new Nottingham headquarters building for the Inland Revenue; and what are the expected annual savings to the Treasury.

Mr. Dorrell: The construction work for the project for a new Inland Revenue building in Nottingham is currently at the tendering stage. Consequently the cost estimates for the various work packages remain, at present, commercial-in-confidence. It is fully expected that the outturn will be within the agreed budget for the project.

The currently estimated annual net accommodation and pay savings are around £12 million from 1996-97 following completion of the project.

Housing Loans

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of mortgage interest relief at source payments are currently made to households earning *(a)* over £50,000 per annum, *(b)* over £35,000 per annum, *(c)*under £20,000 per annum, *(d)* under £10,000 per annum and *(e)* under £5,000 per annum.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional estimates for 1992-93 based on projected information from the 1990 family expenditure survey and the 1989-90 survey of personal incomes are in the table.

Range of total income with percentage of total cost of mortgage interest relief

£	*Per cent.*
Up to 5,000	4
5,001to 10,000	6
10,001 to 20,000	38
20,001 to 35,000	37
35,001 to 50,000	9
Over 50,000	6
Total	100

Inheritance Tax Exemptions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now make it his policy to allow public access to information on successful applications for conditional inheritance tax exemption where the conditions referred to within the application refer to public access to land.

Mr. Dorrell: Reasonable public access is required to all scenic land which is conditionally exempt from inheritance tax. The heritage advisory agencies, including the Countryside Council for Wales, can supply information about public access to heritage land including conditionally exempt land. To protect taxpayers' confidentiality, the conditionally exempt land cannot be separately distinguished.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to overturn conditional exemptions from inheritance tax payments where it has been proved that the conditions set out concerning public access have not been fulfilled.

Mr. Dorrell: The undertakings providing for public access to land and buildings which have been conditionally exempted from inheritance tax are monitored by the relevant heritage advisory agencies. Where breaches cannot be resolved in discussion between the agencies and landowners, the agencies will notify the Inland Revenue. To date, there has been no occasion on which they have had to do this. Undertakings providing for public access to conditionally exempt chattels are monitored directly by the Inland Revenue.

If an owner refuses to observe any undertakings given in respect of conditional exemption, inheritance tax is charged on the current value of the property. This provides a powerful incentive for the owner to honour the terms of the undertakings.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that all public rights of way granted as part of conditional exemptions from inheritance tax appear on subsequent editions of ordnance survey maps.

Mr. Dorrell: Definitive public rights of way which result from the conditional exemption from inheritance tax of scenic land will appear on subsequent Ordnance Survey maps. Decisions on what other paths or forms of public access are shown on the maps are a matter for the chief executive of Ordnance Survey.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to apply the definition of public access outlined in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 when evaluating applications for inheritance tax exemptions under the Inheritance Tax Act 1984.

Mr. Dorrell: No. The heritage advisory agencies advise the Inland Revenue as to what constitutes reasonable public access to land for which conditional exemption from inheritance tax is claimed. The access arrangements for each case are considered individually on the basis of its own facts. Adopting the approach in the 1949 Act would allow the landowner to deny public access in some circumstances where it is currently sought in return for the conditional inheritance tax exemption.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state for each year since 1986, in Wales, *(a)* the number of successful applications for conditional exemption from inheritance tax, *(b)* the number of such applications related to land and *(c)* the minimum total estimated value of such land.

Mr. Dorrell: The number of designations for conditional exemption from inheritance tax of all types of heritage property in Wales could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Since 1976 there have been five successful applications for conditional exemption of heritage land in Wales. Where conditional exemption from inheritance tax is granted it is not necessary to establish the value of the land.

Energy Review

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution his Department will be making to the energy review; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: My Department will be playing a full part in the review.

Drug Seizures

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list by type, number of seizures and weight all drug seizures made by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise at Heathrow airport during each of the past 12 quarters.

Sir John Cope: The number of drug seizures by type and weight made at Heathrow Airport in each of the past 12 quarters is as shown in the table.

Schedule

Period and type	*Seizure numbers*	*Weight (in grammes)*	*Numbers*
December 1989			
Amphetamine	3	12·016	—
Cannabis herbal	127	536,326·400	—
Cannabis liquid	2	4,401·500	—
Cannabis resin	88	14,194·204	—
Cocaine	32	22,307·420	—
Diamorphine	44	39,507·421	—
LSD	3	—	973
Other	11	232·580	—
March 1990			
Amphetamine	5	8·880	—
Cannabis herbal	116	229,290·850	—
Cannabis liquid	2	41·000	
Cannabis resin	113	104,705·080	—
Cocaine	31	23,635·880	—
Diamorphine	28	18,173·790	—
LSD	1	—	1,000
Other	17	214·180	—
June 1990			
Amphetamine	4	500·610	—
Cannabis herbal	113	37,348·640	—
Cannabis resin	90	10,809·129	—
Cocaine	31	45,814·310	—
Diamorphine	25	30,995·307	—
LSD	1	—	2,000
Other	24	19,847·900	—
September 1990			
Amphetamine	7	52·630	—
Cannabis herbal	117	73,209·380	—
Cannabis resin	96	5,989·670	—
Cocaine	43	28,081·270	—
Diamorphine	28	16,315·237	—
Other	28	513·380	—
December 1990			
Amphetamine	5	18·420	—
Cannabis herbal	97	62,694·410	—
Cannabis liquid	1	1,000·000	—
Cannabis resin	100	13,400·642	—
Cocaine	49	66,001·440	—
Diamorphine	37	28,521·501	—
LSD	5	—	8,000
Other	23	1,869·346	—
March 1991			
Amphetamine	2	2·860	—
Cannabis herbal	91	90,643·710	—
Cannabis liquid	3	400·000	—
Cannabis resin	98	28,377·849	—
Cocaine	41	25,902·270	—
Diamorphine	26	33,554·600	—
LSD	7	—	17,931
Other	27	2,612·600	—
June 1991			
Amphetamine	7	7·000	—
Cannabis herbal	102	124,899·773	—
Cannabis resin	110	9,054·729	—
Cocaine	44	46,080·060	—
Diamorphine	18	18,539·900	—
LSD	3	—	500
Other	22	1,377·980	—
September 1991			
Amphetamine	8	183·300	—
Cannabis herbal	96	36,512·832	—
Cannabis liquid	1	2·000	—
Cannabis resin	93	8,897·526	—
Cocaine	52	85,184·410	—
Diamorphine	14	25,041·096	—
LSD	4	—	12
Other	21	4,548·513	—
December 1991			
Amphetamine	8	10·000	—
Cannabis herbal	78	209,314·390	—
Cannabis liquid	2	11·900	—
Cannabis resin	60	7,209·640	—
Cocaine	53	39,960·895	—
Diamorphine	12	9,332·050	—
LSD	2	—	4
Other	18	626·910	—
March 1992			
Amphetamine	3	863·700	—
Cannabis herbal	103	150,090·401	—
Cannabis liquid	1	250·000	—
Cannabis resin	84	5,422·590	—
Cocaine	55	34,487·361	—
Diamorphine	20	26,574·310	—
LSD	2	—	1,646
Other	12	332·600	—
June 1992			
Amphetamine	1	1·000	—
Cannabis herbal	66	63,873·070	—
Cannabis liquid	3	531·500	—
Cannabis resin	58	17,988·348	—

Period and type	*Seizure numbers*	*Weight (in grammes)*	*Numbers*
Cocaine	33	47,032·780	—
Diamorphine	11	7,445·892	—
LSD	1	—	520
Other	22	16,711·380	—
September 1992			
Cannabis herbal	98	211,494·040	—
Cannabis resin	45	7,101·980	—
Cocaine	41	53,366·000	—
Diamorphine	20	17,087·500	—
LSD	3	—	3,006
Other	25	1,914·100	—

[1] For LSD the number of tablets rather than weight is shown.

Footpaths and Bridleways

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new *(a)* footpaths and *(b)* bridleways in Wales have been created as a direct result of granted exemptions on inheritance tax, since the Inheritance Tax Act 1984, in each year since 1984; and if he will list the location of the footpaths and bridleways in each instance.

Mr. Dorrell: The public have access to approximately 20 miles of footpaths and bridleways over scenic land in Wales which is conditionally exempt from inheritance tax. A breakdown of this figure by year of designation cannot be provided due to the taxpayer confidentiality rules.

Public access was already allowed to some of these paths and bridleways before the exemption was given, but the conditions attached to the exemption will have put the access on a more secure basis.

The Countryside Council for Wales is able to supply information about access to heritage land, including conditionally exempt land, although the land will not be identified as conditionally exempt.

VAT Penalties

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to announce the findings of his review into value added tax penalties on companies.

Sir John Cope: The reviews of misdeclaration penalty and default surcharge are due to report in time for decisions to be taken as part of the 1993 Budget strategy.

Taxpayers (Interviews)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Inland Revenue staff are permitted to make tape recordings of interviews with taxpayers without the knowledge or consent of the taxpayer; and if he will include provisions in the taxpayers charter and in departmental guidance manuals so as to preclude such recordings being made.

Mr. Dorrell: Existing guidance for inspectors of taxes tells them that they should not make a tape recording of an interview.

Self-employment (Tax)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made on the simplification of tax for the self-employed.

Mr. Dorrell: A further consultative paper entitled "A Simpler System for Assessing Personal Tax" has been published by the Inland Revenue. This takes forward the discussions on simplification of the personal tax system. Copies of the paper have been placed in the Library of the House.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he intends to introduce to implement paragraph 2 of proposed article 130R of the treaty of Rome, included in the Maastricht treaty on European union.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

It falls to the European Commission to make proposals for measures to implement obligations under the treaty of Rome. The Government fully endorse the considerations set out in the second paragraph of article 130R as it will be amended by the Maastricht treaty. During the United Kingdom's presidency of the Environment Council, we have been laying particular emphasis on the need to integrate environmental protection requirements into other policy areas.

Smuggling

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures are being taken to counter the extra opportunities for smugglers as a result of EC measures which will make movement through EC countries easier.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* It is a central objective of all changes to customs controls for the single market, that effectiveness against smuggling should be maintained. Following a thorough review of their anti-smuggling controls, customs have been creating new flexible anti-smuggling teams and important results have come from the risk-based targeting methods which they employ.

Customs are working with other enforcement agencies, trade associations and individual transport companies to sign memoranda of understanding under which they assist customs to detect drug smugglers who are using their facilities. Customs are also developing closer co-operation with our Community partners. They have signed maritime and aerial surveillance memoranda of understanding with France and Spain and are in the process of concluding one with the Netherlands. The fight against smugglers will be further assisted in the single market by the customs information system. This network, which I launched in October allows information to be exchanged electronically between all 12 member states.

VAT

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what limit the recent agreements in the EC on the harmonisation of rates of VAT place on the amount by which the VAT starting threshold can be raised.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* The recent agreements in the EC will not affect the level of the VAT registration threshold which is governed by the EC Sixth VAT Directive and current United Kingdom legislation.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider raising the VAT threshold to £50,000 and beyond.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 4 November 1992]*: The EC Sixth VAT Directive which the then United Kingdom Government agreed in 1977 constrains increases in the VAT registration threshold to what is needed to maintain its value in real terms.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he is currently giving to problems relating to the current VAT penalty regime.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 4 November 1992]*: The second phase of the review of the serious misdeclaration penalty regime was announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget statement in March 1992. Wide ranging consultations have since taken place with the relevant trade and professional bodies. In addition, Customs have issued a consultative paper on default surcharge inviting comment on how the system might be made both more effective and acceptable.

ENVIRONMENT

Ozone-destroying Substances

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are used by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution when assessing the best available technology not entailing excessive cost for the prevention of the release of ozone-destroying substances.

Mr. Maclean: HMIP is responsible for authorising releases from those processes prescribed under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The Act requires an operator of a prescribed process to either prevent releases of prescribed substances or where not practicable, to minimise releases and to render them harmless. In implementing this requirement, a balance must be made between the costs of these techniques against the potential environmental harm, such as possible damage to the ozone layer, resulting from proposed releases. This is the basis of the requirement to use the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost—BATNEEC.

In granting authorisation HM inspectorate of pollution will have regard to the advice provided in the relevant chief inspector's guidance note including the need to use BATNEEC.

One of the most significant industry sectors as far as potential releases of compounds posing a threat to stratospheric ozone levels, most notably some volatile organic compounds, is that covering the production and storage of chemicals.

The first nine guidance notes covering this sector will be published shortly. They will provide detailed guidance on the release of VOCs and in particular will place extremely tight release limits on those substances, covered by the Montreal Protocol which have been identified as posing a threat to ozone levels. Guidance is also given on preventing fugitive releases from all parts of such processes.

On publication, copies of all chief inspector's guidance notes are placed in the House Library.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which companies have made applications to release ozone-destroying substances under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and how many have been turned down.

Mr. Maclean: The information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by his Department in utilising the powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to outlaw the release of ozone-destroying chemicals.

Mr. Maclean: The Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991 set out the industrial processes and the main substances to be controlled under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The regulations are enforced by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and local authorities who are required to ensure industry uses best available techniques not entailing excessive cost to prevent, or minimise and render harmless the release of prescribed substances. The substances prescribed for release into the air include oxides of nitrogen, organic compounds and halogens and their compounds, which are ozonede-depleters.

To date HMIP has received just over 500 applications and local authorities some 6,300 in England and Wales. Details of all these applications and authorisations issued as a result are not held centrally.

Waste Incineration

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many shipments of clinical waste have been imported for incineration within the United Kingdom in each of the past five years; and if he will specify the tonnage imported in each instance.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has no record of clinical waste being imported before 1 January 1992. Since then, 463 tonnes in 71 separate shipments have been notified to the Department under the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Wastes Regulations 1988 as having been imported for incineration in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to prohibit the incineration of wastes containing heavy metals, organochlorines and other organic halogens.

Mr. Maclean: Waste incineration processes are tightly controlled under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Since 30 September 1992, operators of all existing waste incinerators have had to apply under the Act to either Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution or their local authority, depending on the size of the plant or the sort of waste being incinerated, to obtain authorisation to undertake the process. Any authorisations given will include conditions covering such matters as combustion conditions and release limits to ensure the protection of public health and the environment. These conditions must be designed so as to ensure the use of the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost—BATNEEC—to prevent or minimise releases of prescribed substances from the plant, and to render all unpreventable releases harmless. I, therefore, see no grounds for a general prohibition on the incineration of wastes containing heavy metals, organochlorines and other organic halogens.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to undertake a full assessment of problematic waste streams going into incineration.

Mr. Maclean: There is already a considerable amount of research into the incineration of various types of waste. The objective is to determine the conditions required to minimise the release of pollutants, and to render harmless any unpreventable releases.

Chlorine (Stratosphere)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what level of chlorine loading in the stratosphere is regarded as the maximum that the United Kingdom will accept as a condition for signing a revised Montreal protocol in Copenhagen;

(2) what are the maximum periods of stratospheric chlorine loading *(a)* above 2ppbv and *(b)* above 3ppbv that the United Kingdom is prepared to accept as a condition for signing the revised Montreal protocol in Copenhagen.

Mr. Maclean: We will be pressing for the Montreal protocol's controls to be tightened to require the earliest possible phase out of ozone-depleting substances, in order to achieve the lowest possible level of chlorine loading in the stratosphere.

Waste Streams

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set goals and time scales for the reduction of priority waste streams.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom is participating in several European Community "priority waste streams" groups comprising representatives from business, national and local government, consumer and environmental organisation. The groups aim to agree common targets and objectives within the Community for the treatment and handling of a number of difficult waste streams, including used tyres, chlorinated solvents, scrap vehicles, clinical waste and demolition material. The United Kingdom is leading on clinical waste, and has also initiated a research project on the recycling of demolition wastes.

Members' Correspondence

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines are issued to his Department for the processing of correspondence from hon. Members; and what is the average delay between receipt of correspondence from, and the date of response to, an hon. Member.

Mr. Howard: Guidelines to officials in my Department stress that all ministerial correspondence should be dealt with as soon as possible, and every attempt is made to achieve my Department' objective of replying to hon. Members' letters within three weeks of receipt.

It is not possible to identify from my Department's records, an arithemetical average length of time taken to reply to hon. Members.' letters. However my Department's objective of a reply within three weeks of receipt, was achieved for 60 per cent. of letters from hon. Members' received in the first six months of this year. Seventy-seven per cent. were replied to within four weeks, and 90 per centre within six weeks.

March Consultancy Group

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policy changes he will implement as a result of research undertaken for the Department by March Consulting Group.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has commissioned four studies from the March Consulting Group. Three of these are for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and concern pollution control for petrochemical and petroleum processes, and for processes involving sulphonation. The group is required to identify both the various processes being undertaken and the best available techniques being used worldwide to control polluting releases. The results of these studies will be used by the inspectorate in the chief inspector's guidance notes covering those processes. The fourth is on the use of chlorofluorocarbons in the United Kingdom refrigeration and air conditioning industries. The Government are committed to the earliest possible phase out of CFCs, and are now considering what further action might be taken in the light of March Consulting Group's report, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Hydrochlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what essential uses of hydrochlorofluorocarbons his Department has identified in the refrigeration and air conditioning sector.

Mr. Maclean: HCFCs are needed in the short to medium term in this sector to ensure the swiftest possible move away from the use of CFCs.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines are currently provided by his Department to companies involved in the incineration of clinical waste concerning the safe deposit of toxic ash following the burning of such waste.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is satisfied that ash from incinerators burning clinical waste can be safely deposited at landfill sites licensed and designed to accept such waste without risk to public health or the environment. Waste disposal authorities formulate licence conditions and monitor sites to ensure that no hazard arises.

My Department has published definitive guidance on the landfilling of waste in waste management paper No. 26 and on disposal licensing in waste management paper No. 4. Copies of both these documents have been placed in the Library of the House. Guidance will shortly be issued on the management of clinical waste in the revised version of waste management paper No. 25.

Rural Development Commission

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much grant in aid the Rural Development Commission received in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Maclean: In 1979-80 the development commission was issued a grant of £16·126 million to meet expenditure of £18·257 million. For 1992-93 grant in aid of £11·969 million was approved by Parliament, prior to the 1992 summer recess, for the Rural Development Commission enabling it to spend up to £38·939 million. In both years, the balance between grant in aid and gross expenditure is accounted for by receipts.

Biodiversity Agreements

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to encourage the involvement of non-governmental organisations in the drafting and negotiation of future treaties and agreements related to biodiversity.

Mr. Maclean: Non-governmental organisations were involved throughout the preparations leading up to the agreement of the convention on biological diversity, in particular through the Advisory Group on Biological Diversity.

We will continue to involve non governmental organisations in taking forward this convention and in other biodiversity-related work.

Hazardous Waste (Imports)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of imports of hazardous waste in *(a)* 1981 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Maclean: There was no requirement for information on hazardous waste imports to be supplied to the Secretary of State until the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988 came into force on 1 October 1988. During the 1988-89 financial year, approximately 52,000 tonnes of hazardous waste were imported. This figure comprises estimates from 1 April to 30 September 1988, and collected data thereafter.

Water Pollution

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many incidents of water pollution on Britain's bathing beaches were reported in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Maclean: No data are held centrally for 1980. The results for the 1992 bathing water survey are not yet available. In 1991, 76 per cent. of the United Kingdom's 453 identified bathing waters met the mandatory coliform bacteria standards of the EC bathing water directive.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people in Britain are supplied with water that does not reach the EC regulated standard.

Mr. Maclean: Information on drinking water quality in England and Wales is contained in "Drinking Water 1991", the second annual report by the chief drinking water inspector, published in July 1992. Copies have been placed in the Library. It is planned to publish shortly a similar report on drinking water quality in Scotland.

Controlled Wastes

Mr. Chris Smith To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action has been taken by his Department and other relevant authorities to clarify to users of ozone destroying substances the circumstances in which these chemicals are to be considered controlled wastes for the purposes of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(2) what guidance has been issued, and when further guidance will be available to users of ozone destroying substances that are considered controlled wastes, concerning their obligations under section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(3) which authorities are responsible for enforcing section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 as it applies to ozone destroying substances that are considered controlled wastes; and what action they have so far taken to enforce section 33 so far as it applies to ozone destroying substances.

Mr. Maclean: Section 33(1)(c) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which came into force on 1 April this year, makes it an offence to treat, keep or dispose of controlled waste in a manner likely to cause pollution of the environment or harm to human health. Controlled waste is defined in section 75 of the Act. The Controlled Waste Regulations, which refine and extend the definitions of controlled waste, were also brought into force on 1 April. Guidance on those regulations was issued to local authorities, including waste regulation authorities, in a joint circular from the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and my Department—DOE circular 14/92—published on 21 May 1992.

Section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 imposes a duty of care on those holding controlled waste to take reasonable steps to prevent a breach of section 33. Guidance for waste holders on how to discharge this duty, including advice on how to decide whether a substance is controlled waste, was issued in a code of practice published jointly by the three Departments in December 1991. The definition of controlled waste and the provisions of sections 33 and 34 of the Act are not specific to particular substances or sectors of industry, nor is the advice on those sections.

It is intended that section 33 together with the waste management licensing system in the Act will be brought fully into force on 1 April 1993, and further advice on the operation of waste management licensing will be issued before then.

Waste regulation authorities, as the authorities who will have the duty of granting waste management licences, will be mainly responsible for the enforcement of section 33 of the Act, but there is no restriction on the right to instigate prosecutions for offences under section 33.

Bird Pests

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether the proposed general licences to kill or take certain birds will fully discharge United Kingdom obligations so far as they relate to his Department's responsibilities under the 1979 EC birds directive;

(2) if he has consulted the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on the proposed general licensing system to control the shooting of bird pest species under section 16(1) (c), (d) and (i) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and whether the committee has approved the form and scope of the proposed licences;

(3) whether the constituent bodies of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee had submitted their opinions on the proposed general licensing system to control the shooting of bird pest species by the final date of submission; and what steps have been taken to obtain them;

(4) if he has consulted the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on the proposed general licensing system to control the shooting of bird pest species under section 16 (i), (j) and (k) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and whether the committee has approved the form and scope of the proposed licences.

Mr. Maclean: We are satisfied that the proposed general licensing system for pest bird control will meet the requirement of the EC birds directive and provide a sensible basis for pest control in the United Kingdom.

Officials of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee have been fully involved with those from my Department in the development of the licensing system and have provided the scientific advice on which the licences will be based. In discharging the special function of the country councils to jointly advise on nature conservation matters affecting Great Britain as a whole, committee officials have liaised with their counterparts in the country councils. The councils received the public consultation paper, issued in July, setting out the Government's proposals. The Countryside Council for Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage have responded directly to the Department.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *347*, if he will set out a summary of the advice on radiological equivalence of radioactive wastes from the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee; and when he expects to reply to the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee report.

Mr. Maclean: The Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee's report offers advice on the technical basis of British Nuclear Fuels' proposals and their likely radiological and environmental impact for the United Kingdom. I expect to reply to the report after consulting colleagues.

Neighbour Noise

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue new guidelines on neighbour noise to local authorities.

Mr. Maclean: Part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 contains provisions for controlling statutory nuisances, including noise. In September, my Department and the Home Office issued joint guidance to local authorities and the police on the control of noise from parties.

Wildlife Habitats

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures he is proposing to provide greater protection to sites of special scientific interest in order to prevent destruction of wildlife habitats.

Mr. Maclean: The additional safeguards for sites of special scientific interest announced by this Government in September 1991 came into effect on 2 January 1992. Guidance to local authorities and others on how our policies for the conservation of our natural heritage are to be reflected in land use planning, and development control, are to be set out in a planning policy guidance note, which will be published shortly.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, how many households in the network installer area including the Lancashire, West constituency qualify and have been improved under the home energy efficiency scheme since its inception in 1991.

Mr. Maclean: In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit or disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Within the network installer area that contains the hon. Member's constituency, 2,494 homes have benefited from home energy efficiency scheme grant since its inception in 1991.

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in the network installer area covering the Falkirk, East constituency have been improved under the home energy efficiency scheme since its inception in 1991.

Mr. Maclean: Within the network installer area that contains the hon. Member's constituency, 2,119 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

City Challenge

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what analysis was made of the benefits to local communities of the first round of city challenge pacemaker authorities before deciding to embark on a second round.

Mr. Robin Squire: The decision to go ahead with the second round of city challenge was announced in February 1992. The pacemaker authorities began implementing their action plans in April 1992. However, analysis of pacemaker bids helped to inform the decision to embark on a second round and on the bidding guidance for that round. The guidance stated that one of the main aims of city challenge was to support the development and implementation of locally devised and time limited plans for the regeneration of disadvantaged areas within our cities which will significantly benefit the residents of those areas.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which urban development corporations have enterd into agreements with developers which require them to employ local labour.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. Although the use of local labour is encouraged, a contractual requirement specifying that local labour must be used would be in contravention of United Kingdom legislation, the treaty of Rome, and European Community works and supplies directives.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the occasions on which boards of urban development corporations have met in public.

Mr. Robin Squire: The boards of the urban development corporations do not meet in public.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each urban development corporation the total amount of Government finance they have received since their inception.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total amount of Government grant in aid the urban development corporations have received, up to 31 March 1992, is as follows.

	£ million
Birmingham Heartlands	Nil
Bristol	35·233
Black Country	141·643
Central Manchester	43·500
Leeds	39·038
London Docklands	1,347·500
Merseyside	291·386
Sheffield	49·725
Teesside	160·071
Trafford Park	91·581
Tyne and Wear	142·066

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to require the boards of urban development corporations to meet in public.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have no plans to require the boards of the urban development corporations to meet in public. UDCs have the discretion to admit the public to discussions on land use planning matters and most choose to do so.

London Forum

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his plans for the London forum.

Sir George Young: My hon. and learned Friend announced on 21 October that Sir Allen Sheppard had agreed to be the first chairman of the London forum, and that Sir Hugh Bidwell has agreed to be a deputy chairman. The Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage have agreed in principle with Sir Hugh that the forum should merge with the London tourist board, of which Sir Hugh is the chairman. The merger will create a single powerful private sector body to promote London overseas, with the aim of maximising business investment in the capital and expanding London's role as a centre for tourism and culture.

The London forum will share an executive organisation with London First, a new private sector initiative of which Sir Allen is also the chairman. London First is a private and public sector partnership harnessing business skills to enhance London's attractions. It will improve the "product" which it will be the forum's job to promote internationally. A common supporting organisation under chief executive Stephen O'Brien will ensure close coordination of the efforts of the two bodies.

Sir Allen is now taking forward the development of a business plan for the forum, with a view to launching the new body around the turn of the year.

Environmental Information

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish an independent body to oversee the implementation of procedures under the EC directive on the freedom of access to information on the environment.

Mr. Maclean: No.

Council Tax

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to ensure that disabled persons living in band A properties will be entitled to a reduction in their council tax liability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The scheme of council tax reductions for people with disabilities will ensure that no one pays more council tax in respect of additional accommodation which they need because of a disability. If a dwelling is allocated to band A, any additional accommodation cannot have resulted in an increase in council tax liability, and no reduction is therefore appropriate.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department spent in total on transitional relief and the community charge reduction scheme; and what was the original estimate of the amount required.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department has so far paid out £1,950 million in transitional relief and community charge reduction scheme grant. Further grant payments totalling about £500 million will be paid this and next year. Early estimates put the cost of the schemes at about £2,830 million.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish a table showing for each collecting local authority in England the latest figures available of uncollected community charge and the percentage of the total community charge that this figure represents;

(2) if he will publish a table showing for each collecting local authority in England the amount of uncollected domestic rates in 1989-90 and the percentage of the total rate that this figure represented.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department does not collect figures for the amounts of domestic rates and of community charges outstanding. Figures for community charge arrears outstanding at 31 March 1991 were published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in "Revenue Collection Statistics 1990-91 Actuals", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Figures for uncollected domestic rates are not available, although the chartered institute has published gross arrears of domestic and non-domestic rates at 31 March 1990 in "Rate Collection Statistics 1989-90 Actuals", a copy of which is also available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each collecting local authority in England how much was bid by that authority for Government funds to cover the set-up costs of the council tax and how much his Department gave to each authority in 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: Authorities were not asked to bid for funds to cover the costs of implementing the council tax. Independent consultants, CSL Ltd., were employed to advise on these costs. They estimated that the revenue costs of implementing the council tax would be £114·6 million. The Government agreed to pay 75 per cent. of these costs by way of a special grant of which £56·74 million will be paid to authorities this year, and a further £29·23 million will be paid in 1993-94 on receipt of audited claims. The allocation to billing authorities of this grant is given in Special Grant Report (No. 4) approved by the House in June this year, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. The other 25 per cent. of costs will be met through revenue support grant.

In addition, supplementary credit approvals to the value of £41·2 million are available to authorities in respect of capital expenditure they incur on implementing the council tax.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what items of local authority expenditure were included in the Government's calculations of council tax set-up costs.

Mr. Robin Squire: This Department employed independent consultants CSL Ltd to advise on the total cost of preparing for the introduction of the council tax by April 1993. The costs, both revenue and capital, taken into account by the consultants covered staffing, accommodation, computer hardware, computer software, stationery, publicity and training.

Capital Receipts

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each housing authority in England the amount of unapplied capital receipts from *(a)* housing sales and *(b)* other capital sales.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have arranged for the available information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Separate figures for housing receipts and other capital receipts are not available.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each county council in England the total amount of unapplied capital receipts.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total usable receipts for each county council in England as at 31 March 1992 are shown in the table.

	£000s
Avon	2,150
Bedfordshire	1,250
Berkshire	1,500
Buckinghamshire	600
Cambridgeshire	1,000
Cheshire	1,500
Cleveland	55
Cornwall	1,400
Cumbria	1,250
Derbyshire	2,175
Devon	3,000
Dorset	1,000
Durham	1,132
East Sussex	1,178
Essex	726
Gloucestershire	2,075
Hampshire	5,000
Hereford and Worcester	1,549
Hertfordshire	6,000
Humberside	1,000
Isle of Wight	250
Kent	3,800
Lancashire	2,000
Leicestershire	2,100
Lincolnshire	4,005
Norfolk	1,225
North Yorkshire	1,350
Northamptonshire	3,000
Northumberland	600
Nottinghamshire	1,500
Oxfordshire	4,000
Shropshire	1,000
Somerset	4,800
Staffordshire	1,500
Suffolk	1,000
Surrey	4,000
Warwickshire	2,100
West Sussex	8,100
Wiltshire	1,191

Montreal Protocol

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals Her Majesty's Government will make at the forthcoming preparatory meeting for the Montreal protocol.

Mr. Maclean: The Government, together with our EC partners, will be proposing that the phase-out dates for production and consumption of CFCs, halons, carbon tetrachloride and 1,1,1 trichloroethane be brought forward to 1 January 1996 with an interim cut of 50 per cent. for 1,1,1 trichloroethane and 85 per cent. for the other substances by 1 January 1994. In addition, we shall be pressing for tight controls on HCFCs to be introduced and a freeze on the production and consumption of methyl bromide at 1991 levels by 1995.

House Condition Survey

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 July to the hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton), *Official Report*, column *833*, if he will make a statement on the reasons for the time taken to prepare the report on the 1991 English house condition survey.

Sir George Young: The 1991 English house condition survey began in September last year and has involved three separate surveys—a physical inspection of 25,000 dwellings, interviews with households and a postal survey of local authorities and housing associations. Data collection for the last of these surveys will be completed this month. Results will be published just as soon as the analysis is completed.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to issue a public consultation paper on the removal Crown exemption from planning legislation.

Sir George Young: My right hon. and learned Friend has today issued a public consultation paper on the removal of Crown immunity from planning law. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales also propose shortly to issue public consultation papers as regards Scotland and Wales.

The consultation paper proposes that all Crown bodies should be required to apply to the local planning authority for planning permission, listed building consent, conservation area consent, and hazardous substances consent, and to the Secretary of State for National Heritage for scheduled monument consent in the normal way.

There will be some exceptions to these requirements, principally where national or prison security is involved, and for trunk road proposals, which are already subject to statutory procedures equivalent to town and country planning procedures. In the case of national security, it is intended to make provision in the legislation for a certification system whereby the appropriate Minister or official would certify projects which would be exempt from the legislation on grounds of national security. A similar procedure will apply to prison security.

The Government consider that it would be inappropriate for the enforcement provisions of the planning legislation, particularly those which contain criminal sanctions or permit the local authority to enter land, to apply to the Crown. It is proposed that in lieu of the enforcement provisions and injunctive or criminal proceedings the "enforcing" authority would be able to apply to the High Court for a declaration of the rights of the parties. If the Crown is shown by a declaration to have acted in breach of planning control, it would, of its own accord, remedy the position.

One consequence of the proposals will be that Crown developers will be legally required to undertake environmental impact assessments of their proposals, as required by EC Directive 85/337, in the same way as other developers, replacing the non-statutory arrangements in DOE circular 15/88, Welsh Office 23/88.

The statutory regimes in part VIII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for outdoor advertisement control and tree protection will also apply to Crown land, subject to certain modifications and exceptions.

These proposals will be embodied in primary legislation when a suitable opportunity arises.

Supplementary Credit Approvals

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the supplementary credit approvals for *(a)* improvement grants and *(b)* other purposes.

Mr. Howard: Provisional awards of supplementary credit approvals—SCAs—for mandatory house renovation grants will be notified to local authorities shortly. On the SCAs issued by my Department for other purposes, we have already announced to local authorities our intentions for 1992-93. The SCAs themselves will be issued by 30 September 1993.

Rating Revaluations

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional resources will be made available to the Valuation Office in connection with outstanding rating appeals from the 1990 revaluation of non-domestic property.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department's existing expenditure plans in respect of Valuation Office agency rating services are set out in figure 119 of the Department's annual report for 1992. This shows the following provision over three years:

Year	*£ million*
1992-93	115·3
1993-94	115·4
1994-95	118·2

This provision covers work on outstanding and new rating appeals against the 1990 rating list, and work in connection with the 1995 general revaluation.

Darwin Initiative

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in relation to the Darwin initiative.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* Consultations with interested institutions and organisations are continuing. I expect to make a statement later this year.

Household Waste

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the first results will be available from the national household waste analysis project, currently being undertaken by Warren Spring laboratory and Aspinwalls on behalf of his Department.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* The first phase of the project—developing the methodology—has been completed and a report should be available by the end of 1992. Preliminary results from the first samples will be available from Warren Spring laboratory from the beginning of 1993. A full report of the 1992-93 results will be available in the late summer of 1993.

Recovery and Recycling

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any consideration has been given to making a cradle-to-grave analysis of potential benefits to be gained from combining recovery and recycling facilities with incineration and energy recovery facilities.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* My Department and the Department of Trade and Industry have been studying the concept of combining recovery and recycling facilities with incineration and energy recovery facilities. The DTI's energy technology support unit started a five year research programme on the concept in 1991. Preliminary results will be published in due course.

Water Supplies

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment the Office of Water Services has made of the health and safety danger posed by pre-payment water meters in domestic properties in the event of an accident in the home or of heating systems running dry.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* I understand that OFWAT will be closely monitoring inter alia the health and safety aspects of a trial of pre-payment meters by Severn Trent Water Limited. OFWAT has asked the company to produce a leaflet for the customers concerned, giving advice about the precautionary action customers should take if they interrupt their supply by not inserting a pre-paid card to buy further units. However, I understand that all electronic pre-payment water meters enable water to be taken on credit in the event of an emergency.

Contaminated Land Register

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will improve the clarity of the definition of the areas of land that are to be included in the proposed regulations relating to the contaminated land register.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* It would be our intention to accompany any regulations made under section 143 of the Environment Protection Act 1990 with guidance about their implementation, including criteria for defining areas of registrable land.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconsider his proposals to include land that has been used for mineral extraction from the contaminated land register.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* Our recent consultative draft of regulations proposed under section 143 of the Environment Protection Act 1990 did not include mineral extraction as a registrable use of land; the proposed regulations would apply only to the most contaminative uses of land.

Methane Emissions

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the contributions to the United Kingdom total methane emissions from landfills in Scotland and Northern Ireland will be.

Mr. Maclean: Direct estimates of total methane production from landfills in Scotland and Northern Ireland have not been made. An estimate based on population and waste arising statistics suggests that the figure is likely to be between 10 and 15 per cent. of the total for England and Wales, or between 100,000 and 150,000 tonnes per annum.

Geopathic Stress

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department is currently carrying out into geopathic stress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Department is supporting studies at Lancaster university to determine the sensitivity in the United Kingdom of vegetation and of plant pathogenic micro-organisms to increased fluxes of ultraviolet-B radiation which may result from depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer. These studies will feed into the periodic reassessment of available scientific, environmental, technical and economic information required under article 6 of the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Procedure

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to bring proposals for reform of parliamentary procedure before the House.

Mr. Newton: I informed the House during the debate on the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House on 13 July that I hoped to identify a basis of agreement for discussion through the usual channels, with the aim of being in a position to bring forward substantive motions at an early stage once the House returned.

That remains my intention.

WALES

Arable Support Scheme

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the arable support scheme for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received a number of representations concerning the arable support scheme. The rates (converted using the green rate applicable on 22 September 1992) payable in Wales for the main scheme in 1993-94 are:

	Notional compensation ECU per tonne	*Payment per hectare ECU*	*Payment per hectare £*
Cereals[1] (including sweetcorn)	25	116·25	95·20
Oilseeds	152	477·65	391·15
Proteins (including vining peas)	65	302·25	247·51
Set-aside	45	209·25	171·35

[1] Producers in the simplified scheme (less than 19·78 ha in production) willl receive the cereals rate for all crops grown.

I have made it clear in my discussions with the farming unions in Wales that this is for one year only and I have asked my Department, in consultation with industry representatives, to examine the available data in order to decide whether for future years a different regionalisation plan might be more appropriate.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to exclude local authorities' grants to charities and voluntary organisations from charge-capping calculation arrangements.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Local authorities in Wales should keep their budget requirements for 1993-94, including provision for grants to charities and voluntary organisations, in line with my right hon. Friend's expenditure plans. My right hon. Friend will announce his proposals for the 1993-94 local government revenue settlement in due course.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to tell local authorities in Wales their allocations of money for collecting the council tax for the next financial year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The cost of council tax administration is one of the categories of expenditure taken into account in determining local authorities' standard spending assessments. My right hon. Friend's proposals for the 1993-94 local government revenue settlement will be announced in due course.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each collecting local authority in Wales the latest figures available of uncollected community charge and the percentage of the total community charge that this figure represents.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is shown in the table:

Arrears of community charges at 31 March 1992

	Amount[1] *(£000)*	*As a percentage of the total debit*[2]
Alyn and Deeside	1,866	10
Colwyn	1,148	8
Delyn	983	6
Glyndwr	890	8
Rhuddlan	1,069	7
Wrexham Maelor	2,711	10
Carmarthen	467	5
Ceredigion	801	7
Dinefwr	393	6
Llanelli	978	7
Preseli Pembrokeshire	439	4
South Pembrokeshire	521	7
Blaenau Gwent	1,395	11
Islwyn	1,046	9
Monmouth	1,229	7
Newport	3,734	12
Torfaen	1,115	6
Aberconwy	596	5
Arfon	1,117	11
Dwyfor	230	3
Meirionnydd	353	4
Ynys Mon	1,113	7
Cynon Valley	1,072	11
Merthyr Tydfil	547	6
Ogwr	1,130	5
Rhondda	498	5
Rhymney Valley	1,822	10
Taff Ely	1,676	9
Brecknock	279	3
Montgomeryshire	325	4
Radnorshire	113	2
Cardiff	6,560	10
Vale of Glamorgan	1,131	5
Port Talbot	704	7
Lliw Valley	449	4
Neath	804	6
Swansea	3,057	7
Total Wales	44,361	8

[1] The arrears shown include both 1990-91 and 1991-92 charges.

[2] The total debit is the amount actually billed to chargepayers, net of deductions, in respect of 1990-91 and 1991-92 charges.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each Welsh district council the amount of unapplied capital receipts from *(a)* housing sales and *(b)* other capital sales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is given in the table:

Usable capital receipts at 31 March 1992

	Housing £000	*Other £000*
Alyn and Deeside	24	0
Colwyn	585	42
Delyn	0	0
Glyndwr	863	160
Rhuddlan	469	16
Wrexham Maelor	41	21
Carmarthen	609	0
Ceredigion	0	137
Dinefwr	0	746
Llanelli	0	0
Preseli Pembrokeshire	1,122	243
South Pembrokeshire	1,264	327
Blaenau Gwent	488	641
Islwyn	0	0
Monmouth	826	46
Newport	6,309	1,433
Torfaen	0	0
Aberconwy	678	431
Arfon	230	116
Dwyfor	71	0
Meirionnydd	0	0
Ynys Môn	82	84
Cynon Valley	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil	1	169
Ogwr	672	2,086
Rhondda	0	0
Rhymney Valley	802	76
Taff Ely	469	0
Brecknock	692	200
Montgomeryshire	1,348	22
Radnorshire	343	59
Cardiff	749	0
Vale of Glamorgan	6,436	0
Lliw Valley	939	467
Neath	548	210
Port Talbot	656	553
Swansea	420	1,758
TOTAL	27,736	10,043

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each Welsh county the total amount of unapplied capital receipts.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is given in the table.

Usable capital receipts at 31 March 1992

	£000s
Clwyd	0
Dyfed	267
Gwent	7,080
Gwynedd	333
Mid Glamorgan	414
Powys	27
South Glamorgan	1,551
West Glamorgan	236
Total	9,908

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each collecting local authority in Wales how much was bid by that authority for Government funds to cover the set-up costs of the council tax and how much his Department allocated to each authority in 1992-93.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Welsh charging authorities did not bid for funds to cover council tax preparation costs. The Government commissioned the consultants CSL Group Ltd to estimate the costs to local authorities in England and Wales of preparing for the council tax. CSL estimated that Welsh authorities would spend £9·2 million—£7·98 million on revenue costs and £1·24 million on capital costs. My right hon. Friend accepted CSL's conclusions for Wales in full and has made £5·985 million special grant available to Welsh charging authorities to cover 75 per cent. of the revenue costs. The remaining 25 per cent. of the estimated revenue cost is supported through revenue support grant. My right hon. Friend has also issued supplementary credit approvals totalling £1·24 million to cover capital costs.

Details of the special grant are set out in the Special Grant Report (Wales) 1992 which received the approval of the House on 24 June 1992. Special grant and supplementary credit approval allocations for each charging authority in Wales are as follows:

Council tax preparation costs 1992-93: allocations to charging (district) councils

	Special grant £	*Supplementary credit approvals* £000
Alyn and Deeside	146,626	30
Colwyn	122,360	25
Delyn	134,515	28
Glyndwr	91,011	19
Rhuddlan	133,456	28
Wrexham Maelor	233,138	48
Carmarthen	118,574	25
Ceredigion	144,829	30
Dinefwr	82,613	17
Llanelli	157,876	33
Preseli Pembrokeshire	152,842	32
South Pembrokeshire	96,950	20
Blaenau Gwent	159,840	33
Islwyn	133,882	28
Monmouth	161,964	34
Newport	274,682	57
Torfaen	184,770	38
Aberconwy	121,682	25
Arfon	118,074	24
Dwyfor	71,289	15
Meirionnydd	87,750	18
Ynys Mon	156,168	32
Cynon Valley	135,366	28
Merthyr Tydfil	122,073	25
Ogwr	264,744	55
Rhondda	163,052	34
Rhymney Valley	203,908	42
Taff Ely	188,813	39
Brecknock	89,027	18
Montgomeryshire	112,828	23
Radnor	53,689	11
Cardiff	580,797	120
Vale of Glamorgan	234,950	49
Port Talbot	104,260	22
Lliw Valley	129,254	27
Neath	134,317	28
Swansea	383,031	79
Total	5,985,000	1,240

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each collecting local authority in Wales the amount of uncollected domestic rates in 1989-90 and the percentage of the total rate that this figure represented.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not collected centrally. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the CIPFA publication "Rate Collection Statistics 1989-90 Actuals" which provides figures for combined domestic and non-domestic rate arrears.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the outstanding amount of money uncollected on the poll tax.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Local authorities in Wales reported that, at 31 March 1992, arrears of community charges for the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 totalled £44 million that is equivalent to about £20 for each chargepayer.

Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many housing association houses have been built in Alyn and Deeside since 1979;

(2) how many council houses have been built in Alyn and Deeside since 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A total of 404 council houses and 168 council flats were built in Alyn and Deeside between 1 January 1980 and 31 August 1992. A total of 103 houses and 114 flats were built by housing associations in the area in the same period.

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of unfit homes in Wales in 1979 and in each of the past three years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Such information is only available from house condition surveys. From these, the estimated numbers of unfit dwellings were 90,900 in 1981 and 79,900 in 1986.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the forecast for the number of new rural housing units to be built in Wales for the year 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available centrally.

Household Statistics

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of households in Wales where the classified head of the household is over the age of 65 years; what percentage of such households are *(a)* owner-occupied (i) with or (ii) without a mortgage or (b) renting from (i) a local authority or (ii) a housing association; and what percentage rent is from private landlords.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The 1986 Welsh inter-censal survey indicated that 299,000 households were headed by a person aged 65 or over. Of these households 59·6 per cent. were owner-occupiers (of which 7·4 per cent. were with a mortgage and 92·6 per cent. were owned outright), 31·3 per cent. rented from local authorities or new towns, 1·7 per cent. from housing associations and 7·4 per cent. from private landlords and other tenures.

Food Premises

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of food premises in Wales were inspected by each local enforcement authority in each year since 1988;

and what were the equivalent percentage figures for *(a)* food manufactures, (b) restaurants and caterers and *(c)* food retailers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the percentage of food premises inspected or visited has been held centrally only since 1991 and is given in the following table (1). Figures for 1992 are not yet available.

I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House with equivalent percentage figures for *(a)* food manufacturers (b) restaurants and caterers and *(c)* food retailers.

Percentage of food premises inspected or visited

Enforcement authority	*Percentage*
County Councils	
Clwyd[1]	13
Dyfed[1]	24
Gwent[1]	12
Gwynedd	9
Mid Glamorgan	33
Powys[1]	27
South Glamorgan[1]	16
West Glamorgan	44
District Councils	
Aberconwy[1]	25
Alyn and Deeside	98
Arfon[1]	12
Blaenau Gwent[1]	53
Brecknock[1]	84
Cardiff[1]	57
Carmarthen[1]	40
Ceredigion[1]	55
Colwyn[1]	40
Cynon Valley[1]	47
Delyn[1]	51
Dinefwr[1]	48
Dwyfor	26
Glyndwr	59
Islwyn	44
Llanelli[1]	25
Lliw Valley	97
Meirionnydd[1]	51
Merthyr Tydfil[1]	44
Monmouth	37
Montgomeryshire	73
Neath	67
Newport[1]	43
Ogwr[1]	32
Port Talbot	79
Preseli Pembrokeshire	77
Radnor[1]	92
Rhondda	100
Rhuddlan[1]	23
Rhymney Valley	38
South Pembrokeshire[1]	26
Swansea[1]	56
Taff Ely[1]	58
Torfaen[1]	53
Vale of Glamorgan[1]	71
Wrexham Maelor	39
Ynys Môn[1]	79
Port Health Authorities	
Barry[1]	100
Beaumaris	66
Caernarfon	[2]Nil
Cardiff[1]	64
Chester[1]	Nil
Milford	89
Newport[1]	96
Swansea[1]	64

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[1] Excludes figures for the first quarter of 1991. This was only required on a voluntary basis.

[2] Arfon borough council act as port health authority for Caernarfon.

Nursing Appeals

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of state for Wales if he will publish the number of clinical regrading nursing appeals that are yet to be determined in Wales; and what is his target for completion.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The numbers of clinical grading appeals outstanding in Wales are as follows:

	Number
At employing authority level	403
At regional level (Welsh Appeals Committee)	1,310
At national level (Negotiating Council)	170

Employing authorities are on course to have completed appeals at the local level by the end of this year. Efforts are being made to speed up the appeals process at regional and national levels, but while further appeals continue to be lodged it is not feasible to forecast when the entire process will be completed.

National Parks

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to introduce environmentally sensitive area-type payments within all the national park areas of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have previously announced my intention to designate Preseli, which includes part of the Pembrokeshire coast national park, as an environmentally sensitive area. The Tir Cymen scheme which offers grants for the conservation of the farm landscape is also available to farmers in parts of the Snowdonia and Brecon Beacons national parks. In addition national park authorities have the discretion to enter into agreements with farmers which encourage environmentally friendly farming.

Aerospace Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are employed in the aerospace industry in Wales; and if he will provide a geographical breakdown of those figures.

Mr. David Hunt: According to the latest available estimates, for September 1989, there were 9,300 people employed in the aerospace industry in Wales. A geographical breakdown of these figures would breach the guidelines for protecting confidential data relating to a small number of businesses.

Rents

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average housing association rent in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average council house rent in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The average council house rent in Wales in 1992-93 is £29·74p per week.

"Women First"

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many copies of "Women First: a guide to health services for Women in Wales" have been *(a)* produced and *(b)* distributed by his Department to date.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A total of 350,000 copies of the booklet have been produced and to date, approximately 325,000 have been distributed.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the councils in Wales who have appointed crime prevention co-ordinators to date; how many local authorities have submitted bids for crime prevention moneys under the urban programme; and what is the total value of these bids in accordance with each local authority area.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Crime prevention co-ordinators have been appointed by seven of the county councils, the exception being South Glamorgan. Information is not held centrally about such appointments by district councils.

I have received the following bids for 1993-94 for funding of crime prevention and related initiatives under the urban programme:

Authority	*No. of schemes*	*Bid for 1993-94 £*
Clwyd county council	2	45,122
Alyn and Deeside district council	1	16,400
Dyfed county council	1	57,290
Gwynedd county council	1	40,000
Cynon Valley borough council	2	61,904
Taff Ely borough council	3	108,422
South Glamorgan county council	2	307,000
Vale of Glamorgan borough council	2	163,000
West Glamorgan county council	2	38,670
Port Talbot borough council	2	109,500
Lliw Valley borough council	2	6,900
Swansea city council	3	57,950
Total	23	1,012,158

Bids under the urban programme normally cover a three year period; the figures show the bid for the initial year.

Proposed Legislation (Representations)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to present copies of all official representations on proposed legislation made to his Department, in the form of deposited papers to the Library unless the body or individual making the representation demands otherwise.

Mr. David Hunt: It is usual practice to deposit such representations in the Library of the House.

Food Safety

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many inspections of food premises have been carried out by each local authority in Wales under the Food Safety Act 1990; and how many of such inspections have resulted in *(a)* the issuing of improvement and emergency prohibition notices, *(b)* informal warning letters or *(c)* the voluntary closure of companies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: At present information is available only for 1991. This is given in the following table[1].

Enforcement authority	*Number of inspections of food premises*[2]	*Issue of improvement and emergency prohibition notices*	*Number of establishments subject to Written warnings*	*Closures (Voluntary and compulsory)*
County Councils				
Clwyd[3]	935	0	79	0
Dyfed[3]	3,019	0	3	0
Gwent[3]	1,015	0	0	0
Gwynedd	441	0	14	0
Mid Glamorgan	39	0	8	0
Powys[3]	235	0	22	0
South Glamorgan[3]	744	0	0	0
West Glamorgan	1,444	0	265	0
District Councils				
Aberconwy[3]	303	47	50	0
Alyn and Deeside	585	326	516	0
Arfon[3]	93	19	69	0
Blaenau Gwent[3]	201	89	29	0
Brecknock[3]	412	13	109	0
Cardiff City[3]	1,794	34	546	0
Carmarthen[3]	383	58	389	0
Ceredigion[3]	594	9	543	0
Colwyn[3]	402	70	99	0
Cynon Valley[3]	251	19	0	0
Delyn[3]	457	0	228	0
Dinefwr[3]	225	3	104	1
Dwyfor	150	2	68	0
Glyndwr	410	67	196	0
Islwyn	230	75	102	8
Llanelli[3]	101	25	56	1

Enforcement authority[1]	Number of inspections of food premises[2]	Issue of improvement and emergency prohibition notices	Number of establishments subject to	
			Written warnings	Closures (Voluntary and compulsory)
Lliw Valley	180	24	166	0
Meirionnydd[3]	155	28	107	0
Merthyr Tydfil[3]	169	13	137	6
Monmouth	227	50	39	1
Montgomeryshire	475	188	235	2
Neath	411	72	57	0
Newport[3]	368	66	209	0
Ogwr[3]	231	108	142	0
Port Talbot	329	11	72	0
Preseli Pembrokeshire	1,220	26	281	2
Radnor[3]	210	58	39	0
Rhondda	413	83	137	1
Rhuddlan[3]	156	24	13	0
Rhymney Valley	214	31	158	4
South Pembrokeshire[3]	144	70	23	2
Swansea[3]	396	157	262	0
Taff Ely[3]	227	74	219	0
Torfaen[3]	212	15	60	0
Vale of Glamorgan[3]	444	2	87	0
Wrexham Maelor	293	124	97	1
Ynys Môn[3]	541	61	255	1
Port health authorities[4]				
Barry[3]	23	0	0	0
Beaumaris	15	0	0	0
Caernarfon	Nil return—Arfon BC act as port health authority for Caernarfon			
Cardiff[3]	1	0	0	0
Chester[3]	Nil return			
Milford	2,186	0	11	0
Newport[3]	63	0	0	0
Swansea[3]	700	0	40	0

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[1] These statistics cover work carried out by local authorities under the Food Safety Act 1990, regulations made under it and the Official Control of Foodstuffs Directive. They exclude:

meat hygiene inspections carried out under EC veterinary legislation;
milk hygiene inspections of production plants;
inspections carried out by the Wine Standards Board under EC wine legislation.

[2] The number of food hygiene and food standards inspections covers:

inspection of premises;
inspection of equipment including cleaning and maintenance equipment;
inspection of a process or operational procedure;
inspection of the hygiene or practices of personnel;
inspection of food (including ingredients, additives and products at any stage of manufacture) or contact materials;
inspection of labels, labelling equipment and advertising matter and/or
inspection of records.

These figures exclude all other visits eg revisits to check compliance with notices, sampling visits and visits to follow up complaints.

[3] Excludes figures for first quarter of 1991. This was only required on a voluntary basis.

[4] For port health authorities this includes the number of consignments and of number of ships kitchens inspected.

Acid Rain

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the effects of acid rain deposition on wildlife habitats in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: At present, no comprehensive information is available on the effects of acid rain deposition on wildlife habitats throughout Wales. The Welsh Office is currently funding research, with the Department of the Environment and the Countryside Council for Wales, aimed at providing a better overall picture of the situation.

Departmental Meetings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* meetings with external organisations and *(b)* public hearings were conducted by his Department both within the Cardiff headquarters and externally in the latest year for which figures are available; how many requests were made for translation facilities at such meetings; and what proportion of such requests were fulfilled.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not held centrally.

Refuse Collection

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many tenders for refuse collection or street cleansing are currently *(a)* run in-house and *(b)* put out to private companies in Wales; and how many tender-holders have made pre-tax losses in the latest accounting year for which figures are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Epilepsy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average annual incidence of epilepsy due to road traffic accidents in Wales between the year 1989 and 1991; and what percentage this represents of epilepsy from all causes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not held centrally.

Special Needs Education

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average cost of special needs education per child per annum.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The average expenditure for each pupil education in maintained special schools and special education provided elsewhere than at school, is available in table 12.17 of "Statistics of Education in Wales: Schools", No. 5 1991. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

Tourism, Clwyd

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of income in Clwyd is generated by tourism.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Road Traffic Injuries

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of referrals for behaviour or emotional problems requiring the services of psychologists or psychiatrists in Wales between 1989 and 1991, resulted from injuries sustained in serious road traffic accidents.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not held centrally.

Head Injuries

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in Wales were assessed from 1980 to 1991 as having special educational needs due to severe head injuries *(a)* sustained in road traffic accidents and *(b)* from all causes after the neonatal period.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was paid in Wales annually between 1989 and 1991 in *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* mobility allowance and *(c)* carers' allowance for disabilities due to serious head injuries (i) as a result of road traffic accidents and (ii) from all causes.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not available.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made to reduce the hours junior doctors work.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest progress report on junior doctors' hours shows that, at the end of August, the number of junior doctors in Wales still working in hard pressed posts in excess of 83 hours per week has been reduced to below 5 per cent.

The Welsh task force is striving to ensure that the target date for reducing all junior doctors hours to a maximum of 83 per week by 1 April 1993 is met.

Building Industry

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are currently employed in the building industry in Wales; and what was the equivalent number in each of the past five years.

Mr. David Hunt: In June this year there were 37,000 employees employed in the construction industry. The equivalent number for each of the last five years is given in the table.

Employees in the construction industry in Wales

	Thousands[1]
1987	43
1988	44
1989	46
1990	46
1991	42

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[1] Quarterly estimate series.

Source: Employment Department.

Museums

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for central funding for the Welsh museum schools service.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am considering this in the public expenditure round but in doing so I am taking into account that five local education authorities already fund the service and the possibility of continued support from these and other sources.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what consultations he has had with the council of the National Museum of Wales regarding the rules for the generation of income from European Community research grants by the national museum and any compensatory withdrawal of grant-in-aid under additionality arrangements; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what arrangements he will make to strengthen the incentives for the National Museum of Wales to undertake European Community research projects, without loss of income generated.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Our officials have provided advice to the museum on specific queries in relation to a proposed application for European Community research funding.

The public expenditure arrangements provide scope and flexibility, within the public expenditure survey, for proper consideration of the implications for domestic expenditure of European Community research and development, for the setting of priorities and obtaining value for money. Our officials stand ready to discuss these arrangements with bodies in Wales.

Health Service

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the specialties for which the Welsh Office will be funding capital costs for the new Neath and Port Talbot hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend's statement on 29 October underlined his determination that there will be a new hospital on the site at Baglan.

The review of health services to be undertaken by West Glamorgan health authority will ensure that the scheme is consistent with the possible need for further investment, including in primary and community health services, in West Glamorgan as a whole and Neath and Port Talbot in particular.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines on the procedure to be followed by the chairmen and non-executive directors of newly-appointed national health service trusts in Wales in appointing to the post of chief executive, as regards advertising the vacancy *(a)* where a general manager is already in post, *(b)* where a trust crosses pre-existing unit or health authority boundaries and *(c)* where there is no general manager in post or where he or she is near retirement or on extended sick leave.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department has issued general guidance on the appointment of executive directors of national health service trusts. The appointment of chief executives is a matter for the chairman and non-executive directors of each trust.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the annual budgets of the training and enterprise councils in West Wales, Mid Glamorgan and Gwent in each year since their creation; and what is the percentage annual change in the central government contribution to each of these TEC budgets.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Comparative information is only available for financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93. This indicates that in the TECs concerned expenditure, budgets and percentage changes were as follows:

	1991-92 expenditure	*1992-93 budget*	*Change Per cent.*
Gwent	17,390	17,909	+2·98
Mid Glamorgan	20,039	20,561	+2·60
West Wales	29,295	27,911	−4·72

Mr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many training places at West Wales TEC, Mid Glamorgan TEC and Gwent TEC there were in each year of their operation; what are the latest current estimates; and what is the percentage year-on-year change in training places at each of those TECs.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not available in the form requested.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number and percentage rate of long-term unemployed in Wales and the valleys programme area, on a seasonally adjusted basis, for *(a)* June 1988, *(b)* June 1990 and *(c)* September 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: The number and percentage rate of long-term unemployed in Wales and the valleys programme area are not available on a seasonally adjusted basis. The following table shows unadjusted numbers and rates of those unemployed for more than 52 weeks.

	Valleys area		*Wales*	
[1]*July*	*Number*	[2]*Rate*	*Number*	[2]*Rate*
1988	12,775	5·2	47,638	3·8
1990	6,648	2·8	23,026	1·8
1992	11,765	4·8	41,456	3·2

[1] Unemployed figures by duration are produced on a quarterly basis. The months, for which data have been produced, closest to those requested are given in this table.

[2] The long-term unemployed expressed as a percentage of the total workforce.

Mr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the value of grant paid by year at constant prices and the associated job creation or job safeguarding effects for *(a)* regional development grant, *(b)* regional selective assistance and *(c)* regional enterprise grant in the valleys programme area in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. David Hunt: It is not possible to link payments of grant on a yearly basis to the number of jobs created or safeguarded over the lifetime of projects.

Payments of grant made to projects in the Valleys Programme Area since 1988-89 are as follows:

				£ million
Scheme	*1988-89*	*1989-90*[1]	*1990-91*[1]	*1991-92*[1]
RSA	14·3	9·5	7·6	13·0
RDG II	17·3	8·9	7·4	2·8
REG	0·1	0·2	0·5	0·3

[1] At 1991-92 prices.

For projects to which some payment of grant has been made the number of jobs created or safeguarded during the period 1988-89 to 1991-92 is as follows:

Scheme	*Jobs Created*	*Jobs Safeguarded*
RSA	10,861	4,301
RDG II	10,513	—

Note:—Some payments may have been made towards such projects in previous years, some may be made in subsequent years with more jobs created and safeguarded in subsequent years.

The REG scheme does not specifically require job creation.

Mr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the percentage male unemployment rate in Wales and the valleys programme area, on a seasonally adjusted basis, for *(a)* June 1988, *(b)* June 1990 and *(c)* September 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: Rates for the valleys programme area and Wales are given in the table. Seasonally adjusted unemployment rates are only available for Wales.

Male unemployment rates expressed as a percentage of the work force

	June 1988	*June 1990*	*September 1992*
Valleys[1]	17·5	12·8	18·7
Wales[1]	12·3	8·0	13·3
Wales[2]	12·1	8·3	13·5

[1] Unadjusted.
[2] Seasonally adjusted.

Ely Estate, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on a second tranche of financial assistance to Cardiff city council by way of supplementary credit approval for further housing improvements on the Ely council estate.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Decisions on this matter will be taken in due course after discussion about progress with the local authority.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his current estimate of the value of depleted uranium stockpiled at nuclear facilities operated by British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Mr. Eggar: This is a commercial matter for the owners of the material.

Ozone-depleting Substances

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of what precentage of companies in the *(a)* electronics, *(b)* precision cleaning, *(c)* metal cleaning and *(d)* dry cleaning sectors view hydrochlorofluorocarbons as the only alternative to the use of chlorofluorocarbons or methyl chloroform; and what is the current level of emissions of ozone-depleting solvents from the (i) electronics, (ii) precision cleaning, (iii) metal cleaning and (iv) dry cleaning sectors.

Mr. Eggar: Latest information on the use of CFC113 and methyl chloroform in these sectors and on the proportion of companies which are considering the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons as an alternative is contained in a report recently commissioned by my Department from Touche Ross management consultants. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House. Information on emissions of ozone-depleting substances from the sectors concerned or on companies which view hydrochlorofluorocarbons to be the only alternative is not available.

Mr. Chris S[illegible] To ask the President of the Board of Trade what position his Department has taken with regard to proposals by CEN, the European Committee for Standardisation, for a regulation on hydrocarbon refrigeration.

Mr. Eggar: The European Committee for Standardisation brings together the national standards bodies of the European Community and the European Free Trade Association countries. The British Standards Institution is the United Kingdom national member of the European Committee for Standardisation. Through its technical committee structure, the British Standards Institution acts as the main channel for the United Kingdom's input into European standards-making. The determination of the United Kingdom's position on the European Committee for Standardisation proposals concerning hydrocarbon refrigeration is therefore the responsibility of the appropriate British Standards Institution technical committee.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department has taken to promote the use of hydrocarbon refrigerants; and how much funding his Department has spent or committed to research and uptake of hydrocarbon refrigeration technology.

Mr. Eggar: Hydrocarbon refrigerants are among the alternatives to chlorofluorocarbons identified in a booklet on refrigeration and air conditioning published recently by my Department in a series entitled "Protecting the Ozone Layer and Safeguarding Your Business".

No funds have been spent on or committed specifically to the research and uptake of hydrocarbon refrigeration within the past three years. However, my Department and the Department of the Environment operate schemes of financial support for the research, development and diffusion of sound environmental technologies in general and the replacement of ozone-depleting substances is a priority area within those schemes.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department has taken to promote the use of alternatives to HCFCs in *(a)* refrigeration and air conditioning, *(b)* foams and *(c)* solvents.

Mr. Eggar: HCFCs cause less damage to the ozone layer than CFCs and their availability is enabling industry to move out of CFCs more quickly than would otherwise have been the case. However, booklets on refrigeration and air-conditioning, foam blowing and solvents published recently by my Department in the series "Protecting the Ozone Layer and Safeguarding Your Business" provide information and sources of advice on alternatives to the use of ozone-depleting chemicals in the sectors concerned.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the percentage of demand for HCFCs within the refrigeration and air conditioning industry which results from servicing, maintenance and leaks.

Mr. Eggar: None. However, the problem of loss of refrigerants resulting from servicing, maintenance and leakage is addressed in general terms in a report by March Consulting Group on "CFCs in the UK: Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Industries", commissioned recently by the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what essential uses of HCFCs his Department has defined in solvent cleaning; and what is the current and projected demand during the next 10 years of ozone-depleting substanes in solvent cleaning.

Mr. Eggar: No uses of HCFCs in solvent cleaning have yet been defined as essential for the purposes of exemption from future controls currently under discussion in the context of a review of the Montreal protocol.

The latest available forecasts of future demand for ozone-depleting substances in solvent cleaning are contained in two recent reports commissioned by my Department: figures for HCFCs are contained in a "Study of Ozone Depleting Substances" by Coopers and Lybrand; estimates for other ozone-depleting substances are contained in a report on "The Use of CFC 113 and 1,1,1 Tricholorethane as Solvents in UK Industry" by Touche Ross, management consultants. Copies of both reports have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions his Department has had with ICI and Rhône Poulenc regarding their production and export of HCFC22.

Mr. Eggar: Officials in my Department hold regular meetings with both those companies on the question of phasing out ozone-depleting chemicals. Both ICI and Rhône Poulenc are participating in international consortiums evaluating the toxicology and environmental impact of HFC32 as potential replacement for HCFC22. ICI announced KLEA32, a new ozone-benign refrigerant, on 1 July 1992.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what discussions his Department has had with Sainsbury's regarding the use of HCFCs;

(2) what discussions his Department's officials have had with United Kingdom domestic fridge manufacturers regarding the use of hydrocarbons;

(3) what discussions his Department has had with supermarkets regarding ammonia and absorption refrigeration technology.

Mr. Eggar: Officials in my Department and the Department of the Environment have regular meetings with producers and users of ozone-depleting substances. Trade associations representing the interests of supermarkets, and United Kingdom manufacturers of domestic refrigerators and the refrigeration servicing sector are represented at these meetings. The meetings aim to ensure that manufacturers and users are aware of all current and potential options for accelerating the reduction of dependency on ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research his Department has undertaken or commissioned on refrigeration systems in Sweden; and what discussions the Department has had with the Swedish authorities regarding legislation restricting the use of HCFCs in refrigeration systems.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has commissioned no research into refrigeration systems in Sweden though information on relevant technological developments in Sweden and other countries is made available to it from time to time in its regular meetings with United Kingdom producers and users of ozone-depleting substances.

The United Kingdom and Sweden are both participating in discussions on future controls on the use of HCFCs in the context of the current review of the Montreal protocol.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice his Department has given industry with regard to hydrochlorofluorocarbon phase-out dates; and what representations his Department has recieved from *(a)* industry, *(b)* trade associations and *(c)* HCFC producers regarding phase-out dates of HCFCs.

Mr. Eggar: No dates have been agreed for the phasing-out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons, but my Department has given advice to industry that HCFCs are transitional substances which are likely to be subject to control and eventual phase-out. A range of views have been received from industry, trade associations and producers of HCFCs concerning the timetable for phasing out HCFCs and discussions are continuing.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions his Department has had with German counterparts regarding hydrocarbon refrigeration technology; and if he will instruct departmental officials to visit the German company DDK Scharfenstein to investigate their domestic hydrocarbon fridge.

Mr. Eggar: It is for industry to develop the technologies to replace ozone-depleting substances and my Department and the Department of the Environment operate schemes of financial support to assist industry to do this. I understand that organisations representing producers of refrigeration equipment are aware of recent publicity concerning a domestic hydrocarbon fridge under development in Germany.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contacts his Department has made with the German company Aerotech regarding ammonia refrigeration systems.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what policy changes he will implement as a result of recent research on the use of solvents for the Department by Touche Ross.

Mr. Eggar: The report by Touche Ross was primarily intended to inform decisions on the timetable for phasing out of ozone-depleting substances which have yet to be taken. My Department will continue to advise and assist industry to switch to alternatives to ozone-depleting substances by the deadlines agreed within the European Communitty and earlier where this is practicable.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice his Department has issued to industry with regard to section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the use of ozone-depleting substances; and what particular industrial processes involving the use of ozone-depleting substances are covered by section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Eggar: My Department's advice to industry on section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is contained in a booklet on refrigeration and air conditioning published in the series "Protecting the Ozone Layer and Safeguarding Your Business". However, section 33 of the Act deals with the treatment, keeping or disposal of controlled waste. It is not specific to any particular process or processes.

Point of Ayr Colliery

Mr. Richards: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the details of the criteria on which British Coal originally decided to close Point of Ayr colliery in north Wales; and in what respects the criteria on which its future will now be assessed differ from these.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I accepted British Coal's advice that in order to meet its estimate of its potential market economically, it needed to reduce its present levels of production urgently and subsequently. We also accepted British Coal's advice as to the particular pits that should be closed. The detailed criteria used in making that decision are a matter for British Coal.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe) (Mr. Lester) on 26 October, *Official Report*, columns *522-23*, announcing the terms of reference of the review of the prospects for the 21 pits, including Point of Ayr, proposed for closure by British Coal but not subject to the statutory consultation currently being undertaken by it.

Staffing Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by grade and number employed the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and the estimate for 1992-93 for the business task force.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested for 1991-92 is as follows. No figures for 1992-93 are available: the business task forces were abolished as part of the reorganisation of the Department of Trade and Industry this summer.

Business task forces

Average cost of employing number of staff in grade (including ERNIC)

Grades	*Manpower*	*(£000)*
Grade 3	2·0	118
Grade 5	7·6	367
Grade 6	2·0	86
Grade 7	27·6	911
Senior Executive Officer	5·4	136
Senior Scientific Officer	2·8	72
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	0·6	16
Senior Examiner	0·4	16
Higher Executive Officer	25·7	528
Higher Scientific Officer	1·0	21
Executive Officer	25·0	410
Scientific Officer	2·0	34
Administrative Officer	13·4	185
Administrative Assistant	24·0	264
Senior Personal Secretary	2·0	36
Personal Secretary	8·0	116
Typist	5·0	61
Total	154·5	3,377

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by grade and number employed, the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and the estimate for 1992-93, for the manufacturing technology division.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows. The significant increase in size in 1992-93 follows the reorganisation of the Department of Trade and Industry in the summer, as a result of which the manufacturing technology division took on extra responsibilities in respect of information technology.

Average cost of employing number of staff in grade (including ERNIC)

Grade	*Manufacturing technology division 1991-92*		*Information and manufacturing technologies division 1992-93*	
	Manpower	*(£000)*	*Manpower*	*(£000)*
Grade 3	1·0	59	1·0	62
Grade 5	5·8	280	8·5	428
Grade 6	7·0	300	14·5	648
Grade 7	25·5	842	51·5	1,773
Senior executive officer	5·6	141	11·5	302
Senior scientific officer	9·4	240	14·0	373
Senior professional and technical officer	12·3	336	18·5	526
Higher executive officer	17·6	362	34·0	727
Higher professional and technical officer	0·6	14	0	0
Higher scientific officer	1·8	37	1·0	21
Executive officer	27·8	456	42·0	716
Professional and technical officer	1·0	19	1·0	20
Information officer	0·4	8	0	—
Administrative officer	19·2	265	36·0	516
Administrative assistant	17·7	194	35·0	398
Senior personal secretary	1·0	18	1·0	19
Personal secretary	10·0	144	18·0	270
Typist	1·6	19	5·0	63
Total	165·3	3,734	292·5	6,862

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by grade and number employed, the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and the estimate for 1992-93, for the telecommunications and posts division.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows. Policy responsibility for the film industry was transferred from the telecommunications and posts division to the Department of National Heritage after the general election.

Telecommunications and posts division
Average cost of employing number of staff in grade (including ERNIC)

Grade	*1991-92* *Manpower*	*£000*	*1992-93* *Manpower*	*£000*
Grade 3	1·0	59	1·0	62
Grade 4	1·0	54	1·0	56
Grade 5	4·9	237	5·0	252
Grade 6	1·0	43	1·0	45
Grade 7	17·6	581	15·3	527
Senior executive officer	1·0	25	2·0	52
Senior scientific officer	1·0	26	1·0	27
Higher executive officer	12·2	251	13·0	278
Higher professional and technical officer	1·0	23	1·0	24
Executive officer	14·4	236	13·5	230
Administrative officer	4·6	64	3·0	43
Administrative assistant	12·2	134	12·5	142
Senior personal secretary	1·0	18	1·0	19
Personal secretary	6·4	92	7·0	105
Typist	1·0	12	1·0	13
Total	80·3	1,855	78·3	1,875

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by grade and number employed, the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and the estimate for 1992-93, for the competition policy division.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows:

Average cost of employing number of staff in grade (including ERNIC)

Grade	*Competition policy division* *1991-92* *Manpower*	*(£000)*	*Manpower*	*(£000)*
Grade 3	1·0	59	1·0	62
Grade 5	3·0	145	3·3	166
Grade 6	0·6	26	1·0	45
Grade 7	10·3	340	10·5	361
Senior executive officer	1·2	30	1·0	26
Higher executive officer	6·4	131	7·0	150
Executive officer	4·0	66	4·5	77
Administrative officer	2·6	36	2·0	29
Administrative assistant	6·6	73	7·0	80
Senior personal secretary	1·6	29	2·0	37
Personal secretary	3·4	49	2·0	30
Typist	1·0	12	2·0	25
Total	41·7	996	43·3	1,088

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by grade and number employed the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and the estimate for 1992-93 for the companies investigation branch.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows:

Companies investigation branch
Average cost of employing number of staff in grade (including ERNIC)

Grade	*1991-92* *Manpower*	*(£000)*	*1992-93* *Manpower*	*(£000)*
Grade 4	1·0	55	1·0	56
Grade 5	2·0	97	2·0	101
Grade 6	3·0	129	3·0	134
Grade 7	4·0	132	5·0	172
Insolvency Grade A	3·0	139	3·0	145
Insolvency Grade B	13·0	471	15·0	567
Insolvency Grade C	25·0	700	24·5	714
Insolvency Grade D	3·0	70	3·0	73
Investigation Officer	2·0	41	1·0	21
Senior Executive Officer	2·0	50	3·0	79
Higher Executive Officer	1·5	31	1·5	32
Executive Officer	5·0	82	5·0	85
Administrative Officer	10·0	143	12·0	172
Administrative Assistant	5·0	55	5·0	57
Personal Secretary	6·0	87	6·0	90
Typist	1·0	12	1·0	13

Grade	1991-92 Manpower	1991-92 (£000)	1992-93 Manpower	1992-93 (£000)
Total	86·5	2,342	91·0	2,511

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by grade and number employed, the staffing costs for the year 1991-92 and the estimate for 1992-93, for the insurance division.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows.

Insurance division

Average cost of employing number of staff in grade (including ERNIC)

Grade	1991-92 Manpower	1991-92 (£000)	1992-93 Manpower	1992-93 (£000)
Grade 3	1·0	59	1·0	62
Grade 5	4·1	198	3·5	176
Grade 6	1·0	43	1·0	45
Grade 7	13·3	439	13·5	465
Senior executive officer	2·4	60	2·5	65
Higher executive officer	19·1	392	26·5	567
Executive officer	26·2	430	24·0	409
Librarian	0·2	4	0	0
Administrative officer	13·6	188	11·0	158
Administrative assistant	10·2	112	10·5	119
Senior personal secretary	0·2	4	1·0	19
Personal secretary	4·2	61	3·0	45
Typist	0·4	5	1·0	13
Total	95·9	1,995	98·5	2,143

Power Generation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether power is still being generated for supply to the national grid on the basis of merit order of power stations based on generating cost; and whether he will publish the most recent list of power stations by that merit order, together with their generating capacity, power produced and fuel consumption.

Mr. Eggar: The National Grid Company is required by its transmission licence to schedule and dispatch plant in accordance with a bid price merit order system, under which generators submit price bids for their stations daily and the cheapest plant bid is used first, within the technical constraints of the transmission and distribution system. Price bids are a matter for the generators. Daily information on bid prices and capacity available is not published but may be obtained from National Grid Company Settlements Ltd. Figures for power produced and fuel consumption are commercially confidential.

Coal Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by date the meetings he, Ministers or officials of his Department, have had with external bodies or expert consultants on the coal industry since 15 April.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: My right hon. Friend and I, and our officials, have had numerous meetings with external bodies and expert consultants on the coal industry since 15 April.

Nuclear Materials Review Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what submissions on physical protection, inventory control and enhanced security were put forward by Her Majesty's Government to the review conference on the physical protection on nuclear materials held between 29 September and 1 October; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of the review conference.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: The Government's aim at the review conference was to ensure that the high standards of physical protection required by the convention on the physical protection of nuclear material were maintained and to urge states which had not already done so to accede to the convention.

The conference endorsed the important role of the convention in providing an international framework for the physical protection of nuclear material. I am placing a copy of the final statement of the conference in the Library of the House.

EC Coal Subsidy

Ms. Quin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last had discussions with Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan about the differing levels of subsidy on coal production in the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 November 1992]*: My right hon. Friend and I meet both Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan and Commissioner Cardoso from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Energy Select Committee

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 29 October, *Official Report*, cols. 784-85, to the hon. Member for Newham, South concerning availability of his reply to the Fourth Report of the Select Committee on Energy 1991-92 (HC 113), by what means his memorandum, and that of the Director General of Electricity Supply, were released to the press; and if he will list the names of journals to which it was sent without a request.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* My Department's memorandum was circulated using our standard method of distribution for press notices, which covers around 450 newspapers, journals, media and other companies and individuals. The Office of Electricity Regulation circulated its press release to its standard distribution list of more than 500 newspapers and other contacts, and sent a copy of the director general's memorandum to the majority of press and media contacts.

Gas Reserves

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the reserves of gas which he has estimated will meet Britain's requirements have yet to be proved; and what proportion he estimates will come from smaller fields than those which currently provide supplies to the home market.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* My Department's latest estimates of United Kingdom gas reserves were published in the Brown Book—"Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom"—in April 1992. About 37 per cent. of the total are reserves which have yet to be proved by drilling. Reserves in future fields will fall within a wide range, but it is not expected that any will compare in size with the largest fields currently supplying the United Kingdom market.

Pit Closures

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many representations he has received in the last three months from businesses wishing *(a)* to reopen closed pits in Wales and *(b)* to maintain existing pits under new management; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* My Department has not received any representations in the last three months from businesses wishing to reopen closed pits in Wales. It has received a number of representations in relation to taking over existing pits in Wales for operation under new management.

Expressions of interest in pits are a matter for British Coal, which has a duty to consider carefully applications from responsible organisations seeking licences to mine.

DEFENCE

Reserve Forces

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to use members of the reserve forces in support of current operations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence reported to the House by notice last month the call-out of a small number of willing officers of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve to support current operations.

A further need for specialist support available only from the reserve forces has now become apparent, and a number of individuals from the Territorial Army's intelligence and security group (volunteers) have offered to serve on duties in the United Kingdom. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made the Queen's order required by section 12(1) of the Reserve Forces Act, 1980, and has formally called them out under section 11(1) of the Act.

A number of officers of the Royal Naval Reserve have also volunteered to serve, and they are being called up under the provisions of an Order in Council made in May 1982.

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each executive agency and defence support agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to my Department's executive agencies under their framework documents. I have therefore asked each chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. C. R. Hunt to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 5 November 1992:

I am responding to your written parliamentary question, "to ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each executive agency and defence support agency for which he is responsible."

The answer is as follows:

The number of staff in each grade is given in the table attached. The staff cost (including superannuation) was £59·4 million in 1991-92 and is expected to be £62·9 million in 1992-93.

Meteorological office staff numbers

Grade	*Average 1991-92*	*Estimated Average 1992-93*
2	1	1
3	1	1
4	2	2
5	9	9
6	28	31
7	137	142
Senior Scientific Officer	338	355
Higher Scientific Officer	449	458
Scientific Officer	475	486
Assistant Scientific Officer	542	506
Senior Telecommunications Technical Officer	7	8
Higher Telecommunications Technical Officer	35	36
Telecommunications Technical Officer	47	47
Assistant Telecommunications Technical Officer	33	36
Senior Professional and Technology Officer	5	6
Higher Professional and Technology Officer	20	21
Professional and Technology Officer	6	7
Senior Executive Officer	5	5
Higher Executive Officer	11	12
Executive Officer	26	30
Adminstrative Officer	81	90
Administrative Assistant	45	50
Clerical/Support	122	114

Grade	*Average 1991-92*	*Estimated Average 1992-93*
Industrial	32	28
Locally Entered Overseas	42	39
	2,499	2,520

Letter from J. A. R. Chisholm to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 5 November 1992:

In today's written answer the Under Secretary of State for Defence informed you that, as Chief Executive of the Defence Research Agency, I would be replying directly to your question concerning numbers and costs of staff in Executive Agencies.

The number of personnel employed by DRA on 1 April 1991 was 12,027 and the total staff costs for 1991-92 were £206 million. On 1 April 1992 total personnel numbered 11,187 for whom the costs in 1992-93 will be £211 million. Staff numbers as at 1 October 1992 are 11,267. This number will reduce slightly by the end of the year as a result of my recently announced voluntary redundancy scheme.

My colleague Roger Warren wrote to you on my behalf in July listing the DRA staffing levels by grade as at 1 April 1992. I have repeated that information below for your convenience. I am afraid a breakdown by grade is not available for 1 April 1991.

	Numbers
Non industrial staff	
Grade 2	1
Grade 3	8
Grade 4	6
Grade 5	40
Grade 6	197
Grade 7	857
SSO/SPTO/SEO	1,285
HSO/HPTO/HEO	1,558
SO/PTO/EO	1,501
ASO/AO/AA/Sec	1,160
Others	894
Sub Total	7,507
Industrial staff	
Craft	2,047
Non-craft	1,443
Sub Total	3,490
Military staff	
All ranks	190
Total	11,187

I hope you find this information helpful.

Letter from Colonel G. H. Wilson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

I refer to your parliamentary question, received on 29 October, which asked the Secretary of State for Defence to list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for each Executive Agency for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93.

The Duke of York's Royal Military School was established as an Executive Agency of the MOD on 1st April 1992. Attached are staff numbers and costs for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93.

Pay costs by grade

	1991-92				*1992-93*			
	Strength in grade	*Pay/allotment/ OT/ERNIC £*	*Superannuation £*	*Total £*	*Strength in grade*	*Pay/allotment/ OT/ERNIC £*	*Superannuation £*	*Total £*
Military								
Col/Lt. Col	1	44,080	12,649	56,729	1	46,105	12,811	58,916
Non-Industrial								
Deputy Head	2	65,447	4,287	69,734	2	73,822	5,484	79,306
Teacher	46	1,133,407	68,046	1,201,453	47	1,297,338	86,490	1,383,828
Bursar	0	—	—	—	1	26,104	4,109	30,213
RO2	1	15,892	2,518	18,410	1	17,229	2,731	19,960
Doctor/Medical/ Consultant	1	36,660	5,785	42,445	0·5	12,888	1,612	14,500
EO	1	15,208	2,409	17,617	1	15,854	2,511	18,365
Librarian	1	22,100	3,508	25,608	0·3	6,981	1,110	8,091
HIO	1	16,918	2,680	19,598	1	18,083	2,867	20,950
IO 1	3	46,238	7,333	53,571	3	49,195	7,794	56,989
IO 2	0·5	11,165	1,764	12,929	0·5	11,640	1,839	13,479
Admin Officer	2	22,209	3,511	25,720	2·5	28,952	4,590	33,542
Typist	3	34,082	5,387	39,469	3	32,139	5,100	37,239
SOG(C)	1	16,097	2,551	18,648	1	16,897	2,678	19,575
PIGS(E)	1	13,608	2,154	15,762	1	14,284	2,261	16,545
SG(1)	1	9,866	1,584	11,450	1	10,807	1,706	12,513
School Nurse	2	28,926	969	29,895	2	39,383	1,336	40,719
House Matron	10	97,387	15,502	112,889	10	104,792	16,692	121,484
Industrial								
Senior Store Keeper	1	8,315	1,255	9,570	1	8,718	1,313	10,031
Store Keeper	1	8,038	1,213	9,251	1	8,437	1,272	9,709
L/H Lab	1	7,743	1,179	8,922	1	8,298	1,250	9,548
Labourer	2	17,087	2,275	19,362	2	17,976	2,396	20,372
Housemaid	8	68,392	10,324	78,716	8	71,898	10,875	82,773
Wardmaid	1	8,494	1,137	9,631	1	7,958	1,198	9,156
Exp Wkr (1)	1	8,803	1,329	10,132	1	8,989	1,355	10,344
Exp Wkr (3)	2	16,007	2,416	18,423	2	16,894	2,543	19,437
Exp Wkr (5)	0·5	5,796	875	6,671	0·5	6,030	922	6,952
Caretaker	1	7,536	1,137	8,673	1	7,958	1,198	9,156
Steward (1)	0·5	5,969	902	6,871	0·5	6,192	946	7,138

	1991-92				1992-93			
	Strength in grade	Pay/allotment/ OT/ERNIC £	Superannuation £	Total £	Strength in grade	Pay/allotment/ OT/ERNIC £	Superannuation £	Total £
Swim Bath Att	1	8,200	1,198	9,398	1	8,372	1,261	9,633
Totals	97·5	1,799,670	167,877	1,967,547	98·8	2,000,213	190,250	2,190,463

Letter from Mr. J. D. Hankinson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 November 1992:

I have been asked to write to you in answer to your Parliamentary Question.

Date of Order Paper: 28 October 1992

"31. Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible."

***Answer:* This School has been an Executive Agency since April 1st, 1992, hence it is appropriate to provide the estimated figures for 1992-93. They are as follows:**

Queen Victoria School: Estimated staff and their costs, 1992-93

Grade	Number	Basic pay	ERNIC	Overtime	Superannuation	Total
Senior management team	5·5	160,589	14,004	2,500	14,326	191,419
Teaching and instructional staff	28·0	648,923	49,365	—	52,965	751,253
Support staff NI	20·5	202,034	14,091	22,018	30,247	268,390
I	13·0	121,627	7,614	5,226	15,222	149,689
	67·0	1,133,173	85,074	29,744	112,760	1,360,751

I trust this answer is helpful. Further instructions can be supplied if required.

Letter from Rear Admiral J. A. L. Myres to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 November 1992:

Hydrographic Office DSA—Parliamentary question

You recently asked the Secretary of State for Defence to list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each Executive Agency and Defence Support Agency for which he is responsible. The Minister has asked me, as Chief Executive, to reply in respect of the Hydrographic Office Defence Support Agency.

The information you requested is at the Annex. I hope this is helpful.

The information has been placed in the Library.

Letter from I. S. Mitchelson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence in which you asked him to list by grade, the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each Executive Agency and Defence Support Agency for which he is responsible.

I attach a table which sets out the information you requested, in relation to SCS (NWE).

If you require further information or feel that I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Grade	Financial year 1991-92 Numbers in post	Financial year 1992-93 Numbers in post
Administrative staff		
Chief Executive	1	1
Deputy Chief Executive	1	1
Other UK based Civilians	4·2	8
Total cost	£240K	£364K
Professional support staff		
Chief Inspector Adviser	1	1
Principal Educational Psychologist	1	1
Senior Careers Adviser	1	1
Senior Inspection Adviser	0	2·75
SO2 (Education)-Major	1	0
Inspector Adviser	8	5·8
Advisory Teachers	12·8	14·7
Educational Psychologists	5·8	6·4
Senior Social Workers	3	3·4
Careers Advisers	3	3
Staff Development Officers	3	3
Total cost	£1,197K	£1,298K
Educational staff		
Headteachers	84	77·7
Deputy Headteachers	78·1	75·4
UK based Assistant Teachers	817·9	800·2
UK based Support	10·8	11
Total cost	£26,588K	£28,798K
Locally employed civilians		
Teachers	286·9	278·8
Other Grades[1]	946·3	962·4
Total cost	£13,762K	£13,813K

[1] This category includes miscellaneous support staff such as cooks, cleaners, secretaries etc.

Letter from D. R. French to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

MAINTENANCE GROUP DEFENCE SUPPORT AGENCY

1. In response to Parliamentary Question 7256F, seeking the numbers of staff making up the subject Agency and their costs for financial year 1991-92 as well as the estimated figures for this financial year, you are advised that the outturn cost for the Service element in financial year 1991-92 was £126 million with the estimate for this financial year being £123 million. For the civilian element the outturn cost for financial year 1991-92 was £80 million and the estimate for this year is currently £84 million.

2. Please find at Annexes A and B the required detailed breakdown by rank/grade and number.

Annex:

A. Numbers of Service Staff for 1991-92 and Estimated Figures for 1992-93.

B. Number of Civilian Staff for 1991-92 and Estimated Figures for 1992-93.

The details have been placed in the Library.

Letter from M. J. Dymond to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 5 November 1992:

You asked the Secretary of State for Defence for details of the number of staff in each grade and their costs in 1991-92 and 1992-93 for each MOD executive agency. As Chief Executive of DGDA I have been asked to reply for my Agency. The table at Annex A (attached) sets out the information requested.

DGDA staff numbers

Grade	*Actual average 1991-92*	*Forecast average 1992-93*
United Kingdom non-industrial staff	*Numbers*	*Numbers*
Open Structure Grade 4	1	1
Open Structure Grade 5	3	3
Open Structure Grade 6	9	9
Open Structure Grade 7	15	15
Senior Executive Officer	53	52
Higher Executive Officer	176	165
Executive Officer	447	427
Senior Personal Secretary	1	1
Administrative Officer	1,023	1,006
Administrative Assistant	325	319
Typing Manager	2	4
Personal Secretary	2	3
Typist	10	29
Support Grade 1	12	12
Support Grade 2	46	52
Support Manager 2		2
Support Manager 3	1	3
Total United Kingdom non-industrial staff	2,126	2,103
United Kingdom industrial staff	7	8
Locally entered personnel	9	9
Total non-industrial staff	2,142	2,120
	Actual costs £000	*Forecast outturn £000*
Total staff costs (includes pensions and gratuity liability)	31,464	33,710

Letter from Dr. Graham S. Pearson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 5 November 1992:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their costs for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each Executive Agency and Defence Support Agency has been passed to me for reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The number of staff in post at the end of 1991-92 and their salary/wage costs for that year were 603 and £10·08M respectively; a grade breakdown is provided in the Annex.

3. Our staff target for 1992-93 is 639½ and the estimated cost of their salary/wage costs in this year is £11·31M; a grade breakdown is also in the Annex. The difference in staff in this year numbers arises from a number of vacancies on 1 April 1992 and from additional repayment work being undertaken by this Establishment.

Chemical and biological defence establishment

Grade (a)	*1991-92 End of year strength* (b)	*1992-93 Target* (c)
Non-industrial staff		
Defence science group	260·5	282·0
Medical officers (research)	5·0	7·0
Veterinary officers	1·0	1·0
Defence engineering service	19·0	21·0
Professional photographical class	7·0	8·0
Process and general supervisory	15·0	16·0
Officer support grades	6·0	6·0
Graphics officer class	2·0	2·0
Occupational health nurses	—	3·0
Administration class	64·0	61·0
Secretarial class	12·0	12·0
Stores officer	3·0	3·0
Retired officers	3·0	3·0
Librarian class	1·0	1·0
Investigating officer	1·0	1·0
Fire service officer	1·0	1·0
Total non-industrials	400·5	428·5
Service officers	13·0	12·0
Other ranks	7·0	7·0
Total service staff	20·0	19·0
Industrial staff		
Craft grades	26·0	27·0
Non-craft grades	156·5	165·0
Total industrial	182·5	192·0
Total staff	603·0	639·5

Letter from Major General R. Wood to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

Reply to Parliamentary Question 7256F

Details of Military Survey DSA staff numbers and costs for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are attached.

The details have been placed in the Library.

Letter from Captain D. E. Symonds to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 5 November 1992:

The response to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence concerning a listing by grade of the numbers and costs of staff employed in the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation (NARO) DSA, is shown at the Annex to this letter.

NARO DSA Numbers and cost

Non industrial grades	*1991-92 Numbers*	*1991-92 Cost £*	*1992-93 Numbers*	*1992-93 Cost £*
Unified Grade 7	4	115,781	4	120,607
Senior Executive Officer	2	71,123	2	50,778
Higher Executive Officer	10	168,768	10	186,668
Executive Officer	12	190,232	12	268,531
Administrative Officer	59	637,628	57	680,919
Administrative Assistant	39	211,779	36	233,640
Personal Secretary	1	12,262	1	12,691
Typist	9	94,644	9	93,707
Senior Professional Technical Officer	16	389,141	16	426,713

Non industrial grades	*1991-92 Numbers*	*1991-92 Cost £*	*1992-93 Numbers*	*1992-93 Cost £*
Higher Professional Technical Officer	51	1,141,447	45	1,164,847
Professional Technical Officer	260	4,772,213	241	4,734,241
Stores Officer Grade 'B'	1	22,651	1	23,670
Stores Officer Grade 'C'	4	69,963	4	88,229
Stores Officer Grade 'D'	16	273,354	16	272,160
Instructional Officer	1	16,565	1	17,458
Support Grade 1	4	43,815	4	45,871
Support Grade 2	2	16,200	2	16,378
Processing & General Supervisory Grade 'C'	1	2,648	1	17,000
Processing & General Supervisory Grade 'D'	2	39,620	2	30,349
Processing & General Supervisory Grade 'E'	1	35,377	1	21,838
Communications Officer 3	1	16,699	1	21,776
Communications Officer 4	3	31,686	3	32,804
Senior Photographer	1	18,142	1	18,531
Total Non Industrial	500	8.193,801	470	8,578,686
Craft	651	9,218,268	626	8,955,819
Non Craft	325	3,790,171	308	3,735,192
Apprentices	152	1,036,890	147	1,104,014
Total Industrial	1,128	13,814,523	1,081	13,795,025
Total Civilian Staff	1,628	22,008,324	1,551	22,373,711
Captain RN	1	43,626	1	47,163
Commander	3	123,559	3	133,577
Lieutenant Commander	5	147,349	4	127,437
Lieutenant RN	1	23,352	1	25,245
Captain Army	1	25,206	1	27,250
Chief Petty Officer	1	28,224	—	—
Total Military	12	391,315	10	360,672
Grand Total	1,640	22,399,639	1,561	22,734,383

Letter from Mr. P. Altobell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 November 1992:

Minister of State (DP) asked me to write to you about my Agency staff numbers and their costs.

I have provided this information in the attached table. However, because of restructuring, we do not have a complete record of our costs on a compatible basis before we became an Agency in July 1992. In consequence the cost figures for both 1991-92 and 1992-93 are estimates, and I have therefore rounded the figures to the nearest £10,000.

Defence Analytical services Agency
Staff numbers and costs 1991 to 1993

	Number of staff in full-time equivalents			*Estimated staff costs in £'000*	
	1 April 1991	*1992*	*1993*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Grade 4	1·0	1·0	1·0	50	60
Grade 5	2·0	2·0	2·0	90	100
Grade 6	1·0	2·0	2·0	40	80
Grade 7	21·0	19·5	17·0	680	660
Senior/Assistant Statistician	6·0	6·0	6·0	100	100
Senior Executive Officer	2·0	2·0	3·0	50	60
Higher Executive Officer	21·0	20·0	18·0	400	440
Executive Officer	45·0	45·0	43·0	750	780
Administrative Officer	35·5	33·5	31·5	430	430
Administrative Assistant	8·5	7·0	7·5	80	70
Personal Assistant	3·0	2·0	2·0	40	30
Higher Scientific Officer	1·0	1·0	0	20	20
Warrant Officer (RAF)	1·0	1·0	1·0	20	30
College Based Sandwich Course Student	8·0	4·0	10·0	60	70
Totals	156·0	146·0	144·0	2,810	2,930

Note:—Staff costs comprise basic salary plus Earnings Related National Insurance Contributions (ERNIC).

Letter from D. Leadbeater to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

In his reply of 5th November, the Secretary of State for Defence referred to agency chief executives the question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each executive agency and defence support agency for which he is responsible.

The Defence Operational Analysis Centre was formed as a Defence Support Agency on 1 July 1992; so a comparison of numbers within the agency over the two years is not possible.

Notwithstanding the above limitation on the use of manpower numbers, I can tell you the numbers by grade and costs for year 1991-92 prior to agency status and my projections for year 1992-93 as follows:

Rank/Grade	*Average Actual Number 1991-92*	*Estimated Number 1992-93*
Scientific Staff		
Grade 4	1·0	1·0
Grade 5	2·0	2·0
Grade 6	8·0	8·0
Grade 7	20·3	19·5
SSO	15·9	16·0
HSO	14·0	16·0
SO	8·5	7·0
ASO	4·2	3·0
Services		
Captain RN	0·9	1·0
Commander RN	1·0	1·0
Lieutenant Commander RN	2·0	2·0
Lieutenant WRNS	0·3	—
Colonel (Army)	1·0	1·0
Lieutenant Colonel (Army)	3·7	2·0
Major (Army)	12·0	11·0
Group Captain (RAF)	1·0	1·0
Wing Commander (RAF)	3·0	2·0
Squadron Leader (RAF)	—	—
Support Staff (Non-Industrial)		
Grade 7	1·0	1·0
SEO	—	1·0
HEO	4·0	4·0
EO	3·7	4·0
AO	12·3	13·0
AA	7·8	7·5
SPS	1·0	1·0
PS	3·0	3·0
TM	1·0	1·0
Typist	2·2	2·0
EO/ADP	2·0	2·0
AO/ADP	2·9	3·0
AA/ADP	1·0	3·0
S/Lib	1·0	1·0
Assistant Lib	1·0	1·0
TG1	1·0	1·0
SG1	1·0	1·0
SG2	1·0	1·0
P Photo	2·0	2·0
HPTO	2·0	2·0
PTO	—	1·0
Civilian Staff Total Numbers	148·1	150·0
Cash Costs	2,937K	[1]31,678K
Service Staff Total Numbers	30·8	27·0
Cash Costs	1,326K	[2]1,250K
Total Staff Numbers	178·9	177·0
Cash Costs	4,263K	4,418K

[1] Costs include basis pay, ERNIC and allowances

[2] Costs include basic pay, ERNIC and overtime

Letter from Brigadier M. A. Browne to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 5 November 1992:

In response to your question of the Secretary of State for Defence concerning staff numbers by grade and costs for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency and defence support agency I am replying in respect of the Defence Postal and Courier Service—Defence Support Agency as Chief Executive.

The staff figures for 1991-92 are the average strength in each grade for the year and the associated costs are the actual outturn figures.

Those for 1992-93 are the estimated average strength for the year and the costs are my forecast as at 31 September 1992.

Grade/Rank	*Staff numbers*		*Costs*	
	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £
MILITARY				
Brigadier	1·00	1·00	49,193	55,140
Colonel	2·00	2·00	81,687	93,622
Lieutenant Colonel	3·00	2·40	104,252	96,507
Major	8·00	8·25	223,849	265,183
Captain	7·00	7·00	157,958	192,427
Lieutenant	1·50	1·00	33,848	26,268
Warrant Officer 1	6·00	4·75	161,887	128,532
Warrant Officer 2	10·00	12·58	220,755	253,899
Staff Sergeant	10·00	9·00	216,667	203,912
Sergeant	30·00	33·70	625,472	687,164
Corporal	69·50	53·42	1,136,479	831,653
Lance Corporal	53·00	52·00	715,001	707,354
Private	99·50	70·50	924,923	680,837
Total Military	291·50	257·60	4,651,971	4,222,498
CIVILIAN				
Non Industrial				
Grade 7	1·00	1·00	34,161	34,572
HEO	3·00	3·00	59,782	62,136
EO	4·50	4·40	77,411	96,107
AO	15·50	18·73	179,894	237,034
AA	7·50	9·00	71,443	90,100
Personal Secretary	1·00	1·00	14,474	15,289
Typist	4·00	4·00	44,788	54,030
Support Grade 1	33·00	31·22	306,614	415,371
Support Grade 2	119·00	112·70	1,307,080	1,444,576
Support Manager 2	1·00	1·00	16,324	16,358
Support Manager 3	2·00	2·04	26,010	36,132
Defence Couriers	39·50	36·30	627,677	643,962

Grade/Rank	*Staff numbers* 1991-92	1992-93	*Costs* 1991-92 £	1992-93 £
Industrial				
Chief Steward 1	2·00	2·00	20,148	24,638
Steward 1	2·00	2·00	19,115	20,564
Steward 2	2·00	1·15	18,598	11,459
Mess Hand	11·75	11·59	109,264	122,139
Senior Storekeeper	0·50	—	4,823	—
Storekeeper	2·00	2·41	17,737	20,987
Assistant Storekeeper	0·50	—	4,305	—
Driver	1·00	1·00	8,610	10,438
Labourer	—	2·00	18,598	21,535
Total Civilian	252·75	246·47	3,066,771	3,047,427

I hope this information meets your requirements and is helpful in building the overall picture for staffing and costs for Ministry of Defence executive and defence support agencies.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is not held centrally and could not be compiled without disproportionate cost and effort.

Plutonium

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to seek amendment of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to make the stockpiling of weapon-ready plutonium illegal for signatory members.

Mr. Aitken: It is our policy to seek an indefinite extension to the non-proliferation treaty, without amendment.

Naval Emergency Monitoring Organisation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role and function of the Naval Emergency Monitoring Organisation; what is its annual budget; how many personnel are assigned to it; in what year it was first established; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The role of the Naval Emergency Monitoring Organisation is to provide rapid and effective monitoring advice in the event of a defence radiological incident. It was established in 1961 and currently consists of around 40 full-time and 60 part-time personnel. Because the constituent teams are integrated into other MOD and naval establishments, a full cost breakdown is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Submarines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what agreements exist covering the use of extremely low frequency radio transmitters in the United States of America for the purpose of communicating with Royal Navy submarines; and what plans he has to negotiate an agreement for the use of extremely low frequency radio transmitters in the United States of America for the purpose of communicating with Royal Navy submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no such agreements with the United States and no plans to negotiate any.

RAF Jets (50th Anniversary)

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what ways the forthcoming 50th anniversary of the introduction of jet aircraft to the RAF will be commemorated.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently no plans to commemorate this anniversary.

Scottish Regiments

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received since 9 April about the proposed amalgamation of Scottish regiments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since 9 April this year, my Department has received some 40 letters which were primarily about the amalgamation of Scottish regiments.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each local government region the number of rescues carried out by search and rescue crews from RAF Leuchars in each of the years *(a)* 1987, *(b)* 1988, *(c)* 1989, *(d)* 1990, *(e)* 1991 and *(f)* 1992 to date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Statistical data are not recorded in the form required.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on how many occasions in each year between 1 January 1987 and 31 December 1991 search and rescue helicopters from RAF Leuchars have been involved in operations which required them to begin or to continue flying during the hours of darkness;

(2) on how many occasions since 1 January search and rescue helicopters from RAF Leuchars have been involved in operations which required them to begin or to continue flying during the hours of darkness.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of such operations is:

	Number
1987	32
1988	33
1989	21
1990	13
1991	19
[1]1992	15

[1] Between 1 January and 31 August 1992.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current mandatory training requirements for night flying airmen which are applicable to search and rescue crews based at RAF Leuchars.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Each crew member should complete a minimum of two hours of night flying per month, which includes navigation training, cliff winching training, mountain training and approaches to night landing sites. Crews at RAF Leuchars are exempt from these requirements during the months of May, June and July provided they complete a minimum of one hour of night flying during the previous two calendar months.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many rescue missions have been flown by search and rescue aircraft from RAF Leuchars in the years *(a)* 1987, *(b)* 1988, *(c)* 1989, *(d)* 1990 and *(e)* 1991; how many of them have involved the rescue of civilians; and how many have involved the rescue of military personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The table details the to[illegible] number of rescues—including incidents such as the transfer of sick or injured people from ship to hospital —carried out by the Wessex search-and-rescue flight at RAF Leuchars in the years in question:

year	*Military callouts*	*Civilian callouts*	*Total callouts*
1987	2	47	49
1988	3	57	60
1989	7	38	45
1990	2	38	40
1991	—	66	66

Equipment Exhibition

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the Royal Navy and British army equipment exhibition will be held; and on which days it will be open to *(a)* overseas customers, *(b)* the press and *(c)* the public.

Mr. Aitken: The Royal Navy and British army equipment exhibition will be held in Aldershot from 5 to 10 September 1993. The exhibition will be open to overseas visitors from 6 to 10 September, to the national press on 5 September only, and to the technical press for the whole week. The exhibition will not be open to the public.

Defence Research Agency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions the Defence Research Agency's premises in Dyfed have been used for development or test firing of the RA[illegible]O multiple launch rocket system.

Mr. Aitken: Management of the Aberporth range was transferred from the Defence Research Agency to the newly formed Directorate General of Test and Evaluation on 1 April 1992. For reasons of commercial confidentiality we do not release details of individual test firings by manufacturers at Aberporth or any of our ranges.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all those countries that have used the DRA's facilities at Aberporth in Dyfed in the past five years.

Mr. Aitken: Three countries have used the Aberporth range's facilities directly during the past five years: Germany, the Netherlands and the USA. In addition, in 1988, the RAF's central tactics and trials organisation sponsored a major NATO trial involving aircraft from the following NATO countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain and the USA. We cannot, for reasons of commercial confidentiality, release details of trials in which the range's customer was United Kingdom industry but sales, or potential sales, to foreign countries were involved.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all accidents involving airborne missiles that have occurred at the DRA facility in Aberporth, Dyfed since 1979 indicating the country of origin of the missiles involved.

Mr. Aitken: There have been no such incidents.

General Pinochet

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the visit by General Pinochet of Chile to Government property in Britain in 1991.

Mr. Aitken: The general did not visit Government property.

Aviation Industry

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 24 September regarding the aviation industry.

Mr. Aitken: I replied to the hon. Member's letter—which was passed to me by the Department of Trade and Industry—on 3 November.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 6 November 1992

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the publication dates of *(a)* the citizens charter White Paper, Cm 1599, and *(b)* the tape recorded version for partially sighted people.

Mr. Jackson: The citizens charter White Paper (Cm 1599) was published on 22 July 1991 and the audio version on 18 November 1991.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the salaries of the executive directors of Her Majesty's Stationery Office at the present time and 18 months ago; and what proportion of their present salaries is in the form of performance-related pay.

Mr. Waldegrave: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to HMSO under its chief executive. I have asked him to write to the hon. Member direct.

Letter from Paul Freeman to Mr. John Garrett, dated 3 November 1992:

I have been asked to reply to your Question to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about the salaries of HMSO's executive directors.

The remuneration arrangements for HMSO's directors are exactly the same as for other staff. Jobs are assigned to a pay band by means of an analytical job evaluation system. Progression within the pay band is dependent on performance, and performance pay is not separately identifiable. Details of the relevant pay bands are as follows:

Pay band	*April 1991* £	*Now* £
14	27,856—36,549	29,165—38,267
15	30,748—40,343	32,193—42,239
16	33,940—44,532	35,536—46,625
17	35,658—46,786	37,334—48,985
18	37,469—49,155	39,224—51,465

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Forged Banknotes

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee whether he will arrange for an ultraviolet monitoring machine to be made available in the House of Commons Members' post office to protect hon. Members against receiving forged banknotes.

Mr. Martin: There is no evidence of sufficient demand to justify this provision.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Battery Cages

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the main findings of the EC scientific veterinary committee report on hen welfare; and if he will make it his policy to advocate the phasing out of battery cages.

Mr. Soames: We await the official publication of the scientific veterinary committee's report, together with the Commission's proposals for revision of the battery hens directive and new welfare standards for hens kept in alternative systems.

It is already the Government's policy that the current battery cage design, in which only feeding and drinking facilities are provided, must be phased out on a Community basis.

Farms (Pollution Control)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are currently available to assist family farms with the costs of fulfilling pollution control requirements.

Mr. Curry: Since the farm and conservation grant scheme was introduced in 1989, £88 million has been spent on grants to help United Kingdom farmers meet the costs of installing or improving waste handling facilities. Free initial advice on pollution control is available to farmers from the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, the Scottish Agricultural College and the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture.

In addition, the Ministry is carrying out a pilot study to see if farmers can help to reduce pollution themselves by drawing up their own farm waste management plans.

Agricultural Support

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out, for each system of agricultural support which will be effective next year, the total estimated cost, the likely quantities involved and also the split in costs between the common agricultural policy and United Kingdom public funds.

Mr. Curry: Details of estimates for the years 1992-93 to 1994-95 were provided in the departmental report by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Intervention Board. This report was presented to Parliament in February 1992 and a copy was placed in the Library. Details are not readily available of the likely quantities involved in each of the support systems and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Milk Hygiene

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what charges are being set for milk hygiene enforcement work for 1992-93.

Mr. Curry: Following consultation with interested parties the Government have today laid before Parliament regulations maintaining the current charge for milk hygiene inspection visits and increasing the charge for visits for sampling and testing of untreated milk undertaken by ADAS. The new charge will come into force on 27 November 1992.

The Milk and Dairies and Milk (Special Designation) (Charges) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 will increase the charge for sampling and testing visits from £47 to £63. This increase is necessary to assist the Government in meeting its ultimate objective of recovering the full costs of milk hygiene enforcement work. The charge for milk hygiene inspection visits will remain unchanged at £92—£71 for producers with fewer than 20 cows—as will the present exemptions from charges for pre-registration inspection visits, for farmhouse caterers and for suppliers in remote areas.

The current milk hygiene enforcement programme will be reviewed in the context of the arrangements that are being made to implement the new EC milk hygiene directive by 1 January 1994. The review will include an examination of the possibility of contracting out the work.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Poll Tax

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average weekly amount ordered by magistrates for payment of poll tax arrears by recipients of income support.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not collected.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will include in the community charge enforcement statement figures for the remission of debt following means tests.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have no plans to add to the existing information that is supplied to the Library of the House.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make regulations to limit the amount of payment for poll tax arrears ordered by the courts in the case of recipients of income support to no more than £2·15 per week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is not the role of the courts to determine the rate of payment of arrears by debtors subject to a liability order. Where recovery cannot otherwise be achieved, a court may, on an application by the charging authority, decide in the light of the debtor's means to postpone committal to prison for default, subject to any requirement to make such payments as the court may determine. I do not think that it would be right for me to seek to fetter the courts' discretion in such matters.

Legal Aid

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to grant the right to free legal advice to all patients detained in psychiatric hospitals.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No. It is the Government's general policy that those who are assessed as having the means to contribute towards the cost of legal advice provided under the legal aid scheme should do so.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the average time between legal aid work being done by barristers and legal aid fees being paid to them for *(a)* criminal and *(b)* civil legal aid for each of the past 20 years.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Figures are not available in the form nor for the period requested. The information immediately available is contained in the tables. It shows performance against target for bills paid by the Legal Aid Board and the Crown court. It is only available in respect of the time taken to pay bills once they have been submitted.

Payments made by the Legal Aid Board

1991-92 *Civil bills: Taxed and assessed* *Time taken*	*March 1992 Target Per cent.*	*March 1992 Performance Per cent.*
6 weeks	65	78
8 weeks	85	88
Bills in Magistrates' Courts' proceedings		
6 weeks	80	89
Other bills		
6 weeks	95	95

1990-91 *Civil bills: taxed and assessed time taken*	*March 1990 performance Per cent.*	*March 1991 performance Per cent.*	*March 1992 target Per cent.*
4 weeks	38	31	—
6 weeks	68	71	85
8 weeks	81	88	85
Bills in Magistrates' Courts' proceedings			
4 weeks	78	76	—
6 weeks	93	91	80

1990-91 *Other bills* *Time taken*	*March 1991 performance Per cent.*	*March 1992 target Per cent.*
4 weeks	82	—
6 weeks	95	95
1989-90 time taken to process bills		
4 weeks	82	76
6 weeks	95	91

Payments made by the Crown court

In the Crown court, where counsel has claimed a standard fee the target is for payment within five working days where the claim is lodged on the day that the case is concluded; and within 10 working days where it is not. The table gives the percentage of cases paid within target and the average number of days taken to pay all standard fees.

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Performance	60 per cent.	68 per cent.	72 per cent.
Average time (days) between date of receipt and payment of claim	10	11	9

For non-standard fee cases in the Crown court there is a target of no more than 30 per cent. of claims to be outstanding after four weeks from date of receipt.

	1987-88 Per cent.	1988-89 Per cent.	1989-90 Per cent.	1990-91 Per cent.	1991-92 Per cent.
Percentage of claims from counsel outstanding more than four weeks from receipt	33	32	37	38	28

Figures for the speed of payment of Crown court claims by the central taxing teams—which were established in March 1991—are produced on a monthly basis. The target is for payment of 75 per cent. of the claims within three months of the claim becoming ready to tax and for no claims to remain untaxed after six months. In terms of their own workload, all teams, except the south-eastern, are currently meeting the first of these targets, and all but the south-eastern and midland and Oxford are meeting the second.

Queen's Counsel

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to allow people who are being considered for appointments as Queen's Counsel to see files that are held by him on them.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Factual information held on a candidate is available on request in the form of a summary sheet. It is also open to the individual concerned to see a senior official of the Lord Chancellor's Department when he can be told the tenor of the opinions received. However, as in most organisations dealing with recruitment and appointments, the references and opinions obtained on those who have applied for appointment as Queen's Counsel are confidential. The Lord Chancellor has no plans to make them available to applicants.

TRANSPORT

Safety Tests

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to publish annually the results of safety inspections on *(a)* ferries, *(b)* locomotives and *(c)* aircraft.

Mr. Norris: The Surveyor General's Organisation—which is responsible for inspecting ferries as well as other types of ship—produces an annual report setting out its survey and inspection performance. The Civil Aviation Authority's surveyors monitor compliance with established safety standards in transport aircraft; operators are required to report defects to the CAA under the mandatory occurrence reporting system and these reports are published. Railway operators are responsible for inspecting their locomotives and while they do not publish any information on safety inspections, the Health and Safety Executive publishes an annual report on railway safety which gives details of certain safety-related failures of locomotives and multiple units which have occurred in service.

We have no plans to require the publication of any additional information.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to publish annually the failure of any *(a)* ferry, *(b)* locomotive or *(c)* aircraft to pass safety tests.

Mr. Norris: We have no plans to publish information on individual failures at safety tests. Any ferry, locomotive or aircraft on which a major defect was found at a safety inspection would not be allowed to return to service until the relevant fault had been rectified.

InterCity 225 Trains

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, column 866, if he will list the number of claims by British Rail, under warranty protections, to the manufacturers of InterCity 225 trains.

Mr. Freeman: The number of claims is a commercial matter between British Rail and the manufacturers.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will establish a centralised database of the movement of nuclear materials, including medical isotopes, within, into and from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: No.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his plans for the membership of the franchising authority proposed as part of the rail privatisation; and what local imput there will be.

Mr. Freeman: The franchising authority's head will be appointed directly by the Secretary of State. The authority will wish to take into account the views of local authorities when specifying service levels for franchises, particularly in the passenger transport authorities areas where the passenger transport executives will continue to pay for the services they support.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to ensure the continuation of the integrated local services in the west midlands area after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The west midlands, in common with six other areas in the United Kingdom, has a passenger transport executive responsible for specifying and procuring local passenger rail services, and for measures which promote their operation in conjunction with local passenger transport services. PTEs will continue to have this responsibility following British Rail's privatisation, feeding their requirements into the service specification that the franchising authority will draw up when letting the franchises for passenger rail services which cover PTA areas.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that expenditure by the West Midlands passenger transport authority on rail developments receives a return on outlay following privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: Any contractual rights or obligations existing between British Rail and the West Midlands PTA will be honoured.

Radioactive Fuel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many occasions in 1991 and so far in 1992 irradiated test reactor fuel from Harwell has been transported by road to Dounreay; and how many accidents have taken place in the course of those journeys.

Mr. Norris: There were no such shipments in 1991, and have been none so far this year.

Westway

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the dates of resurfacing work carried out on the Westway since 1987;

(2) to what extent the present repairs to the Westway in west London involve remedial work following the most recent previous repairs; and what amount and proportion of the costs of the current repairs are accounted for by such remedial work;

(3) why the current repairs to the Westway in West London were not carried out when the road was last under repair;

(4) what the difference is between the current repairs to the Westway in west London and those carried out in the most recent previous repair programme.

Mr. Norris: During an inspection of Westway in 1988, the waterproof membrane was found to have reached the end of its life. As an interim measure the defective membrane was patched in places between August and November of that year. This was the first time that Westway had been subject to substantial repair works since 1986. Following this interim measure, full waterproofing and resurfacing of the entire length of A40(M) is being carried out. In consultation with the police and the local boroughs—Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham—it was decided that to undertake all the work at once would cause unacceptable disruption to traffic on both Westway and the adjacent road network. The work was accordingly divided into two phases.

Phase I, from the Marylebone flyover to just short of Ladbroke grove, and the A40(M)/M1 flyover, started in September 1991 and was completed in February 1992. Phase II, which covers work at the A40(M)/M41 roundabout and the Wood Lane flyover, began in July 1992 and is due to finish at the end of November. None of the current work is remedial work. During carriageway closures, signed diversions are in operation.

Once the work is complete, I do not envisage resurfacing the Westway for many years.

Brake Lights

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what alterations are being considered with regard to the regulations affecting the provision of high mounted brake lights on motor vehicles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have no plans at present to alter the current lighting regulations which provide for the optional fitting of high mounted stop lamps on vehicles.

It now seems likely that Europe will follow the USA and, for the future, make the fitting of a supplementary high mounted stop lamp compulsory. When changes are agreed by the European Community, an amendment will be needed to our regulations.

EC Transport Council

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of the Luxembourg Transport Council.

Mr. John MacGregor: The Transport Council, in Luxembourg on 26 October, held most constructive discussions which have cleared the way for agreement on a wide range of subjects including airport slot allocation, transport infrastructure funding, road and rail transit of Austria and Switzerland and road haulage cabotage liberalisation together with associated taxation and charging issues.

Airport Slot Allocation

The Council provided guidance on the direction which further preparatory work should take on key issues, with the objective of agreeing the detailed regulation at the December Council.

Transport Infrastructure Funding

After discussion based on a presidency compromise, the Council is now in a position to reach agreement on the regulation to supersede the present transport infrastructure funding regulation, subject to the views of Parliaments. As at present, maritime and aviation infrastructure is not to be included in the regulation. Its duration is to be two years but with the provision that it will automatically lapse on the introduction of trans-European networks funding for transport under the Maastricht treaty.

Road and Rail Transit of Austria, Switzerland and Slovenia

The Council is now also in a position to conclude transport agreements between the Community and Austria and Switzerland and administrative arrangements for implementing them, subject to the views of Parliaments and to the satisfactory conclusion of outstanding discussions between Germany and Austria. The Council reached a similar provisional agreement on a regulation on the distribution to member states of "ecopoints" which encourage the use of "green lorries" for additional transit journeys through Austria. I expect that final agreements will be reached on these items in time for implementation from 1 January 1993.

The Council also reached agreement on a mandate and procedures for the Commission to negotiate a transit agreement between the Community and Slovenia.

Road Haulage Cabotage Liberalisation and Fiscal Harmonisation

The Council had a constructive discussion on the taxation and charging of road goods transport and made useful progress. It was agreed that the Commission's proposals on taxation and charging represent the best possible basis for making further progress. The presidency will work further in the next few weeks on this issue and the related one of road haulage cabotage liberalisation, on the basis of the Commission's proposal together with the previous compromise proposal of the Portuguese presidency on cabotage liberalisation. Agreement on free cabotage is required under the single market provisions of the treaty by the end of 1992 and I shall be pressing for agreement on this at the Council's December meeting.

Combined Transport

The Council is also in a position to reach agreement, subject to the views of Parliaments, on a directive amending the definition of combined transport for the purpose of certain concessions to road hauliers so as to include journeys made partly by sea; and on a regulation to extend by three years and to widen the scope of the existing regulation permitting member states to grant aid for combined transport.

The Commission's proposal for a Community shipping register, Euros, was discussed briefly and a full discussion will take place at the December Council. The Commission briefly introduced proposals for revising the code of conduct on airline computer reservation systems, for a directive on standards for air services relations with third countries. All these issues were referred to the Committee of Permanent Representatives for examination.

Rail Freight Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *345*, whether his Department or British Rail put out to tender the consultancy on the sale of British Rail's freight operations; and how many replies were received to the invitation to tender.

Mr. Freeman: Yes; six.

SCOTLAND

Consultants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the names of all the consultants commissioned by his Department from 1986 to the most recent date for which information is available; and if he will give the subject and expenditure for each.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Low Pay

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his proposals to increase equal economic opportunities for the low paid.

Mr. Lamont: The Government's strategy of reducing inflation, cutting taxes and making markets work better is the best way of helping the low paid.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the reduction in the trade-weighted nominal rate for the pound sterling since the fourth quarter of 1986, together with his estimate of the corresponding reduction in relative export unit values, assuming that the fall in the nominal rate is fully reflected in a reduction in the prices charged by United Kingdom exporters in foreign currency terms.

Mr. Nelson: The latest figures for the sterling effective exchange rate index and the United Kingdom's relative export prices are on the CSO databank which may be accessed through the Library of the House.

Pension Scheme Surpluses

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for legislation under which banks would be prevented from appropriating pension scheme surpluses in their annual accounts.

Mr. Nelson: I have no such proposals.

Bingham Inquiry

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the Government Ministers who gave evidence to the Bingham inquiry and the dates on which they appeared before the inquiry.

Mr. Nelson: A full list of those who gave evidence to the Bingham inquiry is at annex 1 to the report, a copy of which is available in the Library. Of those, five present or former Government Ministers appeared before the inquiry to give oral evidence. The dates of their appearances were:

Date and Witness

4 February 1992—The Right Hon. Sir Ian Stewart, now Lord Stewartby (former Economic Secretary).

6 February—The Right Hon. Nigel Lawson, now Lord Lawson (former Chancellor of the Exchequer).

10 February—The Right Hon. John Major MP (Prime Minister and former Chancellor of the Exchequer).

11 February—John Maples (former Economic Secretary).

12 February—The Right Hon. Norman Lamont MP (Chancellor of the Exchequer).

Interest Rates

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the interest rates in Britain and other EC countries.

Mr. Nelson: United Kingdom short-term interest rates are the lowest in the EC.

Kerrey Inquiry

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the departments and agencies of Her Majesty's Government which provided evidence to the Kerrey inquiry in the United States of America; and if he will place all such evidence which has been published in the Library.

Mr. Nelson: No Departments or agencies of Her Majesty's Government provided evidence to Senator Kerrey's inquiry into the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, nor did Senator Kerrey seek to check the accuracy of his report with them.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rate of increase in the retail prices index *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding, housing costs in (i) the year, (ii) the six-month period and (iii) the three-month period to October; and if he will estimate the effect on the price index of including rents, but excluding mortgage costs.

Mr. Nelson: The table shows the percentage changes in the relevant components of the retail prices index for the periods specified up to September 1992, the latest date for which information is available.

Retail Prices Index: September 1992

	Index	*Percentage change over*		
	(January 1987 = 100)	*Twelve months*	*Six months*	*Three months*
All items	139·4	3·6	2·0	0·1
All items except housing	134·9	3·5	1·4	–0·1
All items except mortgage interest payments	137·3	4·0	2·1	0·1

Note: The housing group of the retail prices index comprises rents in both the public and private sectors, mortgage interest payments, Community charges, water and sewerage charges, dwelling insurance and ground rent, repairs and maintenance charges and do-it-yourself materials.

Output

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give figures for the percentage increases between 1979 and 1991 of *(a)* consumer expenditure at constant prices, *(b)* output, *(c)* output excluding North sea oil production and *(d)* manufacturing output.

Mr. Nelson: The percentage increases, derived at constant 1985 prices, are *(a)* 37·5, *(b)* 23·6, *(c)* 21·8 and *(d)* 5·8 respectively.

Bank and Insurance Company Accounts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what checks he performs on bank and insurance company accounts when they are filed at Companies House.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

The Registrar of Companies informs me that accounts delivered to him for filing, including those of banks and insurance companies, are checked to ensure that they comprise the appropriate documents—in the majority of cases, profit and loss account, balance sheet, directors' report and auditors' report—are duly signed and cover the appropriate period. The accounts are then made available for public inspection.

Insurance companies also deliver accounts to the insurance division of my Department under the provisions of the Insurance Companies Act 1982. These are subjected to manual and computer checks covering correctness, consistency with previous accounts and solvency.

I am advised that the Bank of England carries out its own checks on copies of accounts of banking companies, which are sent direct to them by the companies concerned.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to both Wilton Park under its chief executive, Geoffrey Denton, and to the Natural Resources Institute under its chief executive, Anthony Beattie. I have asked them to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from G. Denton to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

Thank you for your question about the number of fact finding visits made by the Chief Executive of this Agency in the last twelve months.

During the year in question I did not make any fact finding visits.

Letter from A. Beattie to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

Lady Chalker has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about fact-finding visits by chief executives of Agencies.

On 8 November 1991 I visited Hadlow College in Kent to brief myself on the College's facilities and courses. On 8 May this year I went to the EC's centre for Tropical Agriculture (CTA) at Wageningen in The Netherlands to explore the scope for collaboration between the Centre and NRI and to sign a memorandum of understanding covering joint activities.

Overseas Territories

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the proposed citizenship status under the treaty of European union, of citizens of *(a)* French overseas territories and *(b)* British dependent territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The declaration on nationality of a member state accompanying the treaty on European Union states:

> "the question whether an individual possesses the nationality of a member state shall be settled solely by reference to the national law of the member state concerned."

Under the United Kingdom declaration on the definition of United Kingdom nationals for European Community purposes, made on accession and revised in January 1983, the only British dependent territories citizens so defined are those

> "who acquire their citizenship from a connection with Gibraltar".

These are accordingly the only BDTCs eligible for citizenship of the European union. It is not for us to comment on French nationality law.

Indonesia

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken in respect of British arms trading with Indonesia under the terms of the European Council of Ministers declaration at Lisbon on non-proliferation and arms exports.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. The sale of arms and defence equipment to all destinations, including Indonesia, is subject to strict export licensing procedures. In the United Kingdom's case, the criterion agreed at the Lisbon European Council was already taken into consideration when making export licensing decisions.

Haiti

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he has taken to encourage constitutional rule in Haiti.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We issued a statement and co-sponsored United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/7 condemning the coup and calling for the restoration of democracy in Haiti. Along with our EC partners, we continue to support the efforts of the Organisation of American States (OAS) to broker a settlement: a senior British diplomat represented the presidency on a recent OAS mission to Haiti.

EC General Affairs

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, at the next General Affairs Council, he will propose that its next meeting shall be held wholly or partially in public, pursuant to its order of procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At its next meeting on 9 November the General Affairs Council, as instructed by the European Council at Birmingham, will discuss ways in which all Councils can conduct their business in a more open and transparent way. As Chairman of the Council, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will call upon Foreign Ministers to consider a number of ideas including the question of whether, and under what circumstances, Council meetings should be held in open session.

Mahammed Afzal

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to help the Pakistani authorities to apprehend the killers of Mahammed Afzal in Jaurah village, Pakistan, on 4 October.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Mr. Afzal was a dual British-Pakistani national, and the United Kingdom has no standing under international law to intervene in the investigation of his murder, which is being conducted by the Pakistani police. Our high commission in Islamabad is, however, maintaining contact with the Pakistani authorities.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Music Day

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will support a national music day in 1993.

Mr. Brooke: Following the success of the national music day on 28 June this year, I am pleased to confirm my commitment to a further national music day in 1993. This will take place on Sunday 27 June.

Redundant Churches Fund

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about the implementation of the Wilding report on the redundant churches fund.

Mr. Key: A number of the recommendations made by Richard Wilding in his report are for the Church Commissioners to implement through amendment of the Pastoral Measure 1983. The General Synod, which meets next week, will have before it a draft amending measure. Should Synod approve the amending measure, I intend to bring forward legislation to amend the Redundant Churches and other Religious Buildings Act 1969 so that my Department's grant to the redundant churches fund can in future be paid through the Church Commissioners rather than directly to the fund. This was a key recommendation of the Wilding report, and will strengthen the role of the Commissioners as the focal point for the review of policy, the selection of priorities and the matching of expenditure with resources.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if there have been any offers accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since his predecessor's announcement on 16 June.

Mr. Brooke: Since my predecessor's announcement on 16 June, *Official Report*, colimns *448-9*, I am pleased to inform the House of the acceptance of two offers in lieu of tax, and the allocation of three offers previously accepted. A further payment has also been made for an offer accepted last year.

The offers are:

A painting by Beccafumi, "San Bernardino preaching in the Campo at Siena", together with a chalk study for the painting, and two diagrams by Michelangelo, satisfying £119,000 tax, and

A sculpture by Henry Moore which will satisfy £87,500 tax.

The sculpture will be allocated to Leeds city art gallery. A decision on the allocation of the Beccafumi and Michelangelo diagrams has yet to be taken.

Three offers, previously accepted, have now been allocated.

An offer of a collection of eight contemporary paintings:

"Bomb store" by David Bomberg
"Self-portrait, recto and verso" by David Bomberg
"Ghetto theatre" by David Bomberg
"Woman and goat" by Robert Colquhoun
"Two Figures Monotype" Robert Colquhoun
"Man hosing metal fish boxes" by Prunella Clough
"Pears" by William Scott
An untitled work by Roger Hilton

"Bomb store" by David Bomberg and the Prunella Clough painting have been allocated to the Tate gallery and the remainder to the Wakefield city art gallery.

An offer comprising of a vintage motorcar and two motor-cycles. The car will go to the national motor museum and the motor-cycles to the Bradford industrial museum and the tank museum.

An offer comprising a Rembrandt etching and 31 illuminated manuscripts will go to the national art collections fund.

The further payment for the Statham collection of porcelain will be £4,333·51.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Cattle

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what systems he has to ensure that payments for cattle sold into the Irish Republic can be traced to buyers in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: None. The question of payment for cattle sold in Northern Ireland is a private matter between the seller and purchaser and, if the sale is through a livestock market, the operator of the market.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action has been taken to trace cattle movements through herd book registers in Northern Ireland to identify smuggling activity into the Irish Republic.

Mr. Hanley: Checks on herd registers as a means of tracing illegal movements of cattle are ineffective. The legal movement of cattle between herds, to and from livestock markets and to slaughterhouses is recorded for purposes of animal disease control. The export of cattle to the Republic of Ireland is prohibited, except in very limited circumstances, for bovine spongiform encephalopathy reasons. This means that permits for movements to the Republic are not normally requested and such movements would not therefore be recorded in herd registers.

Cold Weather Payments Scheme

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many households in East Antrim qualified for payment under the cold weather payments scheme during the winter period 1991-92.

Mr. Hanley: Social security operational matters are the responsibility of the chief executive of the Social Security Agency. However, I understand that the cold weather payment system was not triggered in any part of Northern Ireland during the winter period 1991-92 and consequently no one qualified for payment under the scheme.

Farm Buildings

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will extend the qualifying size condition for grant in respect of replacement dwellings on farms beyond the present 100 sq m restriction.

Mr. Atkins: Whilst existing floor area is not a factor when considering applications for grant for a replacement house or farmhouse, a replacement dwelling with a standard floor area of 100 sq m—1,050 sq ft—is regarded as reasonable to meet normal family requirements. In cases where specific family need can be established, such as accommodation for a disabled person, alleviating overcrowding or providing facilities to accommodate additional farm workers, and where these cannot be met within the standard 100 sq m floor area the Housing Executive, which administers this scheme, has discretion to exceed that standard.

Although farms which were certified as "viable" by the Department of Agriculture, used to enjoy preferential treatment for grants purposes, such status gave no automatic entitlement to a particular size of floor area. Applicants for grant aid who can demonstrate the need for additional floor space will not, therefore, be disadvantaged under the replacement grant scheme.

Health Service

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the background to the review of services at Altnagelvin area hospital and detailing the reorganisation of services including relocation of wards, changes in speciality ward numbers, introduction of new facilities and the closure or phasing out of any existing facilities.

Mr. Hanley: The Western health and social services board has established a project review group, supported by the management consultant firm of Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, to undertake a strategic review of acute services and associated requirements at Altnagelvin hospital.

The review group's recommendations will be considered by the Western board at its meeting on 30 November 1992, following which the board will submit proposals to the Department of Health and Social Services for consideration.

In the meantime a £6·6 million external re-cladding scheme for the hospital has already been approved and is at present in planning.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what contacts have been made between the management executive and units in the Western health and social services board regarding proposals or potential applications for moving to HSS trust status.

Mr. Hanley: The working paper "Self-Governing Hospitals in Northern Ireland—An Initial Guide" was issued in January 1990 and all units of management within the health and personal social services were invited to express an interest in becoming health and social services trusts. The initial guide was replaced by an updated version entitled "HSS: A Working Guide" which was also issued to every unit of management. After the first round, the chief executive of the management executive wrote to unit general managers in all four boards inviting expressions of interest in a second round. No expressions of interest have been received from any unit within the Western health and social services board in either round.

Industrial Relations Legislation

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to introduce further industrial relations legislation.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill at present before the House includes an enablement whereby certain provisions may be extended to Northern Ireland by means of an Order in Council subject to negative resolution procedure. The provisions to be extended to Northern Ireland deal with EC obligations—relating to proof of an employment relationship, procedures for handling redundancies and protection against dismissal of health and safety workers—employment rights—relating to pregnant workers, sex discrimination and industrial tribunals procedures—and the abolition of wages councils. It is my intention to introduce such an order as soon as possible following Royal Assent.

The application to Northern Ireland of provisions equivalent to the remainder of the Bill, and also the provisions of the Employment Act 1990, will be considered in due course following discussions with local bodies.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the cash limit, NID2, for the independent living fund.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The cash limit for the independent living fund (NID2) in 1992-93 will be reduced by £247,000 from £5,298,000 to £5,051,000. The cash limit is being reduced because of an overspend in 1991-92.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the lowest and the mean rates of pay discovered in wages council industries.

Mr. McLoughlin: In April 1992 the mean rate paid to workers on adult rates of pay in wages council industries was £5.05 an hour. The minimum basic rates currently range from £2.59 to £3.10 an hour.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research she has commissioned into the likely effectiveness and enforceability of legal measures intended to protect shop managers and employees who do not wish to work on Sundays.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. The Government will shortly be announcing their intentions regarding the current legislation governing Sunday trading.

Protective Headwear (Sikhs)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will arrange to exempt Sikhs from EC regulations requiring those people in certain occupations to wear protective headwear in their place of work; what representations she has received on this matter; what consultations EC institutions are undertaking with Sikh organisations and others; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has no plans to arrange for a general exemption for turban wearing followers of the Sikh religion from the regulations to implement the European directive on the use of personal protective equipment at work. Nor has she any plans to remove the existing exemption for such Sikhs on construction sites. The Secretary of State has received a number of representations from Sikh organisations and others on this issue, to which she and Ministers of this Department have responded individually. Consultations which EC institutions undertake are a matter for those institutions themselves.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *418*, if she will now provide the figures for training and enterprise council budgets and contracts for 1992-93 in the same form as her answer.

Mr. McLoughlin: The tables show the budgets and volumes agreed for each training and enterprise council in England for 1992-93.

Information relating to Wales and Scotland is for the respective Secretaries of State to provide.

	Budget—£ million			*Training weeks × 10,000*	
TEC	*Total*	*Enterprise training*	*Youth training*	*Enterprise training*	*Youth training*
South East Region					
Essex	**35·5**	**7·8**	**16·2**	**6·6**	**33·0**
Hampshire	**34·1**	**5·4**	**17·6**	**9·0**	**39·5**
Heart of England	**12·2**	**1·7**	**5·7**	**3·4**	**14·6**
Hertfordshire	**24·8**	**3·1**	**13·2**	**5·5**	**19·5**
Isle of Wight	**4·3**	**0·6**	**1·9**	**1·6**	**6·8**
Kent	**35·1**	**5·3**	**18·0**	**8·6**	**31·5**
Milton Keynes/North Buckinghamshire	**8·0**	**1·2**	**4·0**	**2·6**	**11·1**
Surrey	**13·8**	**1·5**	**4·4**	**3·1**	**11·9**
Sussex	**27·2**	**5·1**	**11·3**	**8·3**	**24·5**
Thames Valley Enterprise	**21·2**	**2·1**	**9·2**	**3·6**	**20·3**
London					
AZTEC	**11·7**	**1·7**	**3·6**	**2·8**	**7·3**
CENTEC	**24·2**	**6·6**	**6·5**	**10·4**	**12·8**
CILNTEC	**22·6**	**5·9**	**7·3**	**9·7**	**12·4**
LETEC	**35·8**	**9·8**	**12·5**	**16·2**	**27·2**
North London	**18·9**	**5·0**	**4·1**	**8·1**	**8·5**
North West London	**10·0**	**2·8**	**2·5**	**4·5**	**4·9**
SOLOTEC	**20·1**	**3·3**	**9·1**	**5·3**	**14·7**
South Thames	**32·9**	**9·1**	**9·2**	**15·4**	**15·5**
West London	**17·3**	**2·5**	**6·6**	**4·1**	**13·6**
South West					
Avon	**28·8**	**6·1**	**11·8**	**10·3**	**26·9**
Devon/Cornwall	**52·5**	**9·0**	**26·3**	**15·7**	**41·5**
Dorset	**16·5**	**2·3**	**7·3**	**4·4**	**17·9**
Gloucestershire	**13·9**	**2·0**	**6·6**	**3·6**	**15·7**
Somerset	**13·8**	**2·1**	**6·4**	**4·1**	**15·7**
Wiltshire	**14·7**	**2·4**	**6·8**	**4·1**	**16·7**

TEC	*Budget—£ million* *Total*	*Enterprise training*	*Youth training*	*Training weeks × 10,000* *Enterprise training*	*Youth training*
West Midlands					
Birmingham	**49·8**	**15·6**	**20·6**	**22·4**	**36·7**
Central England	**11·7**	**1·8**	**5·1**	**3·4**	**10·9**
Coventry/Warwickshire	**25·4**	**5·0**	**11·9**	**9·1**	**27·3**
Dudley	**11·7**	**2·5**	**5·2**	**4·4**	**11·5**
HAWTEC	**11·8**	**1·8**	**5·5**	**4·0**	**13·5**
Sandwell	**12·0**	**2·6**	**5·5**	**4·5**	**13·3**
Shropshire	**14·7**	**2·4**	**7·7**	**4·4**	**17·3**
Staffordshire	**35·6**	**5·4**	**20·6**	**9·3**	**53·4**
Walsall	**10·0**	**2·3**	**4·3**	**4·3**	**11·3**
Wolverhampton	**12·1**	**2·5**	**5·2**	**4·6**	**10·8**
East Midlands					
Bedfordshire	**11·7**	**1·5**	**5·3**	**2·7**	**12·0**
Cambstec	**6·4**	**0·6**	**2·6**	**1·2**	**5·8**
Greater Nottingham	**21·0**	**4·1**	**9·7**	**6·5**	**21·2**
Greater Peterborough	**9·3**	**1·8**	**4·5**	**3·2**	**10·4**
Leicestershire	**26·2**	**4·0**	**13·3**	**6·5**	**29·0**
Lincolnshire	**20·7**	**3·7**	**10·2**	**6·7**	**22·0**
Norfolk/Waveney	**22·6**	**4·8**	**10·7**	**8·1**	**24·3**
Northamptonshire	**13·8**	**1·7**	**6·6**	**3·0**	**14·5**
North Derbyshire	**10·6**	**2·2**	**5·1**	**4·2**	**11·6**
North Nottinghamshire	**17·1**	**5·4**	**7·4**	**5·6**	**16·2**
South Derbyshire	**18·3**	**3·9**	**8·6**	**5·9**	**18·5**
Suffolk	**15·5**	**1·7**	**9·5**	**3·1**	**15·0**
Yorkshire and Humberside					
Barnsley/Doncaster	**25·1**	**5·5**	**12·9**	**9·5**	**26·9**
Bradford and District	**20·8**	**4·2**	**10·6**	**7·2**	**18·2**
Calderdale/Kirklees	**21·4**	**5·0**	**9·7**	**8·4**	**20·0**
Humberside	**37·8**	**8·5**	**17·9**	**14·2**	**37·2**
Leeds	**21·3**	**5·2**	**8·8**	**9·8**	**17·0**
North Yorkshire	**17·6**	**3·2**	**8·0**	**6·1**	**16·8**
Rotherham	**12·5**	**2·7**	**5·6**	**4·6**	**11·1**
Sheffield	**23·4**	**6·2**	**9·5**	**10·2**	**20·4**
Wakefield	**12·5**	**3·0**	**5·3**	**5·4**	**10·8**
North West					
Bolton/Bury	**14·4**	**2·1**	**6·9**	**3·7**	**14·8**
Cewtec	**21·0**	**5·0**	**9·5**	**8·8**	**19·4**
Cumbria	**17·7**	**2·4**	**9·7**	**4·3**	**21·3**
Eltec	**18·8**	**3·5**	**9·3**	**6·0**	**20·1**
Lawtec	**28·4**	**4·9**	**12·8**	**8·5**	**28·3**
Manchester	**39·3**	**8·7**	**16·4**	**14·5**	**36·3**
Normidtec	**14·6**	**2·7**	**7·2**	**4·6**	**15·4**
Merseyside	**51·0**	**13·2**	**22·8**	**23·1**	**47·6**
Metrotec	**11·3**	**2·2**	**5·3**	**3·8**	**11·0**
Oldham	**9·2**	**1·5**	**4·8**	**2·8**	**10·5**
Qualitec	**9·8**	**2·0**	**5·1**	**3·4**	**10·4**
Rochdale	**8·9**	**2·1**	**3·8**	**3·8**	**8·5**
South and East Cheshire	**12·8**	**1·9**	**6·5**	**2·8**	**22·3**
Stockport	**10·5**	**1·6**	**4·7**	**2·9**	**10·3**
Northern					
Durham	**30·1**	**8·5**	**13·0**	**14·4**	**27·2**
Northumberland	**15·3**	**2·9**	**7·8**	**5·4**	**12·6**
Teesside	**33·5**	**9·2**	**15·7**	**16·1**	**32·2**
Tyneside	**40·5**	**10·7**	**17·0**	**16·4**	**34·5**
Wearside	**18·5**	**5·2**	**7·4**	**9·3**	**17·1**

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Price Marking Order 1991

Mr. McFall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representation he has received from the retail industry relating to the Price Marketing Order 1991.

Mr. Leigh: My Department has received a number of representations from the British Retail Consortium, and its constituent organisations, expressing concern about how some aspects of the order apply to them.

Mr. McFall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his plans to amend the Price Marking Order 1991.

Mr. Leigh: This order has been looked at in detail in the light of representations received. The issues involved are complex, but my Department will be in a position to discuss the way forward with interested parties shortly.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations and communications his Department has had in regard to the establishment of a structure for the forthcoming review of nuclear power; and what criteria he plans to adopt in setting out the remit for the review.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is considering the form and content of the 1994 review of the future prospects for nuclear power in the United Kingdom including the need to provide for appropriate public and parliamentary consultation. The precise terms of reference will take account of any relevant conclusions reached as a result of the review of the coal industry currently being undertaken by my Department.

Pit Closures

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what environmental implications were taken into account in the original announcement for the closure of 31 pits.

Mr. Eggar: This is an operational matter for British Coal.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he proposes to take to extend the support and resources provided to citizens advice bureaux to enable them to meet their increased work load.

Mr. Leigh: The Department of Trade and Industry funds the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux—NACAB—and the Citizens' Advice Scotland—CAS—which provide the central support services for the local bureaux in England, Wales and Scotland. Similarly, the Northern Ireland Office funds the Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux—NIACAB. Since 1982, the total grant in aid to these bodies has more than doubled from around £5·7 million in 1982-83 to around £12·6 million in 1991-92—an increase of more than 30 per cent. in real terms. Total grant in aid in 1992-93 is expected to be more than £13·2 million, representing a 5 per cent. increase over 1991-92 which is above the rate of inflation.

The funding of individual bureaux is a matter for local authorities based on their own assessment of local needs and the resources available. However, although the Government do not fund individual citizens advice bureaux, directly, the grant in aid to the central organisation does include provision to develop the local network through partnership agreements with local authorities on a strictly time-limited basis.

Supervisory Bodies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what basis he will be reviewing the operations of the recognised supervisory bodies in 1993.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: When the supervisory bodies for auditors were granted recognition last year under the Companies Act 1989, it was agreed with them that it would be appropriate for the bodies to review jointly with my Department in 1993 the operation of their procedures for monitoring compliance by their members with their rules.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what examination he made of the disciplinary procedures of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales before granting it recognised supervisory body status.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department's examination of the institute's application for recognition as a supervisory body for auditors under part II of, and schedule 11 to, the Companies Act 1989 was such as to enable the Secretary of State to determine whether the statutory requirements were satisfied.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the relationship between the Auditing Practices Board and the recognised supervisory body regime established under the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Paragraph 8 of schedule 11 to the Companies Act 1989 requires recognised supervisory bodies to have rules and practices governing both the technical standards which their auditor members must apply in company audit work and the manner in which those standards are to be applied. The recognised supervisory bodies have bound themselves to adopt the standards and guidelines issued by the Auditing Practices Board and they require their auditor members to comply with those standards.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what statutory provisions govern the recourse of members of the public to recognised supervisory bodies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Paragraph 12 of schedule 11 to the Companies Act 1989 requires the recognised supervisory bodies to have effective arrangements for the investigation of complaints, both against persons who are eligible under their rules to be appointed as company auditors and for the investigation of complaints against the supervisory bodies themselves in respect of matters arising out of their functions as such. The Companies Act 1989 (Register of Auditors and Information about Audit Firms) Regulations 1991 also require the recognised supervisory bodies to maintain and make available to the public a register of individuals and firms eligible for appointment as company auditor and certain information about firms so registered.

Public Limited Companies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward proposals to require public limited companies in their notes to their annual accounts to show the number of employees who earn less than £209 per week.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Company Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for legislation under which company auditors would owe a duty of care to individual shareholders.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such proposals.

Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will provide a list of the organisations which he consults before appointing accountants as inspectors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. Before making such appointments, my Department makes such inquiries as are necessary and takes all relevant considerations into account.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will publish a table showing for the United Kingdom, United States of America, Germany, France, Italy and Japan the change in relative export values for manufactures each year since 1962, on the basis of the second half of 1973 = 100, together with the change in share of exports of manufactures.

Mr. Needham: The information requested for relative export values is not available on a consistent basis before 1975. The available information is published in table F8 of the CSO publication "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", which is available from the House of Commons Library. Data for changes in the shares of exports of manufactured goods are given in the table.

Shares[1] of the main manufacturing countries[2] exports of manufactured goods percentage

	United Kingdom	*USA*	*France*	*F R Germany[3]*	*Italy*	*Japan*
1962	14·8	23·0	8·9	19·5	5·8	7·3
1963	14·5	22·2	9·0	19·8	5·9	7·6
1964	13·3	22·4	8·7	19·4	6·3	8·2
1965	13·4	20·7	8·8	19·1	6·7	9·4
1966	12·9	20·5	8·5	19·3	6·9	9·7
1967	11·8	20·8	8·5	19·5	7·0	9·8
1968	11·0	20·6	8·2	19·4	7·3	10·6
1969	10·9	19·9	8·2	19·5	7·3	11·1
1970	10·6	18·9	8·8	19·8	7·1	11·7
1971	10·8	17·1	8·9	20·1	7·3	13·0
1972	9·9	16·2	9·3	20·3	7·6	13·2
1973	9·1	16·1	9·6	22·2	6·8	12·8
1974	8·5	17·1	9·2	21·6	6·8	14·4
1975	9·0	18·1	10·1	20·3	7·4	13·5
1976	8·4	17·5	9·6	20·6	7·1	14·6
1977	8·9	16·0	9·8	20·8	7·6	15·5
1978	8·9	15·7	9·8	20·7	7·9	15·6
1979	9·1	16·2	10·5	20·8	8·3	13·7
1980	9·6	17·2	10·0	19·9	7·8	14·8
1981	8·5	18·8	9·2	18·4	7·7	17·9
1982	8·4	18·0	9·0	19·6	7·9	17·3
1983	7·9	17·2	8·9	19·0	8·1	18·4
1984	7·5	17·4	8·6	18·1	7·7	20·0
1985	7·8	16·8	8·5	18·6	7·8	19·7
1986	7·6	14·2	8·8	20·7	8·2	19·4
1987	8·1	14·0	9·0	21·4	8·4	18·0
1988	8·3	15·1	8·8	20·6	8·1	18·0
1989	8·2	16·1	8·8	20·4	8·4	17·5
1990	8·6	15·8	9·7	20·6	8·6	15·8
1991	8·5	17·0	9·6	19·6	8·4	16·9

[1] Share of the value of exports measured in US dollars.

[2] United Kingdom, USA, Germany, France Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Belgium/Luxembourg, Switzerland, Sweden, Canada.

[3] Includes eastern Germany from 1990.

Sources: United Nations and national sources.

Share Options

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to require company directors to give information about share options in the directors' report.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A director is required to disclose certain information concerning share options to the company, and this must be entered in the company's register of directors' interests, which is open to public inspection. Certain information regarding options must also be disclosed in either the directors' report or the notes to the accounts. Moreover, a director is not permitted to buy options in shares in a listed company. I am aware that disclosure generally is under discussion as part of the public debate on corporate governance.

Financial Reporting Council

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received in favour of the transfer of the Auditing Practices Board to the Financial Reporting Council.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have received no such representations.

Auditing Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will provide a list showing the names of the auditing firms that have been criticised five or more times in his Department's inspectors' reports published since 1988.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Since 1988 there have been five published reports of inspectors appointed under the Companies Act containing criticism of constituent firms of what is now Ernst and Young, chartered accountants.

Polly Peck

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will dismiss the Polly Peck administrators.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The power of appointment and removal of an administrator rests with the court, not with the President of the Board of Trade.

Firework Safety

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what effect the single European market will have on firework safety in the United Kingdom; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that any European standard is at least as high as the existing British Standard (BS 7114) on firework safety.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* The single European market should not have an immediate direct effect on fireworks safety in the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom delegation on the CEN technical committee will continue to try to ensure that any European standard for fireworks matches the high standards of safety in the United Kingdom; work on producing such a standard is some years away from completion.

First Stop Shops

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on how his proposed first stop shops to support local businesses in Suffolk and Norfolk will be implemented; and how overlap with existing agencies will be avoided.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* Following extensive consultation, my Department will be issuing a prospectus inviting bids to operate up to 15 pilot one-stop shops in England. The bids will be drawn together by the training and enterprise councils and a key criterion for success will be that the bids clearly demonstrate an active partnership between all the relevant local business support agencies. Following the evaluation of the pilot operating a national network will be established.

Coal Subsidies

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of those subsidies which have been made to the mining operations of British Coal in each of the last eight quarter year periods for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* Figures for financial assistance to British Coal by quarter are not readily available. Government grants paid to British Coal in the last two financial years, 1991-92 and 1990-91, were £709 million and £1,822 million respectively. In addition, British Coal benefited by about £1 billion in both years from the high margins, over and above world market prices, that the electricity generators are obliged to pay for their coal supplies from the corporation under present contracts.

Animal Testing

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy that the use of animals in skin and eye irritant testing of cosmetic materials will be ended during or before 1998.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* In March we called on the European Community to set 1998 as a target date for the replacement of animal tests for skin and eye irritancy, subject to there being validated non-animal alternatives.

Estate Agency Fees

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will investigate the attempt to form a cartel to control the fee structure of estate agency business in part or parts of scotland by Slater Hogg and Howison, Ron Slater Estate Agents Ltd. and Royal Life Estates.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 5 November 1992]:* Any attempt to control the fee structure of estate agency business in any part of the United Kingdom is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading, Sir Bryan Carsberg, to consider. Any evidence of possible anti-competitive agreements should be submitted to Sir Bryan.

Point of Ayr Colliery

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the socio-economic consequences of the closure of Point of Ayr colliery, north Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have been asked to reply. As the hon. Gentleman will know, a review of the proposed closure of 21 pits is under way and a moratorium has been announced on these proposals while the review takes place. My Department is in discussions with the North East Wales TEC, the Welsh Development Agency and local authorities on measures to promote economic diversification and employment opportunities in the area.

HEALTH

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each executive agency for which she is responsible.

Dr. Mawhinney: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the National Health Service Estates agency under its chief executive, Mr. John Locke, and to the Medicines Control Agency under its chief executive, Dr. Keith Jones. I have asked them to reply to the hon. Member.

Letter from K. Jones to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 5 November 1992:

The Secretary of State for Health will have advised that your recent Parliamentary Question would be answered directly by the Chief Executives of the Agencies concerned. I have set out below the response for the Medicines Control Agency.

Numbers of staff, by grade, are as follows:

Grade	*1991-92*[1]	*1992-93*[2]
Unified Grade 3	1	1
Unified Grade 4	5	5
Unified Grade 5	23	26
Unified Grade 6	13	13
Unified Grade 7	51	53
Senior Executive Officer/Pharmaceutical Officer I/Senior Scientific Officer	32	33
Higher Executive Officer/Pharmaceutical Officer II/Higher Professional and Technical Officer/Higher Scientific Officer	29	29
Executive Officer/Scientific Officer	40	42
Administrative Officer/Assistant Scientific Officer	37	40
Administrative Assistant	65	67
Senior Personal Secretary	6	6
Personal Secretary	32	33
Typist/Support Grade Band I	2	2
Support Grade Band II	4	4
Totals	340	354

Total costs[3] are as follows:

	(£000)	(£000)
Salaries, National Insurance, and Superannuation:	9,039	9,750

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[1] Average number of permanent staff during 1991-92, as shown in the Agency's Annual Report and Accounts, plus temporary and contract staff. Numbers by grade have been adjusted to take account of fluctuations during the year.

[2] Estimated numbers and costs.

[3] Cost of permanent and temporary staff as shown in the Agency's Annual Report and Accounts.

I regret it is not possible to show costs by grade, as staff budgeting in the MCA is based on functional businesses.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Letter from J. Locke to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 5 November 1992:

I have been asked by the Secretary of State for Health to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question (No. 1515) regarding Agency staff. Please find attached the number and cost for each grade as recorded in the 1991-92 Annual Report and estimates for 1992-93. The salaries disclosed do not include Employer's National Insurance Contributions or Superannuation.

On the 1 April 1992, the Agency absorbed the Works Information Management System Centre of Responsibility from the North East Thames Regional Health Authority, including their 12 posts.

In April 1993 the Agency will be relocating to Leeds in West Yorkshire. A proportion of London based staff will not be relocating, and the 1992-93 estimate includes the additional cost of advance recruitment.

National Health Service Estates Agency
Cost and number of personnel by grade

Grade	*1991-92 Actual* Number	£	*1992-93 Estimated* Number	£
3[1]	1·0	55,000	1·0	64,025
5	6·0	259,827	5·0	228,431
6	16·8	572,207	17·5	627,710
NO	1·0	35,281	1·0	37,221
7	42·5	1,391,727	41·0	1,417,785
SPTO	8·7	258,236	15·0	471,348
SIO	0·0	0	1·0	21,814
HPTO	3·0	66,062	8·0	185,855
PTO	3·5	62,998	3·0	56,968
SEO	0·5	9,846	2·0	41,550
HEO	11·9	247,056	14·0	306,126
IO	0·0	0	2·0	35,014
EO	13·5	213,353	15·0	250,098
SPES	3·0	58,960	0·0	0
PES	7·8	121,220	8·0	130,664
AO	7·0	115,033	8·0	138,302
AA[2]	2·3	45,577	3·0	61,910
TYP	0·0	0	2·0	32,666
	128·6	3,512,384	146·5	4,107,488

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[1] The Estimated Salary for 1992-93 includes a bonus payment relating to 1991-92.

[2] Cost includes casual employees not included in staff numbers.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what percentage of incidents the London ambulance service failed to meet its call-out time standards in each month of the current year to date; and what were the figures for the equivalent months in each of the past five years.

Mr. Sackville: Monthly details of the response times of ambulance services are not collected centrally. The available information is in the table.

Summary of response times of the London Ambulance Service—1987-88 to 1991-92

	Total emergency calls	*Percentage where response time within performance standard 1*	*Percentage where response time within performance standard 2*
1987-88	470,348	21	85
1988-89	451,150	18	83
1989-90	231,294	14	79
1990-91	456,659	11	74
1991-92	472,310	15	64

Performance standard 1: 50 per cent. of ambulances to respond within seven minutes up to 1990-91 and eight minutes in 1991-92.

Performance standard 2: 95 per cent. of ambulances to respond within 14 minutes.

(i) The number of calls received in 1989-90 are low due to the ambulance dispute which took place during that year.

(ii) 1991-92 figures are provisional.

The response time of an ambulance is the time taken from an emergency call being received, to the arrival of a fully equipped vehicle at the patient's location.

These figures are likely to underestimate the performance of the LAS because percentages relate to the total number of calls and not all calls result in a response.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints have been received *(a)* by her Department and *(b)* by the London ambulance service in each month of the current year to date about delays or failures by the London ambulance service in responding to (i) emergency and (ii) other calls; and how many of these have involved incidents in which patients have died between the time at which the call was logged and the time at which the patient was delivered to hospital.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints she has had from the public about the condition of the London ambulance service since the introduction of the computerised system.

Mr. Sackville: There has been widespread concern and a large number of complaints have been made about the emergency services of the London ambulance service.

My right hon. Friend announced to the House, on 28 October, an external inquiry into the operation of the computer-aided dispatch system and the circumstances surrounding its failure on 26 and 27 October. My right hon. Friend has today announced further details of the terms of reference and composition of the inquiry which will also enquire into the further failure of the system on 4 November.

Every allegation that a patient died as a result of the computer failure will be investigated by the acting chief executive of the London ambulance service.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent meetings she has held with the director of the London ambulance service; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Sackville: The South West Thames regional health authority is responsible for the London ambulance service. My right hon. Friend met Professor Marian Hicks, chairman of South West Thames regional health authority, members of the South West Thames regional health authority management team and Mr. James Harris, chairman of the London ambulance service on 16 October 1992. There was a full discussion about the reasons for the unsatisfactory performance of the London ambulance service in responding to emergency calls.

My right hon. Friend had a further meeting with the regional general manager of SW Thames RHA and the acting chief executive of the London ambulance service on 3 November.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what internal audit has been done of the purchase and efficiency of the London ambulance service computer.

Mr. Sackville: The purchase of the computer-aided dispatch system by the London ambulance service was subject to the South West Thames regional health authority standing orders and standing financial instructions. The RHA is satisfied that these were complied with.

The development of the system was managed by a project board in line with the PRINCE project management methodology. During the development phase the component parts were tested on dummy data.

The system would ordinarily have been subject to a post implementation review but due to the problems experienced following full implementation, the London ambulance service reverted to a part manual system. Following a further failure on 4 November the London ambulance service had now reverted to a full manual system. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in the House on 28 October, that there will be an external inquiry into the operation of the computer-aided dispatch system. Further details of the terms of reference and composition of the inquiry were announced today.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many different ambulance controls systems have been installed at the headquarters of the London ambulance service over the past 15 years; what was their cost; and what were the reasons for their abandonment.

Mr. Sackville: I am advised that an ambulance control system was originally commissioned at a cost of £1·8 million by South West Thames regional health authority which was responsible for the management of the London ambulance service. When the London ambulance service board was established, in August 1990, the system was found to be inoperable. The new board tendered for a new computer based system in the same year and this has been phased in over the last six months, at a capital cost of about £1·5 million. Following the failure of this system on 26 and 27 October and 4 November a decision was made to revert to manual control. The reasons for the failure are being investigated.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current condition of the London ambulance service computer; and how many times it has broken down since installation.

Mr. Sackville: The computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system failed on 26 and 27 October. On 4 November the system was malfunctioning and management at the London ambulance service decided to revert to a fully manual system. The computerised system will not be brought back into use until the problems have been solved. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced today details of the external inquiry set up by the South West Thames regional health authority into these failures.

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the external inquiry into the London ambulance service which she announced on 28 October.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today agreed the terms of reference and composition of the independent inquiry which the South West Thames regional health authority has set up on the London ambulance service. The inquiry's terms of reference are:

> "To examine the operation of the computer-aided dispatch system, including:
>
> the circumstances surrounding its failures on Monday and Tuesday 26 and 27 October and Wednesday 4 November
>
> the process of its procurement
>
> and to identify the lessons to be learned for the operation and management of the London Ambulance Service against the imperatives of delivering the service at the required standard, demonstrating good working relationships and restoring public confidence."

The inquiry will be led by Mr. Don Page, chief executive of the South Yorkshire ambulance service. Other members of the inquiry will be Mr. Paul Williams, a specialist in computer systems from BDO Binder Hamlyn Chartered Accountants, and Mr. Dennis Boyd, formerly chief conciliation officer of the Arbitration, Conciliation Advisory Service (ACAS).

The inquiry has been asked to report to the South West Thames RHA by February 1993 at the latest and to highlight any action, where necessary, for the chief executive of the London ambulance service. The report will be published. The chairman of the RHA will report to me on its outcomes, and will keep me informed of progress in improving service performance during the inquiry period and beyond.

Smoking

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the comparative influences of *(a)* price, *(b)* parental smoking and *(c)* tobacco advertising bans on smoking habits.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is difficult to estimate the comparative influences of the different factors on smoking habits. The influence of each factor taken alone can be summarised as follows:

(a) increases in price have been shown to decrease consumption, though by a proportionately smaller amount. For example, a 10 per cent. increase in price will lead to a 3 per cent. to 6 per cent. decrease in consumption;

(b) children whose parents both smoke are two and a half times more likely to smoke than children whose parents do not smoke;

(c) the Department of Health discussion document, titled "Effect of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption", looks at the effect of tobacco advertising bans. It was published on 28 October and comments have been invited on it over the next three months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list for each study examined by her Department of the effect of advertising on tobacco consumption the final year of data, the level of participation in smoking in that year, the present level and the estimated reduction associated with a ban; and what conclusions she has drawn on the effect if these results were replicated in the United Kingdom in the same years;

(2) if she will list the information available to her of the year and the level of smoking when an advertising ban was introduced and the levels of smoking in this country in each of those years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The figures for those countries studied in the Department of Health discussion document "Effect of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption" are as follows:

Per cent.

Country	*Final year of data before ban*	*Smoking level in relevant country in that year*	*Present level in relevant country*	*Consumption reduction associated with ban*	*United Kingdom prevalence in year of ban*
Norway	1975	43	34	9	45 (1974)
Finland	1977	29	(1985) 26	7	42 (1976)
Canada	1989	[1]	32	4	32 (1988)
New Zealand	1990	28	26	5·6	30 (1990)

[1] Indicates that a prevalence figure is not available.

It is unclear whether the effect of a tobacco advertising ban in these countries would be replicated in the United Kingdom, given the fall in smoking in the United Kingdom from 45 per cent. of the population in 1974 to 30 per cent. in 1990 and the existing controls on tobacco advertising through the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising and promotion.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the contribution of the major factors in the reduction of smoking in the past 20 years in this country and in other countries since the introduction of a ban on advertising.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is difficult to estimate the contribution of the major factors in reducing smoking in this country. Perhaps the most important factor has been the increasing social unacceptability of smoking, with increased awareness of the health risks of smoking and passive smoking. It is also difficult to estimate the contribution of various factors in other countries. The Department of Health report, titled "Effect of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption", reviews the evidence on the effect of advertising bans in other countries.

Tinnitus

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been allocated for research into the cause and treatment of tinnitus in each of the past three years in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: It is not possible to identify centrally funds allocated for research into the treatment of tinnitus.

The main agency through which the Government support medical and clinical research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council (MRC) which receives its grant-in-aid from the Office of Science and Technology under the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

In 1991-92, the latest year for which figures are available, the MRC spent £129,000 on research into tinnitus. The council also supports a substantial volume of basic research into hearing which may have relevance to the understanding and treatment of this condition.

Influenza

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring her Department is undertaking as to the effectiveness of family health authorities, general medical practitioners, regional medical officers and district medical officers in implementing the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of 21 September on the immunisation of groups at risk from influenza; and if she will make a statement as to the results.

Mr. Sackville: The Department monitors the national uptake of influenza vaccine each year. In addition, the public health laboratory service's communicable disease surveillance centre monitors laboratory reports of influenza—and other respiratory tract infections—and provides regular information for health authorities through its communicable disease review. It is for directors of public health to decide what data to collect locally in assessing health care needs, including protection against influenza. Steps have been taken in the past two years to ensure that both doctors and patients are aware of the benefits of influenza immunisation for those patients who are at increased risk of complications should they develop influenza. This includes the production of guidance leaflets for general practitioners, revised guidance in the 1992 edition of "Immunisation against Infectious Disease" and a patient information poster for GPs' surgeries.

Hydatid Disease

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current incidence of hydatid disease.

Mr. Sackville: Interim figures from the public health laboratory service indicate an average of five cases a year presumed to be acquired in England and Wales for the last three years—1988 to 1990—of its current survey into hydatid disease. This figure may be subject to amendment by the time the survey is completed at the end of this year. The final results of the survey will be published.

Health Services, Coventry

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of people each year having NHS eye tests in the Coventry health authority area in each year since 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: Figures are not collected in respect of district health authorities. The numbers of national health service sight tests paid for in each financial year by the Coventry family health services authority are shown in the table.

Year	*Number of sight tests*
1987-88	75,470
1988-89	86,610
[1]1989-90	31,500
1990-91	28,200
1991-92	36,440

[1] From April 1989, national health service sight tests were restricted to certain groups in the population. The sight tests paid for in 1989-90 include some carried out prior to that date. The remainder paid for in 1989-90 do not represent a full year under the new system, because of the delay in payments. The figure for 1989-90 is not, therefore, directly comparable with 1990-91.

Health Care, London

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will formally consult on the establishment of a new St. Thomas's and Guy's national health service trust; and when she expects to announce her decision on whether to grant the new hospital trust status.

Dr. Mawhinney: Consultation on Sir Bernard Tomlinson's recommendation that the St. Thomas's and Guy's and Lewisham national health service trusts should be dissolved, and a new St. Thomas's and Guy's national health service trust, and a Lewisham national health service trust established will be managed by South East Thames regional health authority and should begin shortly. It will last for three months. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will announce her decision only when that consultation is completed.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members of the implementation group for Tomlinson on the future of London's health care; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chairman of the London implementation group will be Mr. Tim Chessells. I shall announce the other members in due course.

Deaths (Unemployed)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department has on the number of unemployed people who *(a)* committed suicide, *(b)* died prematurely or *(c)* suffered clinical depression in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not available centrally.

Family Breakdown

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline her policy on the prevention of family breakdown.

Mr. Yeo: The Department's view is that the family is the best place for a child to be brought up. This is reflected in the provisions of the Children Act 1989 which, among other requirements, gives local authorities the duty to provide such services for children in need to enable them to be brought up by their family, wherever possible.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of hospitals in the north-west of England are, or have applied to be, self-governing trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: Fifty-three per cent. of hospital and community service revenue allocated to North Western regional health authority is currently spent in national health service trusts, or units which have applied to be trusts. From April 1993 there will be eight NHS trusts in the region which provide acute hospital services. The proportion this represents depends on the management configuration of the remaining units, but it is likely that the vast majority will apply to become operational trusts from April 1994.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what forecasts she has made for the future ratio in the number of self-governing national health service trust hospitals to district health authority hospitals; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for local managers and clinicians to decide whether to seek NHS trust status, but we anticipate that all providers of NHS services—hospitals, community units and ambulance services—will become NHS trusts. From next April the proportion of hospital and community services revenue spent in NHS trusts will be 63 per cent. or more, depending on the decisions on outstanding third wave trust applications and deferred London teaching hospital trusts. We expect the vast majority of the remaining directly managed units to apply to become NHS trusts in April 1994.

Kidney Dialysis

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females (i) under and (ii) over the age of 55 years per million of the population, were accepted for kidney dialysis treatment in England in 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not collected centrally in the form requested. The number of new patients accepted for dialysis was 3,491—60.7 per million population—in 1990 and 3,430—59.7 pmp—in 1991.

No national health service patient is barred from treatment on the grounds of age. Whether any patient should receive a particular form of treatment is a matter for clinical decision by the doctor in charge of the patient.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional revenue would be raised in the financial year 1993-94 by an increase in prescription charges of *(a)* 1 per cent., *(b)* 5 per cent., *(c)* 10 per cent. and *(d)* 15 per cent.; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The requested information is in the table.

Estimated additional revenue in 1993-94 from prescription charge set at 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent., and 15 per cent. higher than current charge

Percentage increase in prescription charge	*Prescription charge (£)*	*Increased revenue (£ million)*
1	3·79	2
5	3·94	9
10	4·13	18
15	4·31	26

Regional Health Authorities (Property)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much, at current prices, was raised from the disposal of property in each regional health authority covering London in each year since 1990; what is the current projection of funds to be raised by such disposals in 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table:

£ million

RHA	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	[1]*1992-93*	[1]*1993-94*
North West Thames	22	33	25	50
North East Thames	16	22	21	8
South East Thames	9	11	20	25
South West Thames	17	20	10-15	10

[1] RHA projection.

All money realised from the sale of surplus NHS property is used for the benefit of patients.

Halcion

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members of the Medicines Commission which dealt with the appeal against the ban on Halcion.

Dr. Mawhinney: The appeal was heard by the Medicines Commission on 15 May 1992. The following members were present:

Professor Dame Rosalinde Hurley, DBE, LLB, MD DUniv (Surrey), FRCPath (Chairman). Professor of Microbiology, Royal Postgraduate Medical School's Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of London.

Professor I. D. Aitken, PhD, BVMS, MRCVS. Director of Animal Diseases Research Association, Moredun Research Institute, Edinburgh.

M. J. S. Butler Esq, BSc (Econ). Lecturer in Politics and Public Administration, University of Kent. Former Chairman of Canterbury and Thanet CHC and Former Chairman of Association of CHC's for England and Wales.

Dr. M. G. Carter, MB ChB BPharm, DipPharmMed, FRPharmS, MCPP, FFPM, Director, ICI Pharmaceuticals.

Professor J. G. Collee, CBE, MD, FRCPath, FRCP(E). Emeritus Professor of Medical Microbiology, University of Edinburgh.

Professor A. D. Dayan, DM, FRCP, FRCPath, FIBiol, FFPM. Professor of Toxicology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London.

Dr. Sheila Gore, MA, PhD. Senior Statistician, Medical Research Council Biostatistics Unit, Cambridge.

Miss Joan Greenleaf, OBE, BA, FRPharmS. Former Regional Pharmaceutical Officer, North East Thames RHA.

B. D. Hoskin, Esq, BVMS, MRCVS. Consultant to Veterinary Pharmaceutical Industry.

Professor C. N. Hudson, MChir, FRCS, FRCOG, FRACOG. Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London.

Professor T. M. Jones, BPharm, PhD, FRPharmS, CChem, FRSC, MCPP. Director, Research, Development and Medical, Wellcome Foundation Ltd.

Professor D. G. McDevitt, MD, DSc, FRCP, FRCPed, FRCPI, FFPM. Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, University of Dundee.

Dr. P. Pietroni, FRCGP, MRCP, DCH. General Medical Practitioner, London, Senior Lecturer in General Practice, Regent's College, Regent's Park, London.

Professor John Rhodes, MD, FRCOP, BSc, ChB. General Physician, University Hospital of Wales.

Professor P. S. J. Spencer, BPharm, PhD (London) DSc (Wales) CBiol, FIBiol, MCPP, FRPharmS. Professor of Pharmacology and Head of School, Welsh School of Pharmacy, University of Wales, Cardiff.

Professor D. W. Vere, MD, FRCP, FFPM (Hon). Professor of Therapeutics, University of London.

H. Cowan Wilson Esq, BVMS, FRCVS. General Veterinary Practitioner, Fife.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members of the committee dealing with the current appeal against the ban on Halcion.

Dr. Mawhinney: The members are:

Ms. Diana Cotton QC, Barrister *(Chairman)*.
Professor J. A. Edwardson, Director of the MRC, Neurological and Pathology Unit, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
Ms. Ann Foster, Director of the Scottish Consumer Council.
Professor David Marsden, Professor of Neurology at London University.
Professor Charles George, Professor of Clinical Pharmacology at Southampton University.

Lancashire Ambulance Authority

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the emergency response times for the Lancashire ambulance authority for each year since 1986 showing the percentage answered within eight minutes and within 20 minutes.

Mr. Sackville: Information on response times has only been collected centrally since 1987-88.

The available figures are shown in the table:

Year	*Total emergency calls*	*Percentage where response within 8 minutes*	*Percentage where response within 20 minutes*
1987-88	70,509	70·7	99·1
1988-89	70,561	71·2	99·2
1989-90	35,630	70·9	99·1
1990-91	73,640	67·1	98·9
1991-92[1]	71,414	67·3	98·9

[1] Provisional figures.

National Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was being spent on average on the national health service per week for each family in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Sackville: Total spending on the health service in the United Kingdom per week, for a family of four persons, was £11·05 in 1978-79—£31·28 at 1992-93 prices. Total spending in 1992-93 is planned to be £47·56, a real terms increase of 52 per cent.

Mental Handicap

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish for each district health authority for the current financial year *(a)* the planned capital and revenue expenditure on mental handicap—learning disabilities—services and *(b)* the value of assets relevant to mental handicap—learning disabilities—services listed in capital asset registers.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Housing

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to extend compulsory competitive tendering to the management of council housing.

Mr. Baldry: Yes.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to offer financial incentives to local authorities that encourage tenant participation in planning, management and service delivery of housing provisions.

Mr. Baldry: The extent and effectiveness with which local authorities encourage appropriate tenant participation is taken into account in housing investment programme (HIP) allocations. The best authorities already deploy significant resources to encourage greater tenant participation, and the HIP process will offer clear incentives to others to follow their lead. My Department also makes grants in support of tenant management under section 16 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986.

Housing Allocations

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue to local authorities guidelines on equal opportunities and anti-discrimination within housing allocation policies and homelessness service provision.

Mr. Baldry: My Department issued to local authorities in August last year a revised code of guidance on the homelessness legislation. On 30 January 1991 the Commission for Racial Equality, with the Secretary of State's backing, issued a code of practice giving practical guidance on eliminating racial discrimination and promoting equal opportunities in the field of rented housing.

House Condition Survey

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the 1991 house condition survey at an early date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The results of the 1991 English house condition survey will be published as soon as the analysis of the data is completed.

Staffordshire County Council

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet a delegation from Staffordshire county council to discuss the forthcoming standard spending assessment settlement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We would be pleased to receive a delegation as soon as proposals for the 1993-94 revenue support grant settlement have been announced.

Local Housing Companies

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to permit local authorities to set up local housing companies to stimulate new investment.

Mr. Baldry: Part V of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which sets out the statutory framework for local authority interests in companies, will be brought into force shortly. Any housing companies set up by local authorities would have to operate within this framework.

Housing Associations

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review current arrangements for the administration of the housing association grant and the monitoring of financial and service delivery performances by housing associations.

Mr. Baldry: These matters are the statutory responsibility of the Housing Corporation, in respect of housing associations registered in England, and Housing for Wales —Tai Cymru—in respect of associations registered in Wales.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidelines to housing associations in Wales on tenant participation within housing association management committees.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have been asked to reply. Housing for Wales is on course to issue guidelines to housing associations in Wales during this financial year.

Intentionality

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek the repeal of the intentionality clause in the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have no immediate plans for further legislative change, although the operation of the homelessness legislation is monitored closely.

Mortgage Debts

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to provide funding for local authorities and housing associations to enable them to take on mortgage debts.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Homelessness

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend section III of the Housing Act 1985 to cover all homeless people.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have no immediate plans for further legislative change, although the operation of the homelessness legislation is monitored closely.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tenants' organisations and individual tenants have responded to the consultation paper, "Competing for Quality in Housing"; and how many of these were in favour of compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Baldry: A total of 104 tenants' organisations and six individual tenants have responded to the Government's consultation paper, "Competing for Quality in Housing". A wide range of views were expressed on various aspects of the Government's proposals, including a substantial body of opinion that competitive tendering would lead to an improvement in standards.

Private Rented Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will introduce a new improvement grants system for landlords in the private rented sector;

(2) if he will introduce a new improvement grants system for landlords in the private rental sector.

Mr. Baldry: No, but we continue to keep the grant system, including provisions relating to private landlords, under review.

Housing Needs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the localised housing needs assessment research initiative currently carried out in England; and how much funding is provided by his Department to each initiative.

Mr. Baldry: Information about local housing needs assessments is not held centrally; funding is a matter for individual local authorities.

Subsidised Housing

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average subsidy from central and local government expenditure, including housing benefit for *(a)* council tenants, *(b)* housing association tenants and *(c)* private sector tenants, for the last period for which records are available.

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

Council tenants: £970 in 1990-91, comprising rent rebates and the housing element in housing revenue account subsidy.
Housing association tenants: £550 in 1990 (estimate from a sample survey; rent allowances only).
Private sector tenants: £320 in 1990 (estimate from sample survey: rent allowances arranged over all rent-paying tenants).

Building Research Establishment

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish key performance targets for the Building Research Establishment.

Mr. Baldry: The Building Research Establishment has been an executive agency since 2 April 1990. The following key targets have been set for 1992-93:

—£19,000 net contribution to the Exchequer
—income to cover full economic costs on a trading basis
—non-Exchequer component to be 9·4 per cent. of total net income from research commissions
—a new unit cost ratio for research and technical consultancy commissions to be applied. (The ratio is a measure of the agency's overhead costs.)

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Aid Target

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the 0·7 per cent. gross national product target level for overseas aid to developing countries to be reached by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have not set down a timetable for reaching the 0·7 per cent. target. Progress towards the target will depend upon our economic circumstances and on other priorities for public expenditure.

Aid Funds

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy, when allocating aid funds for eastern Europe, that resources will not be diverted from development projects in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 5 November 1992]*: The provision of economic assistance to central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has not been at the expense of aid to developing countries. Future allocations of resources will be made in the light of the outcome of the public expenditure survey which cannot be anticipated.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that emergency aid should not affect long-term development projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 5 November 1992]*: We provide emergency aid in response to specific humanitarian requirements, with the objective of minimising loss of life. This funding is provided separately from that for long-term development projects, although these sometimes help reduce the damage caused by natural disasters.

Timber

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect on the work of the Overseas Development Administration on the phasing out of the use of timber from unsustainable sources.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The most effective way of ensuring that timber comes from sustainable sources is to promote and support the sustainable management of forests. This is a central objective of many ODA-supported forestry projects. Individual projects are monitored to assess their performance against objectives. We are also supporting the International Tropical Timber Organisation, which promotes sustainable forest management with the objective of the production of internationally traded timber being from sustainable sources by the year 2000.

Development Budget

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate what percentage of the overseas development budget is spent in *(a)* each of the EC nations' currencies and *(b)* United States dollars; and if he will make a statement on the impact on his Department's budget of the change in the value of the pound sterling in relation to those currencies.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: About 0·04 per cent. of the gross external assistance programme is spent in other EC nations' currencies and about 3·6 per cent. in United States dollars. Given that exchange rates move up as well as down during the course of a year, it is not possible to say what impact recent changes in the value of sterling will have.

Angola

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the renewed fighting in Angola and on the steps he is able to take to help the international community to arrange a ceasefire.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We deplore the renewal of violence in Angola and fully support the efforts of the United Nations special representative there to consolidate the ceasefire arranged by the United Nations Secretary-General on the night of 1 November. We continue to work actively to this end in the United Nations and with EC partners and, in Angola, through our ambassador in Luanda.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *320*, what percentages of the United Kingdom and EC food for Somalia have come from EC food surpluses; and what commodities have been sent.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 5 November 1992]*: A list of the commodities provided under United Kingdom food aid to Somalia was given in my reply to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 29 October—columns *799-800*. Information on commodities provided as EC food aid was contained in the letter sent to the hon. Member by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development on 22 September, a copy of which has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Much of the food aid is provided through grants to NGO's, including the International Committee for the Red Cross, which are themselves responsible for the purchase from the most appropriate source, whether in the EC or elsewhere. The type of food provided for Somalia has not been determined by the availability of particular commodities in surplus in the EC, but rather by the requirements of those affected by the famine. The source of purchase is equally determined by timing, availability of food and transport, and price, rather than by the need to reduce EC surpluses.

No part of United Kingdom food aid for Somalia has come from EC intervention stocks. As to the percentage of EC food aid provided to Somalia from intervention, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman when we receive the information which we have requested from the European Commission, but I would not expect it to be a large proportion.

Zaire

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations have been made to the Government of Zaire on the question of human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding reply 5 November 1992]*: The European Community and its member states made a joint statement on 10 September noting with satisfaction the election of Prime Minister Tshisekedi by the national conference and the acceptance of his Government by both the conference and the president. This represents a further step towards democracy in Zaire and we wish the Government success in working towards creating a climate which will allow peaceful progress towards free and fair elections and social and economic recovery.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Miss Widdecombe: The information for each executive agency of the Department is shown in the tables.

1991-92 Staff numbers and costs

Grade	Benefit agency	Contribution agency	ITSA[1]	Resettlement agency
UG1-6[2]	236	7	24	1
UG7	304	17	91	4
SEO	701	78	301	7
HEO	3,530	356	764	30
LO1/EO	16,545	2,356	1,320	68
LO11/AO	29,749	3,408	840	104
AA	8,803	1,388	302	9
Secretarial support	3,870	60	204	212
Professional	19	0	0	0
Industrials/Others	100	0	1	8
Total	63,857	7,670	3,847	519
Costs £ million	875·547	108·824	76·763	10·388

1992-93 Estimated staff numbers and costs

Grade	Benefit agency	Contribution agency	ITSA[1]	Resettlement agency
UG1-6[2]	300	10	30	1
UG7	271	21	107	4
SEO	655	98	312	9
HEO	3,227	420	874	26
LO1/EO	15,936	2,438	1,393	60
LO11/AO	31,199	3,846	934	83
AA	8,738	1,792	230	7
Secretarial/Support	3,719	102	209	183
Professional	19	0	0	0
Industrials/Others	147	18	2	80
Total	64,211	8,745	4,091	453
Costs £ million	1,009·505	131·036	84·597	9·173

[1] ITSA—denotes Information Technology Services Agency.

[2] Includes medical staff of equivalent grades.

Notes:

1. Staff numbers quoted refer to full time equivalent permanent staff.
2. Staff numbers for 1991-92 have been calculated by averaging the quarterly staff in post figures.
3. The increase in the Benefits Agency staff numbers UG1-6, in 1992-93 is mainly due to:
   (a) additional medical staff for the new disability benefits and an increased number of war pension claims: and
   (b) transfer of medical staff from the Department of Health (regional medical service).
4. Costs relating to overtime, casuals and ERNIC are included.

Furniture Regulations

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend the rules for the social fund to take account of the pending regulations relating to second hand foam furniture in order that those entitled to social funds can meet in full the cost of second hand goods compliant with safety standards.

Mr. Scott: No change is required. The amount of awards under the discretionary part of the social fund are not specified in the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, or in the Secretary of State's directions or in his guidance to social fund officers. The guidance advises social fund officers to accept an amount requested by an applicant if it is within the broad range of prices that would be considered reasonable for an item of serviceable quality.

Income Support

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to make income support payable by direct credit transfer;

(2) under what circumstances income support can currently be paid direct into a claimant's bank or building society account; and what guidance is available on such direct payments for *(a)* Benefits Agency staff and *(b)* individual claimants.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of Income Support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Andrew Bowden, dated 5 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what plans he has to make Income Support payable by direct credit transfer; under what circumstances Income Support can currently be paid to a bank or building society account; and what guidance is available to both staff and customers.

The Citizen's Charter committed us to making the facility to have benefit paid by Automated Credit Transfer (ACT) as soon as possible. The Benefits Agency also sees the ACT facility as a means of improving service to its customers. ACT is already available for a range of benefits, including

Retirement Pensions and Child Benefit. As far as Income Support is concerned the introduction of ACT requires the adaptation of our computer systems, of our claim forms and of our literature. This will take some time, and the introduction of ACT for Income Support is planned for October 1993.

Currently, payment to a bank or building society can be considered where a customer has real difficulties in getting to a Post Office and has no one to act as an agent or appointee. An appointee is someone who is appointed to act on behalf of a customer who is unable to manage his or her own affairs.

All Districts have comprehensive written guidance covering arrangements for customers who may have difficulties, for example someone with health or mobility problems who has no 'carer' or regular visitor; these include direct payments where a bank or building society agree to the arrangement. The customer is, however, advised that the bank or building society may charge for the service.

In such cases, guidance to customers is provided via detailed correspondence. In addition (and generally) notifications and leaflets issued to customers advise them to contact their local Benefits Agency Office if they require further advice, disagree with a decision or have anything else they wish to raise.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in each parliamentary constituency in Coventry qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

Mr. Scott: The administration of social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Geoffrey Robinson, dated 5 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many households in each Parliamentary constituency in Coventry qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

The four constituencies in Coventry are all covered by the Agency's Coventry District, which consists of two offices, Coventry East and Coventry West. The boundaries of the constituencies do not correspond with those of the Agency's offices and it is not possible to give a figure for each constituency except at disproportionate cost. However, based on figures for those claiming Income Support in August 1992, it is estimated that 19,700 customers in the Coventry District may qualify for a cold weather payment should the area be triggered.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the delay in processing the disability living allowance claim of the Woolwich constituent, national insurance No. LW 263446C about whom the hon. Member for Woolwich wrote to him on 4 September.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief execitive of the Benfits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. J. Austin-Walker dated 5 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the nine months delay in processing the Disability Living Allowance claim of the Woolwich constituent, National Insurance No. LW 263446C.

I should explain that the claim to which you refer has now been considered by an adjudication officer and the decision notified direct to your constituent on 29 October.

I offer my sincere apologies for the delay in dealing with your constituent's claim. My reply to your letter of 4 September to the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People explains the position in greater detail.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Social Fund

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for social fund payments have been made in the Euston district office in each month of the past year; and how many were *(a)* granted money, *(b)* offered a loan and *(c)* refused.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Bichard to Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, dated 5 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Social Fund payments in Euston District.

Details of applications to the discretionary part of the Fund, grant awards, loan offers and refusals for discretionary payments at Euston District in each month of the past year are in the Annex attached.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Social fund information—Euston District—October 1991 to September 1992

	Applications	*Grant awards*	*Loan offers*	*Refusals*
October 1991	3,177	183	1,652	984
November 1991	2,681	204	1,346	1,191
December 1991	2,967	239	1,393	1,177
January 1992	3,105	238	1,343	1,274
February 1992	2,677	208	1,177	1,197
March 1992	2,963	240	1,138	1,399
April 1992	2,696	255	1,035	1,368
May 1992	2,605	224	1,029	1,242
June 1992	1,656	140	709	636
July 1992	2,786	152	1,207	1,038

	Applications	Grant awards	Loan offers	Refusals
August 1992	2,890	241	1,326	1,184
Septeber 1992	2,923	174	1,074	1,125

September 1992 data is the latest available.

Local Offices

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when his Department's new Finsbury Park local office will be opened; and if he will make a statement on the future of the Highgate DSS local office.

Mr. Burt: The provision of new, and the future of existing, local DSS offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, dated 5 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the new Finsbury Park local office and the future of the Highgate office.

Finsbury Park

The main work on the new Finsbury Park local office was completed on 23 October 1992. Full completion, following the installation of computer cabling, is expected to be achieved by 17 November and the intention is to open to the public on 30 November 1992. Until then customers will continue to be served from the existing premises.

Highgate

The search for a new building to rehouse the Highgate office continues and our service will, therefore, remain at Archway Tower for the time being.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Pensioners

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the proportion of *(a)* all pensioners, *(b)* single male pensioners, *(c)* single female pensioners, *(d)* pensioner couples, *(e)* single women aged 75 years or over and *(f)* single men aged 75 years or over, who are in receipt of an occupational pension on the basis of the most recent family expenditure survey data available; and for each group, what is the mean and median amount received.

Miss Widdecombe: The most recent year for which information is available is 1988. The table sets out the information requested.

Proportion of pensioner units in receipt of an occupational pension 1988

Group	Percentage with an occupational pension (per cent.)	Mean amount of occupational pension for those in receipt (£ per week)	Median amount of occupational pension for those in receipt (£ per week)
Single men aged 65-74	66	42·70	24·90
Single men aged 75 and over	[1]60	[1]47·30	[1]29·60
All single men aged 65 and over	63	44·80	26·40
Single women aged 60-74	53	41·90	25·80
Single women aged 75 and over	39	32·70	18·40
All single women aged 60 and over	46	38·00	21·00
Pensioner couples	70	68·00	33·90
All pensioner units	57	54·10	27·20

[1] Based upon a sample of less than 100 cases.

Notes:

1. Estimates are based upon data from "Occupational Pension Schemes 1987", a survey by the Government Actuary (HMSO) and the 1988 Family Expenditure Survey. Pension amounts are at 1988 levels.
2. Pensioner couples are defined as couples in which the husband is over state pension age; pensioner units are defined as pensioner couples or single people over state pension age.
3. Figures in square brackets are based upon a sample of less than 100 cases.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what number and proportion of all pensioners had no income from any source other than from state benefits for each of the last 10 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The table sets out information for the 10 years ending in 1988, the latest year for which information is available.

Year	Percentage of pensioners with no income other than state benefits	Number of pensioners with no income other than state benefits (Thousands)
1979	22	1,500
1980	22	n/a
1981	21	1,400
1982	20	n/a
1983	18	1,250
1984	21	1,450
1985	17	1,200
1986	19	1,300
1987	16	1,150
1988	16	1,150

Notes:

1. Estimates are based upon data from the 1979-1988 Family Expenditure Surveys.
2. Estimates relate to pensioner units. They are defined as single people over state pension age or couples in which the husband is over state pension age.

3. Accurate estimates of the number of pensioner units in 1980 and 1982 with no income from sources other than state benefits could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the actual weekly amount received by all pensioners as *(a)* total social security benefits, *(b)* occupational pensions and *(c)* savings income for each of the last 10 years; what were the gross and net weekly total figures; and what was the real terms increase over the last 10 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The table sets out information for the 10 years ending in 1988, the latest year for which information is available. Information about average income from earnings is also included as net income must be derived from total gross income.

The average income of pensioner units by source

(£ per week, 1988 prices)

Year	*State Pension/ Benefit*	*Occupational Pension*	*Savings income*	*Earnings*	*Total gross income*	*Tax/NI*	*Total net income*
1979	53·00	13·90	9·50	10·40	86·80	7·20	79·70
1980	53·80	13·80	10·00	9·90	87·50	6·20	81·30
1981	56·50	15·10	12·10	9·20	92·90	7·70	85·20
1982	58·20	15·50	10·60	7·30	91·50	7·10	84·50
1983	61·20	19·00	14·00	8·30	102·50	9·10	93·30
1984	61·20	18·20	12·70	8·20	100·40	8·10	92·30
1985	60·90	21·00	14·50	6·50	102·90	9·10	93·80
1986	63·10	21·70	15·50	7·50	107·80	9·80	98·00
1987	62·10	24·40	21·90	8·30	116·70	11·90	104·80
1988	60·70	27·70	20·00	9·70	118·10	11·70	106·30
Real increase	14 per cent.	99 per cent.	110 per cent.	−6 per cent.	36 per cent.	—	34 per cent.

Notes:

1. Source: Family Expenditure Survey.
2. Component incomes by source are rounded to the nearest 10p.
3. Components may not sum to totals owing to rounding.
4. Percentage increases are calculated using unrounded figures.
5. A pensioner unit is defined as a single person over state pension age or a couple in which the husband is over stage pension age.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what proportion of all pensioners, single pensioners and pensioner couples have total incomes *(a)* £1, *(b)* £2, *(c)* £3, *(d)* £4 and *(e)* £5 above income support levels.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the tables. As this question seeks to establish pensioners' incomes in relation to income support levels the criteria for assessing pensioner entitlement to income support have been used, i.e. "pensioners" are taken to be those aged 60 or over, and the average income bands exclude income derived from sources which would not be taken into account for income support—eg. housing benefit or attendance allowance.

Number of pensioners whose income for IS purposes is within a banded range of their IS levels

Range	*Singles*	*Couples*	*Total*
£0-£1	75,000	20,000	95,000
£1-£2	65,000	25,000	90,000
£2-£3	65,000	20,000	85,000
£3-£4	60,000	25,000	85,000
£4-£5	80,000	20,000	100,000

Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5,000.

Proportion of pensioners whose income for IS purposes is within a banded range of their IS levels.

Range	*Singles (percentage)*	*Couples (percentage)*	*Total*
£0-£1	2	1	1
£1-£2	1	1	1
£2-£3	1	1	1
£3-£4	1	1	1
£4-£5	2	1	1

Note: Each percentage gives the proportion of the total pensioner caseload for the column. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Source: Family Expenditure Surveys 1987-88-89 modelled at 1992-93 prices and benefit levels.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what proportion of pensioners receive income support.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 3 November at column *152*.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the number of pensioners entitled to claim income support and housing benefit who do not do so.

Mr. Burt: We will publish the latest available estimates for take-up of income-related benefits shortly.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioner households have been dependent on state benefits for at least 75 per cent. of their income in each of the last 10 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The table sets out information for the 10 years ending in 1988, the latest year for which information is available. Data on pensioners' income is not available in household form so it is provided on the basis of pensioner "units".

Percentage of pensioners dependent on state benefits for 75 per cent. of their income

Year	*Percentage*
1979	62
1980	61
1981	61

Year	*Percentage*
1982	59
1983	60
1984	58
1985	58
1986	54
1987	53
1988	53

Notes:

1. Estimates are based upon data from the 1979-1988 Family Expenditure Surveys.
2. Estimates relate to pensioner units. They are defined as single people over state pension age or couples in which the husband is over state pension age.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* All staff are expected to be able to deal from time to time with the domestic implications of EC legislation or activities. Other than that there are currently 20.5 staff in the Department whose sole or main task is dealing with work directly generated by the European Community or the United Kingdom's current presidency of the Council of Ministers. In addition a number of staff in the Benefits Agency and Contributions Agency are engaged in the payment of benefits to, and collection of national insurance contributions from, people living abroad, including in the European Community.

WALES

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to paragraphs 67-8 of Cm 2074, if he will publish figures of the percentage of regional selective assistance projects which did not start in each of the years 1989, 1990, 1991 and the first half of 1992; and what was the percentage undershoot on the jobs actually achieved compared with the forecast made at the time of regional selective offer for each of the years 1989, 1990, 1991 and the first half of 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: Aggregate information on project start dates is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. As noted in paragraph 66 of Cm 2074, the Welsh Office departmental report contains information on employment actually achieved by projects which are largely completed.

Welsh Language

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, (1) how many staff posts there are within his Department at the present time; and how many of these posts *(a)* require the speaking of Welsh to be a prerequisite, *(b)* consider the speaking of Welsh to be desirable and *(c)* consider linguistic capacity in neutral terms;

(2) how many staff are employed in each section of his Department; and how many staff members in each section speak Welsh;

(3) how many members of staff are currently employed by the Welsh Office on a part-time and full-time basis; how many staff members do not speak the Welsh language; and how many are currently attending Welsh learner courses;

(4) if he will make it his policy to offer paid time-off work to employees wishing to attend courses to learn Welsh.

Mr. David Hunt: There are currently 2,318 permanent staff employed in my Department, of whom 220 are part time. All staff who would like to learn Welsh are strongly encouraged to do so. Training is through courses and the use of distance learning packages. Paid time off and departmental sponsorship are available. The numbers involved are not held centrally. The general staffing requirement is for there to be adequate numbers of Welsh-speaking staff in all areas to meet the needs of clients. There are currently nine specific posts which require a good working knowledge of Welsh.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total publicity budget of his Department for the latest year for which figures are available; how much of the budget has been designated for publicity literature; and, of that proportion, how much has specifically been spent on Welsh language publicity materials.

Mr. David Hunt: Publicity expenditure in 1992-93 is planned to be about £2,500,000. No designation for publicity literature is possible as the allocation of funds to different media often takes place only as projects develop.

Of the £726,890 spent on publicity materials this year, £153,180 was on Welsh only and £404,382 on bilingual material.

Coal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, pursuant to his oral reference to the plan for German coal of 21 October, *Official Report*, columns 526-27, he will place in the Library a copy of the German plan 2005.

Mr. David Hunt: A copy of Kohlekonzept 2005 has been placed in the Library of the House today.

River Dee

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will institute a review of the River Dee fishing byelaws as they impinge upon those River Dee fishermen who fish for fluke, mullet, cockles and shrimps; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will institute an investigation into the connection between the safety of River Dee fishermen in 14 ft boats and the implementation of the fishing byelaws; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Manufacturing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the work force in Wales was engaged in manufacturing in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* at the latest date.

Mr. David Hunt: In June 1979, 30·5 per cent. of employees were employed in manufacturing. In June 1992 the figure was 23·1 per cent.

The table gives a breakdown of manufacturing employment for these two years with, for comparison, employment figures for energy and water supply industries.

Employment figures for Wales by industrial division

	[1]*SIC(80) Division*	*June 1979* *Employees (thousands)*	*June 1979* *Percentage of total employees*	*June 1992* *Employees (thousands)*	*June 1992* *Percentage of total employees*
Metal manufacture and chemicals	(2)	105	10·2	44	4·6
Metal goods, engineering and vehicles	(3)	121	11·7	98	10·3
Other manufacturing (including Foods)	(4)	89	8·6	79	8·3
Total manufacturing	(2-4)	315	30·5	220	23·1
Energy and water supply (including coal, coke and oil)	(1)	62	6·0	22	2·3

[1]Standard Industrial Classification (Revised) 1980.
Source: Employment Department.

Maneot Community Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future use of the former Maneot community hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The future use of this former hospital will be a matter for the prospective Gofal Cymuned Clwydian community care NHS trust. The trust application included the hospital site as part of the estate which will form the NHS trust. The trust intends to use the former hospital as its administrative headquarters. This proposal was welcomed by the health authority and it is expected that the NHS trust staff will occupy the site by the end of the year.

Pit Closures

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of pit closures in east Clwyd upon communities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman will know, a review of the proposed closure of 21 pits is under way and a moratorium has been announced on these proposals whilst the review takes place. My Department is in discussions with the North East Wales training and enterprise council, the Welsh Development Agency and local authorities on measures to promote economic diversification and employment opportunities in the area.

Service Industries

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the work force in Wales is engaged in the service industries for 1979 and at the latest date.

Mr. David Hunt: In June 1979, 55·4 per cent. of employees were employed in the service industries. In June 1992 the figure was 68·6 per cent.

The table gives a breakdown of employment in the service sector for these two years.

Employment figures for Wales by industrial division

	SIC(80)[1] *Division*	*June 1979* *Employees (thousands)*	*June 1979* *Percentage of total employees*	*June 1992* *Employees (thousands)*	*June 1992* *Percentage of total employees*
Wholesale distribution, hotels, catering, repairs and retail distribution	(6)	170	16·5	183	19·2
Transport and communication	(7)	58	5·6	49	5·2
Banking, insurance and finance	(8)	44	4·3	89	9·4
Other services	(9)	299	28·9	332	34·9
Total Services	(6-9)	572	55·4	653	68·6

Source: Employment Department.
[1] Standard Industrial Classification (Revised) 1980.

Traumatic Brain Injury

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision there is in each county of Wales for patients suffering traumatic brain injury.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally. Health authorities are responsible for assessing and meeting the local needs of their residents guided by the principles and targets of the protocol for investment in health gain on injuries, issued by the Department in June 1992.

Investment, Clwyd

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to attract outside investment into Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: Considerable success continues to be achieved in attracting inward investment to Clwyd, and 47 projects were recorded in 1991-92 promising over 2,300 jobs. A wide range of measures will continue to be taken to build on that success, including the provision of industrial sites and infrastructure, and targeted approaches to companies. A conference on EC research and development has been arranged to take place in Clwyd shortly which will help to focus interest in the county from other parts of Europe.

River Pollution

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what measures are being taken to tackle the industrial pollution of Welsh rivers;

(2) what measures are being undertaken to tackle the agricultural pollution of Welsh rivers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the many initiatives being taken to tackle industrial and agricultural pollution of rivers is contained in the Government's White Paper on the Environment "This Common Inheritance" and in the first and second year reports thereon, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Homelessness

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many people were accepted by local authorities in Wales as homeless between *(a)* January and September 1992 and *(b)* January and September 1991;

(2) how many homeless inquiries were made to local authorities in Wales under part III of the Housing Act 1985 between *(a)* January and September 1992 and *(b)* January and September 1991.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Homelessness data for the period January to September 1992 are not yet available. Data for January to September 1991 are given in the table:

Incidence of homelessness, January to September 1991

	Number of inquiries	*Number of persons in households accepted as homeless*
Aberconwy	137	85
Alyn and Deeside	204	419
Arfon	35	78
Blaenau Gwent	374	645
Brecknock	90	265
Cardiff	2,146	3,080
Carmarthen	62	147
Ceredigion	115	270
Colwyn	52	127
Cynon Valley	474	899
Delyn	876	530
Dinefwr	181	321
Dwyfor	60	93
Glyndwr	33	65
Islwyn	291	288
Llanelli	120	302
Lliw Valley	127	201
Meirionnydd	142	204
Merthyr Tydfil	132	291
Monmouth	196	317
Montgomeryshire	135	209
Neath	400	487
Newport	830	2,198
Ogwr	751	1,137
Port Talbot (Afan)	357	263
Preseli Pembrokeshire	115	199
Radnorshire	16	37
Rhondda	111	271
Rhuddlan	114	145
Rhymney Valley	726	318
South Pembrokeshire	74	159
Swansea	1,094	1,393
Taff-Ely	505	542
Torfaen	918	809
Vale of Glamorgan	810	947
Wrexham Maelor	776	558
Ynys Môn	72	93
Wales	13,649	18,392

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will issue guidelines to local authorities limiting the use of bed-and-breakfast hostels to house homeless people;

(2) if he will issue guidelines to local authorities clearly defining their obligations on the treatment of homeless applicants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: These matters are covered in the "Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities", a revised edition of which was issued by the Department on 15 August 1991.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local authorities in Wales currently operate a 24-hour homelessness service.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Tenants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local authorities in Wales have approved tenants' relations officers to assist private rented sector tenants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new lets have been created in the private rented sector in Wales in each year since 1985; and how many such lets have been short term in each of those years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available centrally.

Rural Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to *(a)* increase the proportion of housing association grants currently allocated to rural areas and *(b)* allow a decrease in the borrowing requirements of rural housing associations.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that improvement grants for rural houses in Wales are issued only on the basis of a commitment that the property will stay in local ownership for a predetermined period and that the property is the only and principal home of the applicant.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Home renovation grants are available where the property is the only or main home of the applicant. We have no plans to change these rules.

Council House Sales

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been recouped from the sale of council houses in Wales in each of the last five years; and how much of this money has been redistributed for social housing provision.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In-year receipts from the sale of council houses are set out in the table. Information on the spending of usable receipts by authorities on social housing provision is not held centrally.

In-year receipts from the sale of council houses[1]

	£ million
1987-88	69·2
1988-89	118·9
1989-90	148·0
1990-91	76·0
1991-92	54·6

[1] Including the repayment of principal on local authority mortgages on council house sales.

Housing Research

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the localised housing needs assessment research programmes currently operational in Wales; and how much funding is provided by his Department to each programme.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information about these assessments is not held centrally; funding is a matter for individual local authorities.

Evictions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many private rented sector tenant evictions have occurred in Wales in each year since 1985.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available centrally.

Rented Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to develop an integrated strategy for rented housing in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I look to local housing authorities to develop integrated strategies across all housing tenures.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of homes available in Wales for rent in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* the private sector in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The total number of homes available for rent are shown in table 1.3 of "Welsh Housing Statistics No. 12 1992" a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Housing Associations

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to make funds available to local authorities and housing associations to provide sell-and-stay schemes to low-income home owners living in poor condition houses.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Our renovation grant system is designed to assist low-income home owners without a change of tenure.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to instruct Tai Cymru to encourage housing associations in Wales to purchase properties from the existing housing stock in addition to encouraging new building.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Housing for Wales already encourages housing associations to purchase from existing stock where it is appropriate and cost effective to do so.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish statutory minimum space and quality standards for housing association housing provision in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for Housing for Wales to decide upon appropriate space and quality standards for housing association provision in Wales.

Independent Housing Advice

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funding is currently granted by his Department to independent housing advice services in Wales; and what plans he has to increase the level of funding.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department has allocated £377,877 in grant aid to independent housing advice services in Wales for the 1992-93 financial year.

In addition, the Department has allocated a total of £556,036 to the Home Improvement Agency initiative in Wales which provides help and advice on home improvements, maintenance and repairs to elderly and disabled home occupiers.

Applications for future funding will be considered in the light of available resources.

Health Authorities

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the attributes he regards as essential for candidates for the post of membership of health authorities in Wales;

(2) what inquiries he made under the procedure specified in paragraph 52 of Questions of Procedure for Ministers before making the appointments to Welsh health authorities announced on 30 October.

Mr. David Hunt: Appointments are made on the basis of aptitude and merit. Individual candidates possess a range of attributes and I select those with the most appropriate combination of abilities and experience for each particular post. In doing so, I take account of such matters as expertise in running organisations, previous committee experience, and the extent of other public service work that candidates have undertaken.

Prior to the introduction of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 there was a statutory obligation to consult various specified organisations about health authority appointments. No such requirement presently exists, and I did not publicly invite nominations. It is however, my continued intention to comply with paragraph 52 and accordingly I welcome any suggestions from the Opposition parties and others as to names of those who might be considered suitable for appointment.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in each local education authority in Wales are eligible to apply for grant-maintained status; how many in each case have held ballots under section 61 of the Education Reform Act 1988; how many ballots in each case resulted in votes to seek grant-maintained status, and how many of these have been the subject of section 12 or 13 reorganisation proposals; how many ballots in each case resulted in votes against seeking grant-maintained status and how many of these have been subject to section 12 or 13 notices; and what are the totals in each category.

Sir Wyn Roberts: All primary and secondary schools in Wales are eligible to apply to become grant-maintained schools. Details of the number per authority can be found in table 1·02 of Welsh Office publication "Statistics of Education in Wales: Schools No. 5, 1991", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

To date, four primary schools and 10 secondary schools have balloted on whether to proceed with an application to the Secretary of State for grant-maintained status. All the primary schools and six of the secondary school ballots resulted in a majority in favour of applying for grant-maintained status. Of these, two of the primary schools and three of the secondary schools were the subject of section 12 or 13 reorganisation proposals. None of the secondary schools where the vote was against applying for grant maintained status was the subject of section 12 or 13 notices.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in how many ballots in Wales under section 61 of the Education Reform Act 1988, where a simple majority of parents voted in favour of seeking grant-maintained status, the proportion of such parents was *(a)* above 69 per cent., *(b)* between 60 and 69 per cent., *(c)* between 50 and 59 per cent., *(d)* between 40 and 49 per cent., *(e)* between 30 and 39 per cent. and *(f)* below 30 per cent. of the number of parents eligible to vote.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

	Per cent.
i.above 69	2
ii.between 60 and 69	3
iii.between 50 and 59	3
iv.between 40 and 49	1
v.between 30 and 39	nil
vi.below 30	1

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many ballots, in Wales, on grant-maintained status have resulted in participation rates *(a)* above 79 per cent., *(b)* between 70 and 79 per cent., *(c)* between 60 and 69 per cent., *(d)* between 50 and 59 per cent. and *(e)* below 50 per cent.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

	Per cent.
i. Above 79	3
ii. Between 70 and 79	4
iii. Between 60 and 69	5
iv. Between 50 nd 59	2
v. Below 50	Nil

Mental Handicap

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each district health authority for the current financial year *(a)* the planned capital and revenue expenditure on mental handicap—learning disabilities—services and *(b)* the value of assets relevant to mental handicap—learning disabilities—services listed in capital asset registers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not held centrally.

Clinical Scientific Services

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many audiology scientists are employed in Wales; and how many are employed within each health authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Complete information is only available centrally on the total number of clinical scientists in post. Breakdowns of these figures into detailed occupation category are not considered reliable.

Singleton Hospital

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, column *388*, if he will list the 19 representations in support of trust status for Singleton hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is not my right hon. Friend's policy to publish, or otherwise publicly identify, the individual representations that he has received as a result of public consultations on NHS trust applications.

EDUCATION

Pre-school Education

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average of the proportion of three and four-year-olds in pre-school education in each local education authority; and what is the national average.

Mr. Forth: The percentage of three and four-year-olds attending maintained nursery schools or nursery classes in maintained primary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1991 are given in Statistical Bulletin 5/92 which is available in the Library. In England in January 1991, 25 per cent. of the three and four-year-old population were in such schools or classes.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of nursery places available per 1,000 children for each local education authority in England and Wales for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not collected centrally. Details of the number of pupils in nursery schools and classes in each local education authority in England in January 1991 is contained in Statistical Bulletin 5/92 which is available in the Library. Information for January 1992 is not available. Information on schools in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Birmingham Schools

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what review he has made of the quality of education in schools in the city of Birmingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is kept informed about the quality of education in Birmingham through a variety of sources, including material which is published nationally. My right hon. Friend has made it clear on a number of occasions that he considers there is significant room for improvement.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in each local education authority in England are eligible to apply for grant-maintained status; how many in each case have held ballots under section 61 of the Education Reform Act 1988; how many ballots in each case resulted in votes to seek grant-maintained status, and how many of these have been the subject of section 12 or 13 reorganisation proposals; how many ballots in each case resulted in votes against seeking grant-maintained status and how many of these have been subject to section 12 or 13 notices; and what are the totals in each category.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the following tables. A reply to the question of how many schools which voted against grant-maintained status have been subject to section 12 or 13 notices would incur disproportionate cost.

Table A
Secondary Schools

LEA	*Eligible schools*	*Number of ballots*	*Votes in favour*	*Votes against*
Avon	61	2	2	0
Barking	8	0	0	0
Barnet	21	3	3	0
Barnsley	15	2	0	2
Bedfordshire	31	9	6	3
Berkshire	55	9	9	0
Bexley	17	2	1	1
Birmingham	83	12	9	3
Bolton	18	1	1	0
Bradford	24	4	4	0
Brent	14	5	4	1
Bromley	17	13	12	1
Buckinghamshire	45	7	7	0
Bury	15	0	0	0
Calderdale	17	3	3	0
Cambridgeshire	45	11	8	3
Camden	11	0	0	0
Cheshire	72	7	3	4
City	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	53	1	0	1
Cornwall	32	0	0	0
Coventry	19	0	0	0
Croydon	22	4	3	1
Cumbria	44	9	9	0
Derbyshire	61	10	7	3
Devon	64	8	5	3
Doncaster	17	1	0	1
Dorset	41	11	11	0
Dudley	23	5	4	1
Durham	45	1	0	1
Ealing	13	8	6	2
Enfield	17	0	0	0
East Sussex	38	0	0	0
Essex	108	41	38	3
Gateshead	13	1	0	1

LEA	*Eligible schools*	*Number of ballots*	*Votes in favour*	*Votes against*
Gloucestershire	42	22	16	6
Greenwich	15	0	0	0
Hackney	10	1	0	1
Hammersmith	9	1	1	0
Hampshire	104	10	8	2
Haringey	9	0	0	0
Harrow	11	1	0	1
Havering	19	4	3	1
Hereford and Worcestershire	47	2	1	1
Hertfordshire	79	16	13	3
Hillingdon	17	11	11	0
Hounslow	14	2	2	0
Humberside	64	1	0	1
Isle of Wight	5	0	0	0
Isles of Scilly	1	0	0	0
Islington	9	0	0	0
Kensington	5	1	1	0
Kent	129	49	46	3
Kingston-upon-Thames	10	2	2	0
Kirklees	28	3	2	1
Knowsley	11	1	0	1
Lambeth	10	3	3	0
Lancashire	110	11	6	5
Leeds	46	0	0	0
Leicestershire	74	3	2	1
Lewisham	14	1	0	1
Lincolnshire	63	21	21	0
Liverpool	36	2	1	1
Manchester	31	1	0	1
Merton	10	0	0	0
Newcastle	13	1	0	1
Newham	14	1	1	0
Norfolk	54	15	11	4
North Tyneside	13	0	0	0
North Yorkshire	59	1	0	1
Northamptonshire	41	14	11	3
Northumberland	16	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	79	3	2	1
Oldham	15	1	0	1
Oxfordshire	35	1	0	1
Redbridge	14	1	0	1
Richmond-upon-Thames	8	0	0	0
Rochdale	18	3	1	2
Rotherham	18	0	0	0
St. Helens	13	0	0	0
Salford	21	1	0	1
Salop	39	2	2	0
Sandwell	25	3	1	2
Sefton	23	0	0	0
Sheffield	32	2	1	1
Solihull	15	2	1	1
Somerset	31	1	1	0
South Tyneside	11	0	0	0
Southwark	15	1	1	0
Staffordshire	72	3	2	1
Stockport	18	1	0	1
Suffolk	38	0	0	0
Sunderland	17	0	0	0
Surrey	58	12	12	0
Sutton	14	8	8	0
Tameside	20	3	1	2
Tower Hamlets	14	2	1	1
Trafford	16	3	2	1
Wakefield	20	0	0	0
Walsall	22	7	3	4
Waltham Forest	18	1	1	0
Wandsworth	11	8	7	1
Warwickshire	38	9	8	1
West Sussex	39	2	0	2
Westminster	8	0	0	0
Wigan	24	1	1	0
Wiltshire	39	4	3	1
Wirral	23	1	1	0
Wolverhampton	20	3	3	0

Table B
Middle Schools

LEA	*Eligible schools*	*Number of ballots*	*Votes in favour*	*Votes against*
Avon	0	0	0	0
Barking	0	0	0	0
Barnet	0	0	0	0
Barnsley	0	0	0	0
Bedfordshire	41	2	1	1
Berkshire	14	1	1	0
Bexley	0	0	0	0
Birmingham	13	0	0	0
Bolton	0	0	0	0
Bradford	63	1	1	0
Brent	0	0	0	0
Bromley	0	0	0	0
Buckinghamshire	61	2	1	1
Bury	0	0	0	0
Calderdale	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	0
Camden	0	0	0	0
Cheshire	0	0	0	0
City	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	0	0	0	0
Cornwall	0	0	0	0
Coventry	0	0	0	0
Croydon	0	0	0	0
Cumbria	0	0	0	0
Derbyshire	0	0	0	0
Devon	15	0	0	0
Doncaster	39	0	0	0
Dorset	26	0	0	0
Dudley	0	0	0	0
Durham	0	0	0	0
Ealing	31	1	1	0
Enfield	0	0	0	0
East Sussex	0	0	0	0
Essex	0	0	0	0
Gateshead	0	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0
Greenwich	0	0	0	0
Hackney	0	0	0	0
Hammersmith	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	73	6	5	1
Haringey	0	0	0	0
Harrow	18	0	0	0
Havering	0	0	0	0
Hereford and Worcestershire	38	1	1	0
Hertfordshire	9	0	0	0
Hillingdon	0	0	0	0
Hounslow	0	0	0	0
Humberside	0	0	0	0
Isle of Wight	16	0	0	0
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0
Islington	0	0	0	0
Kensington	0	0	0	0
Kent	9	4	3	1
Kingston-upon-Thames	0	0	0	0
Kirklees	10	2	1	1
Knowsley	0	0	0	0
Lambeth	0	0	0	0
Lancashire	0	0	0	0
Leeds	52	0	0	0
Leicestershire	9	0	0	0
Lewisham	0	0	0	0
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0
Liverpool	0	0	0	0
Manchester	0	0	0	0
Merton	14	0	0	0
Newcastle	9	0	0	0
Newham	0	0	0	0
Norfolk	59	7	6	1
North Tyneside	15	0	0	0
North Yorks	2	0	0	0
Northants	24	4	2	2
Northumberland	45	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	8	3	1	2
Oldham	0	0	0	0
Oxfordshire	10	0	0	0

LEA	*Eligible schools*	*Number of ballots*	*Votes in favour*	*Votes against*
Redbridge	0	0	0	0
Richmond-upon-Thames	0	0	0	0
Rochdale	0	0	0	0
Rotherham	0	0	0	0
St. Helens	0	0	0	0
Salford	0	0	0	0
Salop	0	0	0	0
Sandwell	0	0	0	0
Sefton	0	0	0	0
Sheffield	31	0	0	0
Solihull	0	0	0	0
Somerset	9	0	0	0
South Tyneside	0	0	0	0
Southwark	0	0	0	0
Staffordshire	14	0	0	0
Stockport	0	0	0	0
Suffolk	39	0	0	0
Sunderland	0	0	0	0
Surrey	101	0	0	0
Sutton	0	0	0	0
Tameside	0	0	0	0
Tower Hamlets	0	0	0	0
Trafford	0	0	0	0
Wakefield	28	0	0	0
Walsall	0	0	0	0
Waltham Forest	0	0	0	0
Wandsworth	0	0	0	0
Warwickshire	56	0	0	0
West Sussex	29	0	0	0
Westminster	0	0	0	0
Wigan	0	0	0	0
Wiltshire	5	0	0	0
Wirral	0	0	0	0
Wolverhampton	0	0	0	0

Table C
Primary Schools

LEA	*Eligible schools*	*Number of ballots*	*Votes in favour*	*Votes Against*
Avon	369	1	0	1
Barking	54	0	0	0
Barnet	89	1	0	1
Barnsley	98	1	1	0
Bedfordshire	218	2	2	0
Berkshire	265	3	3	0
Bexley	67	2	2	0
Birmingham	324	0	0	0
Bolton	107	1	1	0
Bradford	165	0	0	0
Brent	65	0	0	0
Bromley	78	2	2	0
Buckinghamshire	226	4	3	1
Bury	72	0	0	0
Calderdale	94	1	1	0
Cambridgeshire	264	8	7	1
Camden	41	0	0	0
Cheshire	460	4	3	1
City	1	0	0	0
Cleveland	202	0	0	0
Cornwall	250	1	1	0
Coventry	110	0	0	0
Croydon	99	0	0	0
Cumbria	312	3	3	0
Derbyshire	450	6	3	3
Devon	433	1	0	1
Doncaster	105	0	0	0
Dorset	191	1	0	1
Dudley	83	0	0	0
Durham	297	0	0	0
Ealing	61	1	1	0
East Sussex	218	0	0	0
Enfield	69	0	0	0
Essex	579	15	13	2
Gateshead	85	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	264	4	3	1

LEA	*Eligible schools*	*Number of ballots*	*Votes in favour*	*Votes Against*
Greenwich	77	0	0	0
Hackney	70	1	1	0
Hammersmith	39	1	1	0
Hampshire	508	6	5	1
Haringey	77	0	0	0
Harrow	35	0	0	0
Havering	74	0	0	0
Hereford and Worcester	281	0	0	0
Hertfordshire	440	7	4	3
Hillingdon	73	4	4	0
Hounslow	63	0	0	0
Humberside	354	1	1	0
Isle of Wight	46	0	0	0
Isles of Scilly	4	0	0	0
Islington	57	0	0	0
Kensington	27	0	0	0
Kent	575	8	7	1
Kingston-upon-Thames	36	0	0	0
Kirklees	161	2	0	2
Knowsley	64	0	0	0
Lambeth	78	1	1	0
Lancashire	601	1	1	0
Leeds	224	0	0	0
Leicestershire	331	0	0	0
Lewisham	74	1	1	0
Lincolnshire	293	10	8	2
Liverpool	186	0	0	0
Manchester	174	0	0	0
Merton	37	0	0	0
Newcastle	85	0	0	0
Newham	67	0	0	0
Norfolk	339	6	4	2
North Tyneside	62	0	0	0
North Yorkshire	395	1	0	1
Northants	270	7	6	1
Northumberland	143	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	423	0	0	0
Oldham	101	0	0	0
Oxfordshire	239	0	0	0
Redbridge	56	0	0	0
Richmond-upon-Thames	40	0	0	0
Rochdale	76	1	1	0
Rotherham	116	0	0	0
Shropshire	216	2	2	0
St. Helens	73	0	0	0
Salford	89	0	0	0
Sandwell	112	0	0	0
Sefton	94	0	0	0
Sheffield	150	5	4	1
Solihull	70	1	1	0
Somerset	233	2	1	1
South Tyneside	61	0	0	0
Southwark	77	1	1	0
Staffordshire	412	2	2	0
Stockport	110	0	0	0
Suffolk	255	0	0	0
Sunderland	106	0	0	0
Surrey	272	11	9	2
Sutton	42	0	0	0
Tameside	83	0	0	0
Tower Hamlets	73	0	0	0
Trafford	78	0	0	0
Wakefield	122	1	1	0
Walsall	106	1	0	1
Waltham Forest	61	0	0	0
Wandsworth	70	5	3	2
Warwickshire	188	0	0	0
West Sussex	220	0	0	0
Westminster	42	0	0	0
Wigan	124	0	0	0
Wiltshire	295	2	1	1
Wirral	106	0	0	0
Wolverhampton	103	1	0	1

Note to tables A to C:

The figures for schools eligible to become grant-maintained include those which have already done so. These are provisional 1992 figures. The figures for schools which have held ballots includes those schools which have completed the process of acquiring grant-maintained status.

Table D

LEAs containing schools which have voted in favour of grant-maintained status and have been subject to section 12 or 13 notices

LEA	*Primary*	*Middle*	*Secondary*
Avon	0	0	1
Barnet	0	0	1
Barnsley	1	0	0
Bedfordshire	0	0	1
Berkshire	0	0	1
Bolton	0	0	1
Brent	0	0	2
Bromley	0	0	1
Calderdale	0	0	2
Cambridgeshire	0	0	1
Cheshire	3	0	1
Cumbria	0	0	4
Derbyshire	0	0	1
Dorset	0	0	4
Dudley	0	0	1
Ealing	1	1	6
Essex	0	0	1
Gloucestershire	0	0	2
Hammersmith	1	0	0
Hampshire	3	3	1
Hertfordshire	0	0	2
Hillingdon	0	0	2
Kensington	0	0	1
Kent	2	2	8
Kirklees	0	0	1
Lancashire	0	0	1
Leicestershire	0	0	1
Lincolnshire	0	0	2
Newham	0	0	1
Northamptonshire	0	0	3
Nottinghamshire	0	1	0
Shropshire	2	0	0
Sandwell	0	0	1
Sheffield	4	0	1
Southwark	0	0	1
Surrey	5	0	2
Tameside	0	0	1
Wakefield	1	0	0
Wandsworth	1	0	1
Warwickshire	0	0	1
Wigan	0	0	1

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many ballots in England on grant-maintained status have resulted in participation rates *(a)* above 79 per cent., *(b)* between 70 and 79 per cent., *(c)* between 60 and 69 per cent., *(d)* between 50 and 59 per cent. and *(e)* below 50 per cent.

Mr. Forth: The participation rates for ballots on grant-maintained status in England have been as follows: 90 above 79 per cent.; 172 between 70 and 79 per cent.; 259 between 60 and 69 per cent.; 171 between 50 and 59 per cent. and 57 below 50 per cent. The Education Reform Act 1988 requires that all first ballots with a participation rate of under 50 per cent. be reheld.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those schools which required a second ballot of parents as part of the grant-maintained status procedure; which schools achieved a 50 per cent. turnout of parents voting in the second ballot; what was the outcome of the second ballot; and in the case of those schools voting yes, what was his decision on the application for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is as follows:

Table A

Schools requiring second ballots:

Alexandra High School
Archbishop Ilsley RC School
Beaverwood School for Girls
Belfairs School/Sixth Form Centre
Brentside High School
Bridgwater Hall School
Brindley Hall School
Bushey Hall School
Chalvedon School
Corby Beanfield Junior School
Grays Secondary School
Grange Park Infant School
Grange Park Junior School
Greenford High School
Hatchford Grant-Maintained Primary School
Henry Harbin Technical High School
Hindley Park High School (now closed)
Hoo Street Werburgh Middle School
Kelsey Park School
Kingsbury High School
Lacey Gardens Junior School
Laisterdyke Middle School
Lynn Grove High School
Mengham Middle School
Minster College
Northwick Park County Infant School
Northwood School
Parkside First School
Pope John Paul High School
Ramsden School for Girls
Ravensdale Middle School
Sale Moor County High School
Sharnbrook Upper School
Sir Harry Smith Community College, Peterborough
Southlands School
St. Andrew's CE Primary School
St. Francesca Cabrini RC Primary School
St. Theresa's RC Girls School
Stopsley High School and Community College
Stratford School
Thamesview School
The Chalfonts Community College (GM)
The Douay Martyrs School
The King Edmund School
The Radcliffe School
Weston Favell Upper School
Wrenn School

Table B Schools achieving a 50 per cent. turnout of parents voting in the second ballot

Alexandra High School
Archbishop Ilsley RC School
Beaverwood School for Girls
Chalvedon School
Corby Beanfield Junior School
Greenford High School
Kelsey Park School
Lacey Gardens Junior School
Lynn Grove High School
Northwood School
Ramsden School for Girls
Ravensdale Middle School
Sharnbrook Upper School
St. Andrew's CE Primary School
St. Francesca Cabrini RC Primary School
Stratford School
The Chalfonts Community College
The Douay Martyrs School
The King Edmund School

Note:—The results of Bushey Hall School, Gray's Secondary School, Henry Harbin Technical College, Kingsbury High School, Sale Moor County High School and Stopsley High School and Community College are yet to be announced.

Table C

Results of the second ballots were as follows:

Alexandra High School—No
Archbishop Ilsley RC School—No
Beaverwood school for Girls—Yes
Belfairs School/Sixth Form Centre—Yes
Brentside High School—Yes
Bridgewater Hall School—Yes
Brindley Hall School—Yes
Chalvedon School—Yes
Corby Beanfield Junior School—Yes
Grange Park Infant School—Yes
Grange Park Junior School—Yes
Greenford High School—Yes
Hatchford Grant-Maintained Primary School—Yes
Hindley Park High School (now closed)—Yes
Hoo St. Werburgh Middle School—No
Kelsey Park School—Yes
Lacey Gardens Junior School—Yes
Laisterdyke Middle School—Yes
Lynn Grove High School—Yes
Mengham Middle School—Yes
Minster College—Yes
Northwick Park County Infant School—Yes
Northwood School—Yes
Parkside First School—Yes
Pope John Paul High School—No
Ramsden School For Girls—Yes
Ravensdale Middle School—Yes
Sharnbrook Upper School—Yes
Sir Harry Smith Community College, Peterborough—Yes
Southlands School—Yes
St. Andrew's CE Primary School—Yes
St. Francesca Cabrini RC Primary School—Yes
St. Theresa's RC Girls School—No
Stratford School—Yes
Thamesview School—Yes
The Chalfonts Community College (GM)—Yes
The Douay Martyrs School—Yes
The King Edmund School—Yes
The Radcliffe School—Yes
Weston Favell Upper School—No
Wrenn School—Yes

Table D

Schools approved for grant-maintained status:

Beaverwood School for Girls
Brentside High School
Bridgewater Hall School
Brindley Hall School
Chalvedon School
Greenford High School
Hatchford Grant-Maintained Primary School
Kelsey Park School
Minster College
Northwood School
Parkside First School
Ravensdale Middle School
Southlands School
Stratford School
Thamesview School
The Chalfonts Community College
The King Edmund School

Table E

Schools rejected

Hindley Park High School
Ramsden School for Girls

The remainder are still under consideration or have yet to submit proposals.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what applications have been received from grant-maintained schools for special purpose grant-restructuring; and in each case *(a)* how many posts have been affected, *(b)* what grant has been paid and *(c)* how many changes have been rejected for grant.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is as follows:

Applications received to date from

Name of school	*Number of posts in school's bid(s) for SPG(R) to date*	*Number of posts for which SPG(R) has been approved*	*Grant (£) requested per school to date* Premature retirement: *Lump sum*	*Grant (£) requested per school to date* Premature retirement: *Annual compensation*	*Grant (£) requested per school to date* *Redundancy/voluntary severance*	*Grant (£) approved per school to date* Premature retirement: *Lump sum*	*Grant (£) approved per school to date* Premature retirement: *Annual compensation*	*Grant (£) approved per school to date* *Redundancy/voluntary severance*
Adams' Grammar School	3	3	12,992	4,331	—	12,992	4,331	—
Archbishops School	1	1	—	—	12,000	—	—	12,000
Arnewood School	2	2	16,233	5,411	—	16,233	5,411	—
Avon Valley School	3	3	20,441	6,814	—	14,553	4,851	—
Aylesford School	1	1	6,534	2,178	—	6,534	2,178	—
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	4	4	15,600	5,200	—	15,600	5,200	—
Baines School	1	1	1,738	579	—	1,738	579	—
Balcarras School	4	3	14,917	4,972	—	8,503	2,834	—
Bankfield School	1	1	—	—	20,586	—	—	20,586
Baverstock School	2	2	8,631	2,877	—	8,631	2,877	—
Beauchamps School	3	3	12,316	2,037	20,591	—	—	20,591
Beechen Cliff School	3	3	16,310	5,436	—	16,310	5,436	—
Bingley Grammar School	3	3	11,974	3,931	—	11,974	3,931	—
Bournemouth School	1	1	4,123	1,374	—	4,123	1,374	—
Bourne Abbey School	2	2	4,506	1,502	—	4,506	1,502	—
Brentside High School	3	3	17,964	5,988	—	17,964	5,988	—
Bridgewater Hall School	1	1	6,077	2,026	—	6,077	2,026	—
Bromfords School	1	1	3,363	1,121	—	3,363	1,121	—
Budmouth Grammar School	4	3	27,032	9,011	—	18,216	6,042	—
Bullers Wood Girls School	2	2	12,291	4,097	—	12,291	4,097	—
Burntwood School	3	3	14,599	4,866	20,279	14,599	4,866	5,000
Caistor Grammar School	6	4	29,154	9,718	—	19,497	6,499	—
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School	2	2	14,509	4,170	—	14,509	4,170	—
Carres Grammar School	2	2	10,219	3,406	—	10,219	3,406	—
Claremont High School	3	3	14,523	4,841	14,513	14,523	4,841	14,513
Clitheroe Royal Grammar School	3	1	21,210	7,070	—	8,423	2,808	—
Collingwood School	3	3	19,381	6,460	—	19,381	6,460	—
Coopers School	1	1	1,690	390	10,221	1,690	390	10,221
Colyton School	2	2	13,601	4,534	—	13,601	4,534	—
Conway School	2	2	7,215	2,405	—	7,215	2,405	—

Name of school	Number of posts in school's bid(s) for SPG(R) to date	Number of posts for which SPG(R) has been approved	Grant (£) requested per school to date: Premature retirement: Lump sum	Grant (£) requested per school to date: Premature retirement: Annual compensation	Grant (£) requested per school to date: Redundancy/ voluntary severance	Grant (£) approved per school to date: Premature retirement: Lump sum	Grant (£) approved per school to date: Premature retirement: Annual compensation	Grant (£) approved per school to date: Redundancy/ voluntary severance
Cranbrook School	2	2	11,202	3,734	—	11,202	3,734	—
Crofton School	1	1	2,998	999	—	2,998	999	—
Crossley Heath School	6	3	30,796	5,338	—	16,015	5,338	—
The Crypt School	1	1	7,850	2,617	—	7,850	2,617	—
Dartford Boys School	3	2	27,118	9,039	—	12,187	4,062	—
Dartford Grammar School	2	2	12,868	4,289	—	12,868	4,289	—
Denefield School	1	1	7,358	2,453	—	7,358	2,453	—
Desborough Comprehensive School	4	4	10,719	3,573	9,938	10,719	3,573	9,938
The Downs School	3	3	12,023	4,008	—	12,023	4,008	—
Ecclesbourne School	4	4	24,311	8,104	—	18,964	6,321	—
Epsom and Ewell High School	3	3	[1]4,933	8,369	40,454	10,773	7,705	29,381
Francis Bacon School	3	3	9,357	3,119	—	9,357	3,119	—
Gartree School	3	3	14,595	4,865	—	14,595	4,865	—
Glyn School	1	1	4,409	1,470	—	4,409	1,470	—
Great Barr School	10	6	58,941	19,647	—	27,837	9,277	—
Graveney School	4	3	[2]32,432	[2]10,811	—	18,957	6,319	—
Handsworth Grammar School	1	1	6,836	2,279	—	6,836	2,279	—
Hardley School	2	2	11,134	3,711	—	11,134	3,711	—
Hartshill School	3	2	27,282	9,094	—	16,172	5,391	—
Hayes School	4	4	11,110	3,703	—	11,110	3,703	—
Hayes Manor School	2	2	16,467	5,549	—	16,467	5,549	—
Haydon School	1	1	[3]20,820	[3]6,940	10,434	5,970	1,990	—
Heacham Middle School	2	2	8,719	2,920	—	8,719	2,920	—
Heathside School	2	2	8,846	2,949	—	8,846	2,949	—
Heckmondwike School	6	6	13,403	4,468	—	13,403	4,468	—
Hendon School	2	2	14,109	4,703	—	14,109	4,703	—
Herschel Grammar School	5	3	12,733	7,360	—	12,733	7,360	—
Highams Park School	8	2	28,752	9,584	—	19,525	6,508	—
John Fisher School	1	1	6,946	2,315	—	6,946	2,315	—
Kelsey Park School	1	1	7,588	2,529	—	7,588	2,529	—
King Edward VI School	4	4	18,158	6,053	—	18,158	6,053	—
King Edward VI Grammar School	2	2	13,186	4,395	—	13,186	4,395	—
King John School	2	2	11,578	3,859	—	11,578	3,859	—
Kingsley Park School	2	2	12,168	4,056	—	12,168	4,056	—
Kingswood School	3	3	14,304	4,768	—	14,304	4,768	—
Kirkby Kendal School	3	2	19,209	6,403	—	6,512	2,171	—
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	5	5	19,391	6,464	—	19,391	6,464	—
Lancaster Girls Grammar School	4	4	13,772	4,591	—	13,772	4,591	—
Langley Grammar School	4	4	19,005	6,335	—	19,005	6,335	—
Lincoln Christ's Hospital School	3	3	8,138	2,713	—	8,138	2,713	—
Loddon Middle School	2	2	9,636	3,212	—	9,636	3,212	—
Manor High School	5	4	26,985	8,995	—	12,468	4,162	—
Mapledon Noakes School	1	1	—	—	21,863	—	—	21,863
Marling School	1	1	3,257	1,086	—	3,257	1,086	—
Mosely Park GM School	1	1	5,933	1,978	11,852	5,933	1,978	11,852
Moulton Primary School	1	1	1,335	445	—	1,335	445	—
Myton School	3	3	8,785	2,928	—	8,785	2,928	—
Nethershorpe School	3	2	24,297	8,099	9,732	10,602	3,534	9,732
Newstead Wood School	3	3	15,156	5,052	13,315	15,156	5,052	—
Nonsuch High School for Girls	4	4	9,134	3,044	—	9,134	3,044	—
Northampton School for Boys	1	1	4,508	1,503	9,478	4,508	1,503	9,478
Northolt High School	3	3	33,276	11,092	—	15,267	5,089	—
North Kesteven School	6	6	21,037	7,012	—	21,037	7,012	—
Northwood School	2	2	13,837	4,612	—	13,837	4,612	—
Oakwood Park Grammar School	1	1	7,850	2,617	—	7,850	2,617	—
Oldborough Manor High	1	1	3,729	1,243	—	3,729	1,243	—
Oldfield School	1	1	465	155	11,234	465	155	11,234
Parkstone Grammar School	2	2	16,722	5,574	14,971	13,267	4,427	2,000
Pates Grammar School	2	2	12,515	4,172	—	12,515	4,172	—
Philip Morant School	1	1	5,221	1,740	—	5,221	1,740	—
The Plume School	6	6	10,126	3,375	—	10,126	3,375	—
The Queens School	5	5	17,973	6,051	—	17,973	6,051	—
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School	6	5	[4]22,500	[4]7,500	—	19,720	6,572	—
Queen Elizabeth School for Boys	1	1	5,459	1,820	—	5,459	1,820	—
Queen Elizabeth School	2	2	7,515	2,505	—	7,515	2,505	—
Queen Elizabeth VC Grammar School	1	1	3,744	1,248	—	3,744	1,248	—
Queensbury School	3	3	8,155	2,718	—	8,155	2,718	—
Queensmead School	4	4	21,336	7,112	—	17,410	5,803	—
Raines Foundation School	2	2	10,833	3,611	—	10,833	3,611	—
Ravensdale GM School	1	1	5,073	1,691	—	5,073	1,691	—
Ravens Wood School for Boys	2	2	11,484	3,828	—	11,484	3,828	—

Name of school	*Number of posts in school's bid(s) for SPG(R) to date*	*Number of posts for which SPG(R) has been approved*	*Grant (£) requested per school to date*			*Grant (£) approved per school to date*		
			Premature retirement		*Redundancy/ voluntary severance*	*Premature retirement*		*Redundancy/ voluntary severance*
			Lump sum	*Annual compensation*		*Lump sum*	*Annual compensation*	
Redgate Middle School	1	1	1,970	657	—	1,970	657	—
Rednock School	1	1	3,385	1,128	—	3,385	1,128	—
Ribston Hall High School	5	4	11,934	3,978	34,034	11,934	3,978	9,594
Riddlesdown High School	1	1	2,179	726	—	2,179	726	—
Ringwood School	2	2	14,495	4,832	—	14,495	4,832	—
Robert Pattinson School	4	3	[2]16,500	[2]5,500	—	10,922	3,641	—
Robinswood Primary School	1	1	8,727	2,909	—	8,727	2,909	—
Roseberry School	1	1	906	302	—	906	302	—
Saffron Walden High School	2	2	9,082	3,027	—	9,082	3,027	—
Senacre School	2	2	13,116	4,372	—	13,116	4,372	—
Skinners School	1	1	6,080	2,027	—	6,080	2,027	—
St. Aiden's	3	2	27,135	9,045	—	12,065	4,022	—
St. Augustine's RC Comprehensive School	1	1	7,231	2,410	—	7,231	2,410	—
St. Bartholomews School	3	3	14,604	4,870	—	14,604	4,870	—
St. Francis Xavier's College	2	2	10,200	3,400	—	10,200	3,400	—
St. Georges School (Kent)	4	3	24,186	8,062	—	16,210	5,403	—
St. Georges School (Lincs)	5	4	19,287	6,429	—	18,093	6,031	—
St. Helen's Primary School	2	1	12,111	4,037	—	4,651	1,550	—
Southfield School for Girls	1	1	8,462	2,821	—	8,462	2,821	—
Southlands School	2	2	—	—	10,420	—	—	10.420
Skegness Grammar School	4	4	16,100	5,371	—	16,100	5,371	—
Stroud High School	2	2	11,718	3,906	—	11,718	3,906	—
St. James's CE School (Bolton)	2	2	12,345	4,114	—	12,345	4,114	—
Stratford School	1	1	1,925	642	—	1,925	642	—
Sutton Grammar School for Boys	2	2	8,659	2,886	—	8,659	2,886	—
Tewkesbury School	4	4	17,057	5,686	—	17,057	5,686	—
Thamesview School	5	5	18,900	6,300	—	18,900	6,300	—
The Burgate School	3	3	17,454	5,818	—	17,454	5,818	—
The North Halifax High School	3	3	11,753	3,918	—	11,753	3,918	—
The Woodroffe School	7	7	26,661	8,887	21,483	26,661	8,887	21,483
Torells School	2	2	11,476	3,825	—	11,476	3,825	—
Trinity School	1	1	2,594	865	—	2,594	865	—
Uxbridge School	2	2	8,213	2,737	—	8,213	2,737	—
Vyners School	1	1	8,731	2,910	—	8,731	2,910	—
Watford Grammar School	1	1	3,750	1,250	—	3,750	1,250	—
Westcliff High School for Boys	4	4	14,425	4,809	—	14,425	4,809	—
West Hatch High School	2	2	5,433	1,811	—	5,433	1,811	—
William Alvey School	2	2	11,280	3,760	—	11,280	3,760	—
William Farr CE School	2	2	12,239	4,080	—	12,239	4,080	—
Wilmington Boys School	4	3	20,340	6,780	—	14,805	4,935	—
Wilmington Girls School	1	1	—	—	722	—	—	722
Wilsons School	4	4	10,236	5,996	10,455	10,236	5,996	10,455
Wolverhampton Girls School	3	3	17,180	5,727	—	17,180	5,727	—
Wymondham College	8	6	23,337	7,779	—	23,168	7,723	—
Yarborough High School	3	3	14,348	4,783	—	14,348	4,783	—

[1] Figure reduced due to redundancy abatement.

[2] Figures estimated.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which primary schools, that have submitted applications for grant-maintained status, offer *(a)* part-time, *(b)* full-time, and *(c)* both part-time and full-time nursery provision; and, in each case, whether the application has been approved, approved with modifications or rejected.

Mr. Forth: This information could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the date of *(a)* the second resolution of the governing body or *(b)* receipt of the written request, and *(c)* what was the closing date of the ballot, for each school which has held a parental ballot on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The information requested at *(a)* and *(b)* is not held centrally. A list of the 676 schools which have held parental ballots follows, with closing dates:

2 November 1988	Skegness Grammar School
7 November 1988	St. James' CE School
5 December 1988	Audenshaw High School
16 December 1988	Wilsons School
21 December 1988	Castlemount School
21 December 1988	Queensbury School
21 December 1988	Blessed Hugh More RC Secondary School
22 December 1988	Heckmondwike Grammar School
29 December 1988	London Oratory School
30 December 1988	Queen Elizabeth's Senior High School
30 December 1988	Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School
30 December 1988	Hendon School
30 December 1988	Southpark High School
30 December 1988	The Grammar School for Girls Wilmington
6 January 1989	Ravensbourne School For Girls
9 January 1989	London Nautical School
11 January 1989	Sale Grammar School for Boys (Now Closed)
17 January 1989	Netherthorpe School
17 January 1989	Ramsden School For Girls
26 January 1989	Bankfield High School (GM)
30 January 1989	Millais School

30 January 1989	Sir James Altham School
2 February 1989	The Grammar School For Boys Wilmington
3 February 1989	The Kings School Grantham
3 February 1989	Southfield School For Girls
6 February 1989	Small Heath School
6 February 1989	Queen Elizabeth's GM School For Boys
6 February 1989	Baverstock GM School
10 February 1989	Colyton Grammar School
14 February 1989	Chesterfield School (Closed, now Brookfield)
16 February 1989	Chichele School
18 February 1989	Foster's Grammar School
20 February 1989	Castle Hall GM School
20 February 1989	Droylsden County High School
20 February 1989	Siddal Moor High School
20 February 1989	Hadham Hall School
20 February 1989	Lord Digby's Grammar School for Girls
23 February 1989	Gaynes School
24 February 1989	Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School
27 February 1989	Old Swinford Hospital
27 February 1989	St. Francis Xavier's College
6 March 1989	Hindley Park High School (Now closed)
6 March 1989	Weald of Kent Grammer School
13 March 1989	Beechen Cliff School
13 March 1989	Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School
13 March 1989	Kettering Boy's School
23 March 1989	Guildford County School
28 March 1989	Ribston Hall High School
28 March 1989	Ruffwood School
31 March 1989	Long Field GM High School
3 April 1989	Claremont High School
17 April 1989	St. Helena School (Closed, now Brookfield School)
20 April 1989	Bishopshalt School
2 May 1989	The Longlands School
15 May 1989	Rickmansworth School
22 May 1989	Marling School
22 May 1989	Stroud High School
30 May 1989	Southlands School
30 May 1989	Simon Digby Comprehensive School
30 May 1989	Lancaster Royal Grammar School
5 June 1989	Eckington School
12 June 1989	Wolverhampton Girls High School
24 July 1989	St. Gregory's RC High School
26 September 1989	Stratford School
2 October 1989	St. Josephs RC High School
9 October 1989	Sir Thomas Rich's School
19 October 1989	Watford Grammar School for Boys
20 October 1989	Watford Girls Grammar School
9 November 1989	Adams' Grammar School
10 November 1989	Preston Manor High School
20 November 1989	Wade Deacon High School
27 November 1989	Francis Bacon School
18 December 1989	The North Halifax High School
19 December 1989	The Crossley Heath School
22 December 1989	Highwood School
28 December 1989	Pate's GM Grammar School
2 January 1990	Brindley Hall School
2 January 1990	Bridgewater Hall School
9 February 1990	Handsworth Grammar School for Boys
20 February 1990	Carre's Grammar School
28 February 1990	The Ecclesbourne School
5 March 1990	Bournemouth School
7 March 1990	The Maplesden Noakes School
7 March 1990	Wilmington Grammar School For Boys
3 April 1990	St. George's GM School
12 April 1990	The Cornwallis School
23 April 1990	Armthorpe Comprehensive School
9 May 1990	Chalvedon School
22 May 1990	Bullers Wood School for Girls
29 May 1990	Reading School
7 June 1990	Lancaster Girls Grammar School
8 June 1990	Wymondham College (GM)
18 June 1990	King Edward VI School
27 June 1990	Hardley School
4 July 1990	Kingsley Park Middle School
6 July 1990	Blackfield Middle School
20 July 1990	Ripon Grammar School
23 July 1990	Woodford County High
24 July 1990	Ailwyn Community School
26 July 1990	Dearneside Comprehensive School
27 July 1990	Swanscombe High School
30 July 1990	Failsworth School
3 August 1990	Cliffe Woods Middle School
17 September 1990	Manor High School, Sandwell
4 October 1990	Hoo St. Werburgh Middle School
17 October 1990	The Woodroffe School
22 October 1990	Bingley Grammar School
23 October 1990	The Avon Valley School
24 October 1990	Westcliff High School for Boys
24 October 1990	Kings School
12 November 1990	Kingswood School
16 November 1990	Burgate School
16 November 1990	Sexey's School
21 November 1990	Alexandra High School
26 November 1990	Nonsuch High School for Girls
29 November 1990	Oldfield School
3 December 1990	Blackpool Sixth Form College
3 December 1990	Grange School
4 December 1990	St. Augustine RC (GM) Comprehensive School
4 December 1990	St. Bartholomew's School
4 December 1990	Queen Elizabeth Grammar School
4 December 1990	Walsingham School
5 December 1990	Beaconsfield High School
7 December 1990	Edenbridge Middle School
7 December 1990	Great Barr School
13 December 1990	Caistor Grammar School
14 December 1990	Kirkbie Kendal School
17 December 1990	Clitheroe Royal Grammar School
18 December 1990	St. George's Church of England School
20 December 1990	Queensmead School
21 December 1990	Thamesview School
24 January 1991	Homewood School
24 January 1991	The Down County Primary School
24 January 1991	Haydon School
25 January 1991	Banbury School
25 January 1991	Morecambe High School
28 January 1991	King Edward VI School
29 January 1991	Townmead School
29 January 1991	Harwood School
29 January 1991	Ellerdine County Primary School
29 January 1991	Parmiters School
29 January 1991	Moseley Park (GM) School
1 February 1991	Vyners School
1 February 1991	Dartford Grammar School
4 February 1991	Drayton Manor High School
4 February 1991	Bourne Abbey Primary School
5 February 1991	The Ridgeway School, Swindon
5 February 1991	Watford Grammar School for Girls
6 February 1991	Whickham School
6 February 1991	Blackthorn Middle School
12 February 1991	St. Aidan's County High School
12 February 1991	Southlands Comprehensive School
12 February 1991	Lord Digby's Girls Grammar School
12 February 1991	Foster's Boys Grammar School
14 February 1991	Chestnut Grove School
15 February 1991	Aylesford School
18 February 1991	Cliffe Woods Primary School, Rochester
18 February 1991	Kettleshulme St. James GM CE Primary School
18 February 1991	Northolt High School
21 February 1991	Collingwood GM CE School
21 February 1991	Boothroyd Junior and Infants School
21 February 1991	St. Helen's RC Primary School
21 February 1991	William Gladstone School
22 February 1991	Graveney School
26 February 1991	Coopers School
26 February 1991	Moulton Primary School (GM)
27 February 1991	Uxbridge High School

27 February 1991	**Copland Community School and Technology Centre**
28 February 1991	**Newton Bluecoat CE GM Primary School**
1 March 1991	**Highams Park School**
1 March 1991	**Wold Newton GM Primary School**
1 March 1991	**The Magdalen School**
1 March 1991	**St. Mary's Catholic Primary School**
2 March 1991	**Crossgates Primary School**
7 March 1991	**The Hayes Manor School**
8 March 1991	**St. Theresa's RC Girls School**
8 March 1991	**Langley Park School for Boys**
13 March 1991	**Minster College**
15 March 1991	**Weaverham High School**
18 March 1991	**Raines Foundation School**
20 March 1991	**The Manor County First School**
25 March 1991	**St. John the Baptist School**
25 March 1991	**Ravens Wood School for Boys**
25 March 1991	**Arley County Primary School**
25 March 1991	**Wood End First School**
25 March 1991	**Appledore CE Primary School**
26 March 1991	**Villiers High School**
26 March 1991	**Turnham Primary with Nursery GM School**
27 March 1991	**Send CE First School (GM)**
28 March 1991	**The Arnewood School**
4 April 1991	**Featherstone High School**
12 April 1991	**Wood End Middle School**
18 April 1991	**Northwood School**
19 April 1991	**Mellow Lane School**
26 April 1991	**John Henry Newman RC School**
29 April 1991	**de Stafford School**
30 April 1991	**Budmouth School**
30 April 1991	**The Crypt School**
7 May 1991	**Booth Lower School**
7 May 1991	**Senacre Technology School**
7 May 1991	**Lincoln Christ's Hospital School**
7 May 1991	**Gamlingay GM Village College**
7 May 1991	**Oakwood Park Grammar School**
7 May 1991	**The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls**
8 May 1991	**Redgate GM Middle School**
8 May 1991	**The Plume School**
9 May 1991	**The King John School**
14 May 1991	**Ravensdale Middle School**
15 May 1991	**Desborough Comprehensive School**
15 May 1991	**Waltham Toll Bar**
15 May 1991	**The Park School**
16 May 1991	**Hayes School**
17 May 1991	**Elmbridge School**
20 May 1991	**Woolley CE First School**
20 May 1991	**Riddlesdown GM School**
20 May 1991	**Greenford High School**
20 May 1991	**Wrotham School**
20 May 1991	**Kelsey Park School**
21 May 1991	**South Farnborough County Infants**
21 May 1991	**Glyn School**
23 May 1991	**Manor High School, Oadby**
23 May 1991	**Burntwood School**
24 May 1991	**Ash Green GM School**
24 May 1991	**The Skinners' School, Tunbridge Wells**
28 May 1991	**Newborough CE VC Primary School**
28 May 1991	**Silverdale School**
29 May 1991	**Dartford Grammar School for Girls**
30 May 1991	**Wortley CE Controlled Junior and Infants School**
30 May 1991	**Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys**
31 May 1991	**Heacham Middle School (GM)**
31 May 1991	**Snodland CE Primary School**
31 May 1991	**Yarborough High School**
3 June 1991	**Hawkedale First School**
3 June 1991	**Norwich Road School**
4 June 1991	**Heathside Secondary School**
4 June 1991	**Gordon's GM School**
4 June 1991	**Loddon Middle GM School**
5 June 1991	**Hartshill GM School**
5 June 1991	**The Admiral's Middle School**
5 June 1991	**Stoneleigh First School (GM)**
6 June 1991	**Salterlee Primary School**
6 June 1991	**Warmbrook Junior School**
7 June 1991	**Oldborough Manor Community College**
7 June 1991	**Boyton Primary School**
7 June 1991	**Walford High School**
10 June 1991	**St. Thomas More RC High School**
11 June 1991	**Sir Wilfrid Martineau School**
11 June 1991	**Nower Hill High School**
11 June 1991	**Eden School**
11 June 1991	**Brookmead School**
11 June 1991	**St. Paul's CE Primary School**
12 June 1991	**Gresham Village School (GM)**
12 June 1991	**Rauceby School CE (GM)**
12 June 1991	**Downham Market High School (GM)**
13 June 1991	**High Oakham Middle School**
13 June 1991	**Barnhill School**
14 June 1991	**The Philip Morant School**
20 June 1991	**Cranbrook School**
21 June 1991	**St. Peter's Primary School Tunbridge Wells**
21 June 1991	**Hatchford Primary School**
21 June 1991	**Denefield School**
21 June 1991	**Christ Church CE School**
24 June 1991	**Silverhill Primary School**
24 June 1991	**Windmill Ridge Middle School**
25 June 1991	**Ringwood School (GM Comprehensive)**
25 June 1991	**Newstead Wood School for Girls (GM)**
25 June 1991	**The Gartree GM School**
25 June 1991	**Tudor Grange School**
26 June 1991	**Langley Grammar School**
26 June 1991	**La Retraite RC Girls, (GM) School**
27 June 1991	**South Holmwood CE First School**
27 June 1991	**King James Ist Comprehensive School**
1 July 1991	**Rainham Mark Grammar School**
1 July 1991	**Brentside High School**
2 July 1991	**Epsom and Ewell High School**
3 July 1991	**Belmont Primary School**
3 July 1991	**The Elmwood Primary School**
3 July 1991	**Borrow Wood Junior School**
4 July 1991	**Hassall Green Methodist Primary School**
8 July 1991	**Parkstone Grammar School**
9 July 1991	**Dereham Church CE GM School**
9 July 1991	**Myton School**
9 July 1991	**Ethelburga Primary School (GM)**
9 July 1991	**The John Fisher School**
10 July 1991	**Crofton Junior School**
10 July 1991	**Neroche Primary School**
10 July 1991	**The Castle Hills GM School, Gainsborough**
11 July 1991	**William Alvey CE Junior School**
15 July 1991	**Queen Elizabeth High School**
16 July 1991	**Hayton CE GM School**
16 July 1991	**The King John School**
19 July 1991	**Bliss Charity Primary School**
19 July 1991	**Bishop Stopford School**
19 July 1991	**Newlands Spring GM School**
22 July 1991	**Romanby County Primary School**
22 July 1991	**Cheam High School**
22 July 1991	**Fulston Manor School**
22 July 1991	**Beaverwood School for Girls**
22 July 1991	**Bowness-on-Solway Primary School**
23 July 1991	**Northampton (GM) School for Boys**
23 July 1991	**Bridport County Primary School**
24 July 1991	**Lodge Park School**
29 July 1991	**Baines School**
1 August 1991	**Westfield County First School**
6 August 1991	**Underhill Junior School**
13 August 1991	**Parkside First School**
27 August 1991	**Blindley Heath CE First School**
23 September 1991	**Huntingfield Primary School**
24 September 1991	**Thomas Whitehead CE School**
1 October 1991	**Angley School**
2 October 1991	**Cromer High School (GM)**
15 October 1991	**Marshland High School**
17 October 1991	**Hamilton County Primary School**
18 October 1991	**Saffron Walden County High School**
18 October 1991	**The City of Portsmouth Boys' School**

18 October 1991	Sutton Grammar School for Boys
22 October 1991	Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School
22 October 1991	Crofton School, Fareham
22 October 1991	The Canterbury High School
23 October 1991	Robert Pattinson GM School
23 October 1991	North Kesteven GM School
24 October 1991	West Hatch High School
25 October 1991	Borough Green Primary School
1 November 1991	Trinity School, Carlisle
4 November 1991	The Robert Napier GM School
4 November 1991	Deighton High School
5 November 1991	Robinswood Primary School
5 November 1991	Queen Elizabeth Upper Atherstone GM School
5 November 1991	Queen Elizabeth Lower Atherstone GM School
5 November 1991	The Downs School
7 November 1991	St. Thomas More RC Comprehensive GM School
8 November 1991	Sir Roger Manwood's School
11 November 1991	Torells GM School
12 November 1991	St. George's Middle School
12 November 1991	Clifford CE GM School
12 November 1991	The Malling School
13 November 1991	Robert Kett GM Middle School
13 November 1991	Lyne and Long Cross CE First School, Surrey
18 November 1991	Kettering Boys' School
18 November 1991	Bromfords School, Wickford
18 November 1991	Beauchamps GM School
19 November 1991	The Beacon School
20 November 1991	Rochester Grammar School for Girls
21 November 1991	The Archbishop's CE GM School
22 November 1991	Rosebery School
22 November 1991	Roehampton Gate Primary
22 November 1991	Bruton Primary School
25 November 1991	Scotby CE GM Primary School
25 November 1991	Aldridge School, Walsall
25 November 1991	Meopham School GM School
26 November 1991	Hayes Road Primary
26 November 1991	The John Birkbeck High School
26 November 1991	Streetly School
26 November 1991	Costessey High School, (GM)
26 November 1991	Barnehurst Junior GM School
26 November 1991	Barnehurst Infant GM School
27 November 1991	Avonbourne School
27 November 1991	The Rickstones School
27 November 1991	Holy Trinty CE Primary School
28 November 1991	Herschel Grammar School
28 November 1991	The Queen's School, Wisbech
29 November 1991	Lanfranc High School, Croydon
2 December 1991	The Bradbourne School
2 December 1991	Katharine Lady Berkeley's School
3 December 1991	Charles Darwin School
3 December 1991	Rede Secondary School, Strood
3 December 1991	Brooklands School, Leighton Buzzard
3 December 1991	King Edward VI Grammar School (GM)
4 December 1991	Brentwood County High School
4 December 1991	The Ancaster High School, Lincoln
4 December 1991	The Barr Beacon School, Walsall
4 December 1991	Tewkesbury GM School
4 December 1991	Joseph Leckie School, Walsall
5 December 1991	St. John Fisher School, Chatham
5 December 1991	Sandown Court Community College
5 December 1991	Bournemouth School for Girls
6 December 1991	The Queen Katherine School
9 December 1991	Norfolk Secondary School
9 December 1991	Deer's Wood Primary School, Bristol
9 December 1991	William Farr CE Comprehensive School
9 December 1991	The Helena Romanes School, Dunmow
10 December 1991	Elliott School (GM)
10 December 1991	Manor JMI School, Walsall
11 December 1991	Highbury Secondary Boys' School
11 December 1991	Bolsterstone CE Junior and Infants School, Sheffield
11 December 1991	Darlaston School
11 December 1991	Bassingbourn GM Village College
13 December 1991	Chelmsford County High School for Girls
16 December 1991	Ermine Junior GM School
17 December 1991	Wayland High School, Norfolk
17 December 1991	Crompton Fold Primary School
18 December 1991	Warren Junior and Infant School, Sheffield
20 December 1991	Roscoe Bank Junior and Infants School
20 December 1991	Stepney Green Boys School, Tower Hamlets
23 December 1991	Hertingfordbury Cowper Junior Mixed Infants School
23 December 1991	Handsworth First School, Sheffield
23 December 1991	Manshead School GM
23 December 1991	The Ridgeway School, Plymouth
24 December 1991	Aloeric GM School
24 December 1991	Northlands Infants School, Pitsea
24 December 1991	Northlands GM Junior School
24 December 1991	Dereham Neatherd High School
24 December 1991	Newent Community School
24 December 1991	Bradenham VC CE Primary School
23 January 1992	Eastwood County High School and Sixth Form Centre
23 January 1992	Hoo St. Werburgh Middle School, Kent
24 January 1992	Highcliffe Comprehensive School
24 January 1992	South Wootton GM Junior School
24 January 1992	Acle High School
24 January 1992	The Boswells School
29 January 1992	Gleed Girls GM School
29 January 1992	Wheatfields Infants School
29 January 1992	Wheatfields Junior School
29 January 1992	Dene Magna Community School
29 January 1992	The Rednock School
30 January 1992	Balcarras School
30 January 1992	Haberghan High School and Sixth Form Centre
30 January 1992	North Crescent Primary School
30 January 1992	King Harold School GM School
31 January 1992	Heywood School, Gloucestershire
31 January 1992	South View County Primary School, Peterborough
4 February 1991	Rickmansworth Park Junior Mixed Infants School
4 February 1992	Chatham Grammar School for Girls
6 February 1992	The Alderman Smith School
13 February 1992	Thurstable School
14 February 1992	Great Totham Primary School, Essex
14 February 1992	Furtherwick Park School
18 February 1992	Katherines Primary School
19 February 1992	St. Thomas the Apostle RC High School
24 February 1992	West Flegg Middle School (GM)
24 February 1992	St. Michaels RC School, Barnsley
25 February 1992	The Cotswold School
26 February 1992	Cippenham Middle School (GM)
27 February 1992	Oak Farm Junior Mixed School (GM)
27 February 1992	Oak Farm Infant School (GM)
28 February 1992	The Park Lane Primary School
2 March 1992	Soham Village College, Cambridgeshire
2 March 1992	Whitecross School
5 March 1992	St. John Rigby School
6 March 1992	Beaufort Community School, Gloucester
9 March 1992	Churchdown GM School
9 March 1992	Thornden School
10 March 1992	St. Anne's RC Primary School
10 March 1992	The Chalfonts Community College (GM)
11 March 1992	Rolph CE VA Primary School, Thorpe-le-Soken
11 March 1992	St. Olave's and St. Saviour's Grammar School
20 March 1992	Chosen Hill School, Gloucester
20 March 1992	Sheringham High School
20 March 1992	Mill Rythe First School, Havant
23 March 1992	Hextable School, Swanley

25 March 1992	Sweyne School
26 March 1992	Mengham First School
26 March 1992	Upper Hopton CE VC First School
30 March 1992	Crosshall Junior School
30 March 1992	Crosshall Infant School
6 April 1992	Priory School
7 April 1992	Saintbridge GM Technology School
8 April 1992	St. Bernadette Junior School
10 April 1992	Monks' Dyke High School
13 April 1992	Pope John Paul High School
13 April 1992	Old Buckenham High School
13 April 1992	The Hugh Christie School
17 April 1992	Sir William Romney's Community School
20 April 1992	Manor School, Northamptonshire
22 April 1992	South Reston CE Primary School
22 April 1992	The Windmill County GM Primary School
24 April 1992	Mengham Middle School
27 April 1992	Sir Harry Smith Community College, Peterborough
30 April 1992	Park Mead County First School
12 May 1992	Hearnville Primary School
18 May 1992	Bourton Meadow Combined School
21 May 1992	Bushloe High School
22 May 1992	Overstone County Combined School
22 May 1992	The Fitzwimarc School, Rayleigh
22 May 1992	The Appleton School
25 May 1992	Upton Grammar School
26 May 1992	The Deanes School
27 May 1992	The Cornelius Vermuyden School
28 May 1992	Chipping Campden School
29 May 1992	Tiffin School
1 June 1992	Castle View School
1 June 1992	Calday Grange Grammar School, West Kirby
1 June 1992	Front Lawn Middle School
1 June 1992	The Bishop's Stortford High School
5 June 1992	Lavington Comprehensive School
8 June 1992	Boundary First School
12 June 1992	St. Richard's RC High School
15 June 1992	Torquay Boys' Grammar School
19 June 1992	Montagu School
22 June 1992	Abbotswood Middle School
22 June 1992	Chelmer Valley High School
22 June 1992	Holy Family RC Combined School
26 June 1992	Belfairs School/Sixth Form Centre
26 June 1992	Davenant Foundation School
29 June 1992	Chellaston School
30 June 1992	The King Edmund School
3 July 1992	Rainsford School
3 July 1992	Orton Wistow Primary School
3 July 1992	Dunsfold CE First School
3 July 1992	Lynn Grove High School
6 July 1992	Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School
6 July 1992	The Priory County Primary School
6 July 1992	The King's School, Peterborough
6 July 1992	St. Thomas More RC High School
10 July 1992	Salesian College
10 July 1992	Monksmead First School
10 July 1992	St. William's Primary School
13 July 1992	St. Andrew's CE Primary School
13 July 1992	Rugby High School for Girls
13 July 1992	Alcester Grammar School
14 July 1992	South Dartmoor School
14 July 1992	Wallington High School for Girls
15 July 1992	Bishop Thomas Grant Secondary School
15 July 1992	Testwood School
16 July 1992	Southend Girls High School
16 July 1992	Weavers School
17 July 1992	Thorpe Bay High School
17 July 1992	The Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe
17 July 1992	The Folkestone School for Girls
17 July 1992	Thamesmead School
20 July 1992	Hamstead Hall School
20 July 1992	Hamilton Combined School
20 July 1992	William De Ferrers School
21 July 1992	Westlands High School
21 July 1992	The Hedley Walter School
21 July 1992	Jack Hunt School, Peterborough
21 July 1992	St. Simon Stock School
22 July 1992	Scissett Middle School
22 July 1992	Cheddington Combined School
23 July 1992	Ashcroft High School
23 July 1992	Mill Hill County High School
23 July 1992	The Malcolm Sargent County Primary School
23 July 1992	Summerswood First School
23 July 1992	St. Philomena's School, Carshalton
24 July 1992	King Edward VI Handsworth School, Birmingham
24 July 1992	King Edward VI Five Ways School
24 July 1992	King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls
24 July 1992	King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys
24 July 1992	King Edward VI Aston School
27 July 1992	Sharnbrook Upper School
27 July 1992	Dame Alice Owens School
27 July 1992	The Bilston High School
27 July 1992	Stoke Newington School
28 July 1992	Sawtry Village College
28 July 1992	Calmore Middle School
28 July 1992	Edenham School
28 July 1992	Crawley Green Infant School, Luton
31 July 1992	St Gregory's RC Primary School
31 July 1992	Sir Christopher Hatton School
31 July 1992	Freshbrook Primary School
31 July 1992	Westcliff High School for Girls
31 July 1992	Teign School
3 August 1992	Alfold County First School
3 August 1992	Weston Favell Upper School
3 August 1992	The Douay Martyrs School
4 August 1992	Westborough County Primary School
5 August 1992	St. Francesca Cabrini RC Primary School
5 August 1992	St. Edmund's RC Comprehensive School
11 August 1992	Wrenn School
12 August 1992	Herne Bay High School
12 August 1992	The Merrill Community School
17 August 1992	The Wildernesse School
7 September 1992	Northwick Park County Junior School
11 September 1992	The Coopers' Company and Coborn School
18 September 1992	Cliff Park High School
18 September 1992	Danesholme Junior School
21 September 1992	Northwick Park County Infant School
22 September 1992	St. Gregory's Catholic Comprehensive School
22 September 1992	Tendring High School
25 September 1992	The Holy Family RC Primary School
25 September 1992	St. Mildred's CE Primary School
28 September 1992	Grange Park Junior School
28 September 1992	Grange Park Infant School
28 September 1992	Oakbank School
28 September 1992	Lea Manor High School and Community College
28 September 1992	Lacey Gardens Junior School
30 September 1992	Heathfield High School
30 September 1992	St. Joseph's RC VA Primary School
1 October 1992	Appleby Grammar School
2 October 1992	Bushey Meads School
2 October 1992	Vandyke Upper School and Community College
2 October 1992	Knowles Hill School
5 October 1992	Hollinsclough CE Primary School
6 October 1992	Woodnewton Way Junior School
7 October 1992	William Levick Primary School
7 October 1992	Thornton School
9 October 1992	Hanson School
9 October 1992	Wallington High School for Boys
12 October 1992	Henbury County High School
12 October 1992	Greenwood Dale School
12 October 1992	Richard Challoner School
12 October 1992	Repton Primary School
12 October 1992	Takeley County Primary School

13 October 1992	Lincroft Middle School
14 October 1992	Fallibroome County High School
15 October 1992	St. John's CE Primary School
15 October 1992	Belper School
15 October 1992	Beechview Middle School
15 October 1992	Wardle High School
16 October 1992	Rastrick High School
16 October 1992	Mount Grace School
16 October 1992	Tonbridge Grammar School for Girls
16 October 1992	The Shire Oak Community High School
16 October 1992	The Radcliffe School
16 October 1992	The George Spencer School
16 October 1992	Cranwell County Primary School
16 October 1992	John Bunyan Upper School
16 October 1992	Irlam and Cadishead Community High School
19 October 1992	Heartsease School
19 October 1992	Grangefield School
19 October 1992	West Hill High School
19 October 1992	Laisterdyke Middle School
19 October 1992	Jotmans Hall County Primary School
19 October 1992	John Paul II RC School
19 October 1992	St. Paul's Catholic School
20 October 1992	St. Bede's RC School
20 October 1992	St. Augustine's RC High School
20 October 1992	Hazelwick School
20 October 1992	Ashlyns School
20 October 1992	Wootton Upper School
20 October 1992	Convent of Jesus and Mary High School
21 October 1992	Blackfield Middle School
21 October 1992	Redborne Upper School and Community college
21 October 1992	Glebe Infant School
21 October 1992	Picklenash County Junior School
21 October 1992	Ashton-on-Mersey County High School
21 October 1992	Eastwood Comprehensive School
21 October 1992	Mascalls School
21 October 1992	Corby Beanfield Junior School
22 October 1992	St. Boniface's College
22 October 1992	Heanor Gate School
22 October 1992	Roseacre County Junior School
22 October 1992	Park High School
22 October 1992	Nicholas Breakspear RC School
22 October 1992	Ellowes Hall School
22 October 1992	New Wellington High School
22 October 1992	Earlsheaton High School
22 October 1992	Dallam School
22 October 1992	St. Mary and St. Joseph's School
23 October 1992	St. Clement's High School
23 October 1992	Great Yarmouth High School
23 October 1992	The Lord Grey School
23 October 1992	Kingsthorpe Middle School
23 October 1992	Abbs Cross School
26 October 1992	St. Joseph's College
26 October 1992	Walbottle School
26 October 1992	The Kingsway School
26 October 1992	The Frances Bardsley School
26 October 1992	Ingatestone Anglo-European School
26 October 1992	Hillbrook Primary School
27 October 1992	Gunnersbury Catholic School
27 October 1992	St. Thomas's CE Primary School
28 October 1992	Gumley House Convent School for Girls
28 October 1992	Newport Free Grammar School
28 October 1992	Dunraven School
28 October 1992	The Manor School
28 October 1992	Deacon's School
28 October 1992	John Port School
29 October 1992	Bond First School
29 October 1992	Blue Coat CE Primary School
29 October 1992	Trinity CE High School
29 October 1992	The Kingswinford School
29 October 1992	Impington Village College
30 October 1992	Southfields School
30 October 1992	Bohunt School
30 October 1992	Harraby School
30 October 1992	Rising Brook High School
30 October 1992	Queen's School
30 October 1992	Whitelocke Infant School
30 October 1992	Comberton Village College
2 November 1992	Hastingsbury Upper School and Community College
2 November 1992	Sawston Village College
2 November 1992	Great Wyrley High School
2 November 1992	Bay House School
2 November 1992	Kirkby Stephen Grammar School
2 November 1992	Braithwell First and Middle School
2 November 1992	St. Martin's School
3 November 1992	Grays Secondary School
3 November 1992	Noel Baker School
3 November 1992	The Greensward School

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which grant-maintained schools have published their proposals later than the guidance given in paragraph 30 of "School Governors—How to Become a Grant-Maintained School" for the proposed date of implementation; and, in each case, what was the date of *(a)* publication of the proposals, *(b)* his decision, *(c)* the date of proposed implementation and *(d)* the date of implementation.

Mr. Forth: The information is not available in the form requested or for the time permitted.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been *(a)* the maximum transitional grant allocation and *(b)* the amount actually claimed and paid to date in respect of each school approved for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is as follows:

School	*Maximum transitional grant allocation available* £	*Amount claimed and paid to date* £
Acle High School	44,160·00	0·00
Adams' Grammar School	21,675·00	21,675·00
Alcester Grammar School	46,530·00	0·00
Aloeric School	40,560·00	28,111·67
Ancaster High School	47,280·00	47,280·00
Angley High School	54,330·00	54,330·00
Appleton School	60,000·00	0·00
Archbishop's School	50,190·00	50,124·00
Ash Green School	44,160·00	44,160·00
Audenshaw School	25,875·00	25,875·00
Avon Valley School	40,770·00	40,770·00
Avonbourne School	56,580·00	56,580·00
Aylesford School	58,560·00	58,400·00
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	26,115·00	26,115·00

School	*Maximum transitional grant allocation available* £	*Amount claimed and paid to date* £
Baines School	49,410·00	49,384·00
Balcarras School	51,750·00	20,200·00
Bankfield High School	21,510·00	21,510·00
Barnehurst Infant School	24,800·00	22,698·69
Barnehurst Junior School	37,980·00	37,057·25
Bassingbourn Village College	40,770·00	40,770·00
Baverstock School	29,700·00	29,700·00
Beaconsfield High School	54,750·00	54,750·00
Beauchamps School	55,860·00	55,860·00
Beaverwood School for Girls	57,870·00	57,870·00
Beechen Cliff School	27,990·00	27,990·00
Belmont Primary School	40,860·00	40,860·00
Bingley Grammar School	58,020·00	58,020·00
Bishopshalt School	28,755·00	28,755·00
Borough Green Primary School	39,000·00	32,730·00
Borrow Wood Junior School	37,350·00	34,512·81
Bourne Abbey (GM) Primary School	45,510·00	45,510·00
Bournemouth School	28,035·00	28,035·00
Bournemouth School for Girls	55,860·00	55,860·00
Brentside High School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Bridgewater Hall School	30,000·00	30,000·00
Brindley Hall School	30,000·00	30,000·00
Bromfords School	50,970·00	50,969·15
Brookmead School	37,140·00	37,000·00
Bruton Primary School	36,630·00	33,150·00
Budmouth School	57,750·00	57,706·25
Bullers Wood School	58,260·00	58,260·00
Burntwood School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Caistor Grammar School	42,300·00	40,932·00
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School	23,880·00	23,880·00
Carre's Grammar School	20,700·00	20,700·00
Castle Hall School	21,000·00	21,000·00
Castle View School	54,720·00	0·00
Chalfonts School	60,000·00	0·00
Chalvedon School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Charles Darwin School	58,260·00	58,260·00
Chatham Grammar School for Girls	47,130·00	41,450·00
Cheam High School	58,710·00	58,710·00
Chellaston School	58,260·00	0·00
Chelmsford County High School for Girls	50,070·00	18,012·00
Chosen Hill School	60,000·00	39,140·00
Christ Church School	36,210·00	36,210·00
Christ's Hospital School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Churchdown School	60,000·00	50,834·14
Cippenham County Middle School	43,620·00	22,745·00
Claremount High School	28,515·00	28,515·00
Clifford CE GM School	22,130·00	16,960·00
Clitheroe Royal Grammar School	52,980·00	52,980·00
Collingwood School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Colyton Grammar School	21,495·00	21.495·00
Coopers School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Copland Community School	55,020·00	55,000·00
Costessey High School	49,140·00	49,140·00
Cranbrook School	50,880·00	50,880·00
Crofton Junior School	49,560·00	49,560·00
Crofton School	59,760·00	59,760·00
Cromer High School	45,480·00	45,480·00
Crompton Fold Primary School	43,230·00	43,224·14
Crossgates Primary School	37,080·00	37,080·00
Crosshall Infant School	38,760·00	0·00
Crosshall Junior School	41,550·00	25,700·00
Dartford Grammar School	54,480·00	54,462·50
Dartford Grammar School for Girls	51,840·00	51,840·00
De Stafford School	41,400·00	41,400·00
Denefield School	56,520·00	56,520·00
Dereham Church First School	24,380·00	24,380·00
Desborough School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Downham Market High School	60,000·00	42,500·00
Drayton Manor High School	60,000·00	59,819·00
Elliott School	60,000·00	57,000·00
Epsom and Ewell High School	57,630·00	52,930·00
Ermine Junior GM School	38,100·00	38,065·00
Ethelburga Primary School	25,070·00	0·00
Francis Bacon School	43,980·00	43,980·00

School	*Maximum transitional grant allocation available* £	*Amount claimed and paid to date* £
Front Lawn Middle School	36,720·00	0·00
Fulston Manor School	52,620·00	52,620·00
Furtherwick Park School	57,630·00	57,630·00
Gamlingay Village College	35,040·00	20,350·00
Gleed Girls GM School	46,680·00	39,915·00
Glyn School	54,420·00	54,417·00
Gordon's School	38,400·00	38,400·00
Graveney School	60,000·00	55,000·00
Great Barr School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Great Totham Primary School	40,830·00	0·00
Greenford High School	53,400·00	53,400·00
Gresham Village School	22,490·00	22,490·00
Guildford County School	25,995·00	25,995·00
Handsworth Grammar School for Boys	53,310·00	53,310·00
Hardley School	51,060·00	51,060·00
Hartshill School	49,410·00	49,410·00
Hatchford JMI School	44,850·00	0·00
Hawkedale First School	22,460·00	22,460·00
Haydon School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Hayes School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Hayton CE Primary School	22,640·00	10,325·57
Heacham Middle School	36,090·00	36,090·00
Heathside School	44,910·00	44,910·00
Heckmondwike Grammar School	23,475·00	23,475·00
Hendon School	27,540·00	27,540·00
Herschel Grammar School	45,060·00	45,060·00
Hertingfordbury Cowper CE JMI School	23,990·00	0·00
Highams Park School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Highbury School	44,190·00	44,190·00
Highcliffe Comprehensive School	52,800·00	39,276·00
Holy Trinity CE Primary School	36,570·00	36,570·00
Homewood School	60,000·00	60,000·60
Katharine Lady Berkeley's School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Katherines Primary School	37,530·00	27,900·00
Kelsey Park School	51,660·00	51,660·00
Kettleshulme CE Primary School	20,360·00	17,800·00
King Edward VI Grammar School	50,910·00	36,295·00
King Edward VI School, Louth	46,380·00	46,380·00
King Harold School	53,190·00	53,100·00
King John School, Thrapston	38,220·00	38,220·00
Kingsley Park Middle School	39,750·00	39,750·00
Kingswood School	57,870·00	57,870·00
Kirkbie Kendal School	57,600·00	57,600·00
La Retraite High School	47,820·00	47,449·44
Lancaster Girls' Grammar School	49,260·00	49,260·00
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	27,675·00	27,675·00
Langley Grammar School	48,060·00	48,060·00
Langley Park School for Boys	60,000·00	60,000·00
Loddon Middle School	37,890·00	37,890·00
Lodge Park School	54,060·00	54,060·00
Manor High School	48,780·00	48,780·00
Manor School, Northants	51,000·00	0·00
Manshead School	50,520·00	31,825·00
Marling School	25,890·00	25,890·00
Marshland High School	48,840·00	48,840·00
Mellow Lane School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Meopham School	44,190·00	44,190·00
Minster College	60,000·00	60,000·00
Monks' Dyke High School	51,150·00	0·00
Montagu School	56,550·00	25,300·00
Mosely Park School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Moulton Primary School	41,640·00	41,640·00
Myton School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Netherthorpe School.	23,205·00	23,205·00
Newent Community School	60,00·00	60,000·00
Newlands Spring Primary School	39,870·00	39,870·00
Newstead Wood School for Girls	50,340·00	50,340·00
Newton Bluecoat School	38,340·00	38,340·00
Nonsuch High School for Girls	56,820·00	56,813·75
North Crescent Primary School	36,090·00	30,992·09
North Kesteven School	60,000·00	59,761·26
Northampton School for Boys	52,020·00	51,945,00
Northlands Junior School	37,620·00	32,683·00
Northolt High School	56,490·00	56,490·00

School	*Maximum transitional grant allocation available* £	*Amount claimed and paid to date* £
Northwood School	59,490·00	59,490·00
Norwich Road School	41,160·00	36,603·00
Oak Farm Infant School	39,960·00	0·00
Oak Farm Junior School	41,010·00	0·00
Oakwood Park Grammar School	43,290·00	43,290·00
Old Swinford Hospital	23,160·00	23,160·00
Oldborough Manor High School	51,450·00	51,450·00
Oldfield School	48,450·00	48,450·00
Overstone Combined School	38,790,00	34,126·00
Parkside First School	37,200·00	37,200·00
Parkstone Grammar School	48,630·00	48,630·00
Parmitor's School	58,620·00	58,620·00
Pate's Grammar School	30,000·00	30,000·00
Priory School	46,620·00	0·00
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith	45,120·00	45,000·00
Queen Elizabeth Lower School, Atherstone	46,710·00	46,710·00
Queen Elizabeth Upper School, Atherstone	32,670·00	32,670·00
Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Alford	19,935·00	19,935·00
Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Horncastle	45,060·00	45,060·00
Queen Elizabeth's School for Boys, Barnet	30,000·00	30,000·00
Queensbury School	24,555·00	24,555·00
Queensmead School	55,500·00	55,500·00
Raine's Foundation School	56,010·00	56,010·00
Rainham Mark Grammar School	59,550·00	59,550·00
Rauceby School CE GM	22,250·00	22,250·00
Ravens Wood School for Boys	55,710·00	55,710·00
Ravensdale GM School	40,890·00	40,890·00
Reading School	49,770·00	47,314·14
Redgate GM Middle School	24,920·00	24,920·00
Rednock School	60,000·00	59,998·24
Ribston Hall High School	22,275·00	22,275·00
Rickmansworth School	28,965·00	28,965·00
Riddlesdown High School	57,630·00	57,630·00
Ringwood School	52,110·00	52,110·00
Robert Kett GM Middle School	42,390·00	33,668·31
Robert Pattinson School	60,000·00	58,915·00
Robinswood Primary School	41,040·00	41,040·00
Rosebery School	52,860·00	52,860·00
Rugby High School for Girls	46,050·00	0·00
Saffron Walden County High School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Saintbridge School	54,090·00	0·00
Salesian College	45,570·00	0·00
Salterlee Primary School	22,190·00	22,190·00
Sandown Court Community College	55,650·00	55,650·00
Sawtry Village College	48,090·00	0·00
Scotby CE Primary School	36,030·00	36,030·00
Sennacre Technology School	57,630·00	57,630·00
Send CE GM First School	24,380·00	24,380·00
Sexey's School	41,610·00	41,610·00
Sheringham High School	46,620·00	0·00
Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys	48,840·00	48,840·00
Sir Roger Manwood's School	49,590·00	29,503·00
Skegness Grammar School	23,520·00	23,520·00
Small Heath School	26,535·00	26,535·00
Snodland CE Primary School	40,680·00	40,680·00
South Wootton Junior School	23,690·00	730·00
Southfield School for Girls	24,225·00	24,225·00
Southlands School, New Romney	60,000·00	60,000·00
Southlands School, Reading	23,115·00	23,115·00
St. Aidan's County High School	44,700·00	44,700·00
St. Augustine's RC Comprehensive School	45,120·00	45,119·25
St. Bartholomew's School	60,000·00	60,000·00
St. Bernadette Junior School	36,990·00	0·00
St. Francis Xavier's College	30,000·00	30,000·00
St. George's CE School, Gravesend	60,000·00	60,000·00
St. George's GM School, Seaford	56,100·00	56,099·75
St. Helen's Primary School	37,620·00	37,620·00
St. James's CE School, Bolton	24,930·00	24,930·00
St. John The Baptist School, Woking	49,800·00	44,938·29
St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Royston	25,850·00	25,749·21
St. Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive	60,000·00	48,657·00
St. Thomas More RC High School	57,510·00	0·00
Stoneleigh First School	25,730·00	25,730·00
Stratford School	52,950·00	52,950·00

School	*Maximum transitional grant allocation available* £	*Amount claimed and paid to date* £
Streetly School	60,000·00	0·00
Stroud High School	25,515·00	25,515·00
Sutton Grammar School	47,580·00	47,580·00
Tewkesbury School	60,000·00	60,000·00
Thamesmead School	43,560·00	0·00
Thamesview School	60,000·00	60,000·00
The Arnewood School	60,000·00	60,000·00
The Beacon School	52,590·00	51,914·00
The Boswells School	60,000·00	60,000·00
The Bradbourne School	43,980·00	38,578·52
The Burgate School	43,650·00	43,650·00
The Canterbury High School	54,120·00	54,120·00
The Castle Hills GM School	42,210·00	42,201·22
The City of Portsmouth Boys' School	50,220·00	50,220·00
The Cornelius Vermuyden School	53,430·00	0·00
The Cornwallis School	54,360·00	54,360·00
The Cotswold School	46,200·00	10,426·00
The Crossley Heath School	50,700·00	50,700·00
The Crypt School	40,740·00	40,740·00
The Deanes School	48,600·00	0·00
The Downs School	45,960·00	45,960·00
The Eastwood School	51,750·00	51,750·00
The Ecclesbourne School	30,000·00	30,000·00
The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls	55,650·00	55,635·50
The Elmwood Primary School	44,430·00	44,430·00
The Fitzwimarc School	60,000·00	0·00
The Gartree Grant Maintained School	41,220·00	41,219·00
The Hayes Manor School	49,800·00	49,800·00
The Hugh Christie School	57,000·00	0·00
The John Fisher School	53,370·00	53,370·00
The King Edmund School	60,000·00	0·00
The King John School, Essex	60,000·00	60,000·00
The King's School, Peterborough	53,460·00	0·00
The Kings School, Grantham	26,150·00	26,150·00
The London Nautical School	20,895·00	20,895·00
The London Oratory School	30,000·00	30,000·00
The Long Field High School	20,880·00	20,880·00
The Magdalen School	37,020·00	37,020·00
The Malling School	46,680·00	46,680·00
The Manor School, Byfleet	24,110·00	18,191·00
The Maplesden Noakes School	49,710·00	49,710·00
The North Halifax High School	50,040·00	50,040·00
The Park Lane Primary School	38,370·00	35,340·00
The Philip Morant School	60,000·00	60,000·00
The Plume School	60,000·00	59,850·00
The Queen Katherine School	60,000·00	36,524·06
The Queen's School, Wisbech	60,000·00	50,695·00
The Rickstones School	44,340·00	34,050·00
The Robert Napier School	54,030·00	54,000·00
The Skinners' School	50,040·00	50,040·00
Thomas Whitehead CE School	36,690·00	36,690·00
Thurstable School	54,210·00	54,200·00
Tiffin School	56,820·00	36,800·00
Torells School	47,160·00	45,619·00
Trinity School, Carlisle	60,000·00	60,000·00
Turnham Primary School	41,580·00	0·00
Upton Grammar School	45,450·00	0·00
Uxbridge High School	51,120·00	51,119·95
Vyners School	57,540·00	57,540·00
Watford Grammar School	30,000·00	30,000·00
Watford Grammar School for Girls	58,470·00	58,470·00
West Flegg Middle School	43,110·00	30,300·00
West Hatch High School	57,480·00	57,480·00
Westcliff High School	55,050·00	55,050·00
Wheatfields Junior School	41,130·00	27,580·00
William Alvey School	42,420·00	42,420·00
William De Ferrers School	60,000·00	0·00
William Farr CE Comprehensive School	55,650·00	55,645·00
Wilmington Grammar School for Boys	40,560·00	40,560·00
Wilmington Grammar School for Girls	21,760·00	21,760·00
Wilson's School	25,875·00	25,875·00
Windmill Primary School	42,630·00	30,869·00
Wold Newton School	22,880·00	22,800·00
Wolverhampton Girls' High School	23,445·00	23,445·00

School	Maximum transitional grant allocation available £	Amount claimed and paid to date £
Wood End First School	38,550·00	0·00
Wood End Middle School	36,810·00	0·00
Woodroffe School	55,170·00	55,170·00
Wrotham School	41,730·00	41,730·00
Wymondham College	53,970·00	53,970·00
Yarborough High School	60,000·00	60,000·00

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many copies have been distributed and, in each case, at what cost of the booklets *(a)* "School Governors—How to Become a Grant-Maintained School", *(b)* "Grant-Maintained Schools—Questions Parents Ask", *(c)* "Grant-Maintained Schools—What it Means for Staff", *(d)* "Grant-Maintained Schools—Questions Staff Ask", *(e)* "Grant-Maintained Schools—Experiences During the First Year" and *(f)* "Education into the Next Century".

Mr. Forth: The total numbers of booklets which have been printed to fulfil expected demand and the current costs of producing each booklet are as follows:

Total printed	Current cost per booklet £
(a) 180,000 since April 1992	0·1800
(b) 1,290,005 since March 1990	0·0800
(c) 193,000 November 1990—September 1992	[1]0·0900
(d) 140,000 since September 1992	0·0700
(e) 350,000 since June 1991	0·0900
(f) 2,750,000 since August 1992	[2]0·0592

[1] Booklet is no longer produced. This is the cost when it was last produced.

[2] Estimated.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools' folders have been produced for the distribution of booklets; and what was the cost of *(a)* the design and *(b)* the production.

Mr. Forth: A total of 90,000 folders have been produced to date. The cost of design was £487·63 and artwork production was £489·98. The printing costs were approximately £29,000.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, in rank order, the 10 local education authorities with most schools which have been approved for grant-maintained status; and for each local education authority, the number of schools which have been approved, the political control of the local education authority and where the local education authority ranks in spending per pupil for all local education authorities.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is as follows:

LEA	Number of GM schools approved	Political control	LEA schools, ranking by per pupil funding, 1990-91
Kent	35	Conservative	108
Essex	33	Conservative	80
Lincolnshire	23	Conservative	101
Norfolk	16	Conservative	76
Gloucestershire	16	No overall control	102
Surrey	15	Conservative	56
Berkshire	11	No overall control	65
Bromley	11	Conservative	27
Cambridgeshire	10	Conservative	97
Hillingdon	10	Conservative	18
Northamptonshire	10	Conservative	103

Note: The ranking is according to each LEA's net institutional funding per nursery, primary and secondary school pupil in 1990-91, the latest year for which information on actual spending is available. Per pupil funding is derived from LEAs' returns of their expenditure to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department for Education. The LEA with the highest per pupil funding would be ranked as 1, that with the lowest per pupil funding as 108 (Isles of Scilly is excluded).

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in how many ballots in England under section 61 of the Education Reform Act 1988, where a simple majority of parents voted in favour of seeking grant-maintained status, the proportion of such parents was *(a)* above 69 per cent., *(b)* between 60 and 69 per cent., *(c)* between 50 and 59 per cent., *(d)* between 40 and 49 per cent., *(e)* between 30 and 39 per cent. and *(f)* below 30 per cent. of the number of parents eligible to vote.

Mr. Forth: The proportion of eligible parents voting in favour of grant-maintained status in ballots where a result in favour was obtained has been as follows: above 69 per cent. in 75 ballots; betweeen 60 and 69 per cent. in 86 ballots; between 50 and 59 per cent. in 155 ballots; between 40 and 49 per cent. in 155 ballots; between 30 and 39 per cent. in 99 ballots and under 30 per cent. in 15 ballots.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools include in their admissions policy an element of priority for the children of staff working in the schools.

Mr. Forth: Information about the admission policies of all grant-maintained schools is not readily available in this form. But since 1 November 1991, my right hon. Friend has approved applications for eight grant-maintained schools to amend their admissions policies so as to give some priority to children of their staff.

Schools Branch

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff are employed in schools branch 4, division B at his Department; what was the cost of the branch in 1991-92; and what is the budgeted cost for 1992-93.

Mr. Forth: There has been some restructuring of the branch during this year. As of 5 November there were 21 civil servants employed in schools branch 4 division B. The running costs of the division in 1991-92 were £706,000 and the budget for 1992-93 is £800,000.

School Sports Facilities

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the possible effect of the elimination of claimed surplus places in maintained schools on sports facilities in general and on statutory or recommended minimum acreages of playing fields.

Mr. Forth: The Department is currently consulting local education authorities on the scope for removing surplus places, on the basis of its estimate that in 1991 there were up to 1·5 million surplus places in England. Decisions on the disposal of playing fields consequential upon school rationalisation are for LEAs.

School Visits

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the schools which he and his ministerial colleagues have visited in their official capacity since assuming their different offices.

Mr. Patten: I, my noble Friend the Minister of State, and the Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State, my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) have visited 57 schools so far during our periods in office, made up of

1 nursery;
21 primary schools, including 1 middle school;
30 secondary schools, including 3 grant-maintained schools;
2 special schools;
3 CTCs and 2 sixth form colleges.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Committee Meetings

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when is the next K4 committee meeting.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The K4 committee will not come into being until the treaty on European union enters into force.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Ray Powell To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the judgment of the European Court of Justice on the B & Q cases.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I hope that the court will deliver its judgment soon.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidance he proposes to give local authorities on the enforcement of the Shops Act 1950;

(2) how he proposes to ensure that the Shops Act 1950 is fairly enforced in the pre-Christmas and new year trading periods.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has recently made clear what steps local authorities can take to enforce the law, *Official Report*, 11 May 1992, column *368;* 15 July 1992, column *707*.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his oral answer on 22 October to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), *Official Report*, column 558, when he expects to make his promised statement to the House;

(2) what procedure and time scale he intends to follow to ensure that Parliament is freely enabled to decide on the nature and extent of any changes to the Shops Act 1950.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend intends to make a statement soon which will deal with these matters among others.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to his oral answer on 22 October to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). *Official Report*, column 558, how many of the stated representations received in favour of Sunday trading have come from pre-printed colour postcards supplied by the Shopping Hours Reform Council.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Of the 4,433 written representations received, 4,086 were postcards in the form described in the question.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the Sunday trading laws of other EC member states.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that nearly all other EC member states place some restrictions on Sunday trading.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations on Sunday trading he has received during the current year from small business organisations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received 35 written representations from business organisations. Our records do not enable us to distinguish between them according to size.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives of the Keep Sunday Special campaign; and when he next expects to do so.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I last met representatives of the Keep Sunday Special campaign on 23 September 1992. We agreed to meet again before the Government bring before the House any proposals for reforming the Shops Act 1950.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has on the incidence of shop theft and damage on the Sundays in the period from November 1991 and for similar periods in the previous five years;

(2) what information he has on the incidence on crimes against shop staff *(a)* in the current year and *(b)* in comparable periods for the previous five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We do not hold such information centrally.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times in the past 12 months he or his ministerial colleagues or his officials has met representatives of *(a)* the Shopping Hours Reform Council, *(b)* the Keep Sunday Special campaign, *(c)* OPEN, *(d)* the Pro-Sunday Coalition, *(e)* Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers and *(f)* Sort Out Sunday, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have had four meetings with the Shopping Hours Reform Council in the last 12 months; four with the Keep Sunday Special campaign; one with OPEN; and two with Sort Out Sunday. We have had no meetings with either the Pro-Sunday coalition or USDAW in that period.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when was the last time his Department issued a circular to local authorities on the Shops Act 1950;

(2) when he plans to issue the next circular to local authorities on the Shops Act 1950.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The last circular to local authorities about the Shops Act 1950 was issued on 17 July 1981. We have no plans to issue another.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consultations he has held with residents associations on the subject of Sunday trading;

(2) what consultations he has held with *(a)* the British Retail Consortium, *(b)* churches, *(c)* ethnic minority groups, *(d)* the Jewish community, *(e)* consumer organisations, *(f)* consumers, *(g)* trade unions and *(h)* employees and other trade associations in the retail sector on the subject of Sunday trading.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Home Office Ministers have consulted a large number of groups and organisations about the law on Sunday trading. Over 75 meetings have been held since January 1988 with a range of different groups.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies he has commissioned into the impact on small shops of the Sunday trading activities of multiple food retailers since November 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A study has been commissioned to review the economic effects of changing Sunday trading patterns.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the last year how many individuals have been refused leave to remain or requested to leave the United Kingdom; and how many have actually left.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In 1991, 16,300 applications for variation of leave were refused. Comprehensive information on those leaving following refusal, or on the outcome of subsequent appeals or reconsideration of the case, is not readily available.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* visitors, *(b)* short-term students and *(c)* would-be students were refused (i) entry clearance and (ii) entry to the United Kingdom by country and for each month since January 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: The available information is given in the tables. It is not possible from the information available centrally to ascertain how many of the persons covered by tables 2 and 3 were seeking entry as visitors, short-term students or would-be students, but it is likely that the large majority of them were.

Table 1. Visitors and students refused[1] entry clearance to the United Kingdom in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Ghana, Nigeria and Hong Kong

Country where application made	*Visitors*	*Students[2]*
Bangladesh		
1991:		
1st quarter	397	7
2nd quarter	576	—
3rd quarter	806	12
4th quarter	751	4
Year	2,530	23
1992:		
1st quarter	557	6
2nd quarter	548	1
India		
1991:		
1st quarter	1,821	21
2nd quarter	3,574	32
3rd quarter	2,672	65
4th quarter	1,438	28
Year	9,505	146
1992:		
1st quarter	1,617	20
2nd quarter	2,505	15
Pakistan		
1991:		
1st quarter	2,286	63
2nd quarter	4,247	59
3rd quarter	5,048	151
4th quarter	3,963	114
Year	15,544	387
1992:		
1st quarter	2,975	87
2nd quarter	3,393	52
Ghana		
1991:		
1st quarter	521	37
2nd quarter	1,061	45
3rd quarter	1,527	90
4th quarter	1,132	76
Year	4,241	248
1992:		
1st quarter	819	62
2nd quarter	1,330	71
3rd quarter	1,727	125

Country where application made	*Visitors*	*Students*[2]
Nigeria		
1991:		
1st quarter	3,331	94
2nd quarter	3,763	76
3rd quarter	2,892	36
4th quarter	5,506	82
Year	15,492	288
1992:		
1st quarter	2,988	68
Hong Kong		
1991:		
1st quarter	10	1
2nd quarter	11	—
3rd quarter	11	2
4th quarter	9	2
Year	41	5
1992:		
1st quarter	10	1
2nd quarter	6	3
3rd quarter	1	1

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[1] Data relate to applications refused initially; some were granted subsequently on appeal.

[2] Including long-term students.

Table 2—Persons refused entry clearance to the United Kingdom other than for settlement[1] *in 1991, in all countries except Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Ghana, Nigeria and Hong Kong.*

Country where application made	*Number of refusals*[2]
Algeria	3,931
Angola	27
Argentina	1
Ascension Island	—
Australia	75
Austria	17
Bahamas	2
Bahrain	50
Barbados	137
Belgium	96
Belize	2
Bermuda	—
Bolivia	1
Botswana	1
Brazil	4
Brunei	3
Bulgaria	457
Burma	14
Cameroon	18
Canada	65
Chile	—
China	2,534
Colombia	2
Congo	—
Costa Rica	1
Cote D'Ivoire	46
Cuba	—
Cyprus	421
Czechoslovakia	10
Denmark	88
Ecuador	—
Egypt	1,222
Ethiopia	456
Fiji	13
Finland	12
France	532
Gabon	—
Gambia	118
Germany	325
Gibraltar	—
Greece	24
Guatemala	—
Guyana	97
Holy See	—
Honduras	—
Hungary	73
Iceland	1
Indonesia	9
Iran	—
Ireland	32
Israel	2
Italy	410
Jamaica	680
Japan	64
Jerusalem	9
Jordan	730
Kenya	117
Korea	8
Kuwait	17
Lebanon	318
Lesotho	1
Liberia	—
Libya	7
Luxembourg	2
Madagascar	—
Malawi	5
Malaysia	180
Malta	25
Mauritius	129
Mexico	—
Mongolia	—
Morocco	2,101
Mozambique	16
Namibia	5
Nepal	127
Netherlands	84
New Zealand	29
Norway	184
Oman	75
Panama	1
Papua New Guinea	—
Peru	1
Philippines	787
Poland	2,462
Portugal	13
Qatar	135
Romania	574
St. Helena	—
Saudi Arabia	701
Senegal	22
Seychelles	2
Sierra Leone	363
Singapore	36
Solomon Island	—
South Africa	37
Spain	48
Sri Lanka	1,143
Sudan	42
Swaziland	3

Country where application made	*Number of refusals*[2]
Sweden	155
Switzerland	50
Syria	413
Tanzania	37
Thailand	809
Tonga	—
Trinidad and Tobago	122
Tunisia	172
Turkey	2,322
Uganda	516
United Arab Emirates	888
United States	154
Uruguay	—
USSR	1,087
Vanuatu	—
Venezuela	5
Vietnam	2
Yemen	138
Yugoslavia	57
Zaire	32
Zambia	31
Zimbabwe	76
Total	29, 632

[1] That is all persons seeking entry clearance other than spouses, fiance(e)s, children and other dependant relatives.

[2] Data relate to applications refused initially; some were subsequently granted on appeal.

Table 3. All persons refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom
1991

Nationality	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*Year*
European Community[1]													
Belgium	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	3
Denmark	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	1	4
France	—	1	5	2	2	2	—	—	1	1	4	—	18
Germany	2	—	—	—	—	3	1	1	—	2	—	4	13
Greece	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Italy	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	4
Luxembourg	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlands	—	1	—	1	—	1	2	1	—	1	—	2	9
Portugal	7	2	2	3	4	5	1	2	—	3	—	3	32
Spain	—	1	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	5
Commonwealth													
Australia	19	27	28	22	20	17	30	17	21	16	16	17	250
Bangladesh	41	42	35	25	26	30	48	30	49	35	24	47	432
Barbados	5	3	2	2	1	5	4	1	2	—	1	—	26
Canada	11	5	5	11	10	16	11	15	11	16	11	8	130
Cyprus	10	9	15	10	12	5	4	7	8	9	11	11	111
Ghana	47	41	40	36	40	28	34	40	46	30	33	49	464
Guyana	3	4	6	1	6	7	2	5	7	8	3	5	57
Hong Kong	10	5	20	16	19	35	23	18	19	27	16	15	223
India	29	36	54	30	34	68	39	39	28	39	34	37	467
Jamaica	33	32	37	34	36	32	50	12	28	33	26	39	392
Kenya	14	15	14	13	24	14	11	11	17	10	13	11	167
Malaysia	35	21	70	156	105	114	44	78	35	49	41	50	798
Malta	4	1	5	—	—	1	2	1	1	2	—	2	19
Mauritius	19	16	16	11	22	18	10	17	11	23	15	11	189
New Zealand	5	9	7	20	14	15	15	12	15	19	20	10	161
Nigeria	71	80	94	105	122	187	160	59	134	186	222	122	1,542
Pakistan	41	29	36	19	33	45	27	31	48	35	29	47	420
Sierra Leone	31	22	24	26	35	29	34	88	43	55	33	36	456
Singapore	1	4	3	5	8	10	1	3	6	7	6	5	59
Sri Lanka	5	15	17	6	6	30	11	6	9	7	8	3	123
Tanzania	5	4	15	11	6	12	13	16	12	11	14	12	131
Trinidad and Tobago	7	13	7	6	6	4	4	1	4	7	4	7	70
Uganda	25	19	34	6	12	5	5	4	6	7	3	4	130
Zambia	8	5	10	5	12	7	12	3	4	8	11	3	88
Zimbabwe	16	13	13	18	15	13	10	4	15	15	21	9	162
British Overseas Citizens	5	2	1	1	2	3	4	3	4	3	7	2	37
Other Commonwealth	20	19	35	52	38	40	33	26	31	25	28	51	398
Other foreign													
Algeria	27	14	6	10	22	19	13	19	16	20	29	31	226
Argentina	4	7	15	17	14	8	2	6	13	5	5	9	105
Austria	6	4	4	1	3	5	7	7	7	4	3	2	53
Brazil	54	35	53	80	73	70	65	53	64	73	57	45	721
Bulgaria	6	8	4	8	2	—	11	7	—	3	8	—	57
Chile	8	1	5	1	4	8	5	6	3	4	3	1	49
China	7	13	4	11	1	1	9	3	5	4	5	2	65
Colombia	32	32	39	48	52	48	39	28	42	29	41	49	479
Cuba	—	4	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	1	2	10
Czechoslovakia	21	18	16	30	45	73	112	53	41	22	18	9	458
Egypt	5	1	5	2	2	1	1	2	4	—	1	1	25
Ethiopia	4	4	8	5	4	5	10	6	5	2	3	1	57
Finland	2	3	6	4	2	3	5	4	6	4	6	3	48
Hungary	33	12	11	21	22	32	39	19	31	28	15	6	269
Indonesia	—	—	—	—	—	2	10	3	1	1	1	3	21
Iran	14	17	9	4	14	14	33	32	21	16	9	6	189
Iraq	9	5	8	—	2	3	5	3	5	—	1	4	45
Israel	18	9	13	13	18	22	15	24	18	13	14	6	183
Japan	18	6	18	24	6	11	8	14	12	14	14	15	160

Nationality	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*Year*
Jordan	10	2	1	1	1	3	2	5	—	1	2	2	30
Kuwait	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2
Lebanon	26	25	26	15	19	36	25	34	12	12	28	23	281
Libya	6	3	—	—	—	4	4	2	4	9	1	1	34
Mexico	14	6	6	8	9	6	14	13	3	14	5	4	102
Morocco	17	11	8	5	18	24	33	33	26	17	15	27	234
Norway	7	4	3	4	2	4	8	7	2	8	4	5	58
Peru	11	15	8	8	9	10	4	8	7	7	5	8	100
Philippines	5	6	23	5	9	14	17	11	5	18	7	24	144
Poland	8	12	6	9	8	13	6	13	14	6	16	5	116
Romania	8	1	2	7	7	4	7	15	3	2	7	2	65
Saudi Arabia	1	—	—	—	—	3	3	3	5	4	2	1	22
Somalia	4	5	5	7	7	10	12	8	6	11	9	—	84
South Africa	39	44	44	27	46	37	36	42	31	46	34	20	446
Sudan	2	—	2	2	—	2	2	2	5	—	3	2	22
Sweden	17	17	11	12	13	12	9	18	21	8	18	11	167
Switzerland	10	4	4	4	8	14	8	10	8	5	7	6	88
Syria	3	2	3	—	1	2	4	3	7	3	—	—	28
Thailand	2	4	4	2	3	4	1	2	9	3	3	1	38
Tunisia	5	2	6	5	7	7	5	3	1	5	4	6	56
Turkey	28	26	26	30	31	25	26	26	23	30	15	40	326
USA	111	79	96	83	79	108	96	107	112	109	95	87	1,162
USSR	11	5	11	7	6	10	32	9	13	4	9	9	126
Uruguay	1	—	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	7
Venezuela	5	3	5	7	5	4	3	1	3	3	7	5	51
Yugoslavia	50	30	42	48	66	50	97	96	143	171	117	104	1,014
Other foreign countries	53	63	77	70	89	78	94	84	76	64	86	74	908
Stateless	114	109	140	100	114	145	177	206	162	146	158	178	1,749
All nationalities	1,367	1,167	1,437	1,400	1,516	1,757	1,761	1,605	1,610	1,637	1,567	1,466	18,270

[1]Persons claiming to be EC nationals

1992

Nationality	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*
European Community[1]								
Belgium	4	2	—	1	3	—	2	1
Denmark	1	1	—	—	1	1	—	—
France	4	3	5	6	12	5	10	12
Germany	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greece	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	1
Italy	1	—	—	3	1	—	1	2
Luxembourg	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlands	3	2	1	1	1	2	4	2
Portugal	4	2	—	7	3	4	2	9
Spain	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Commonwealth								
Australia	21	21	23	27	21	21	18	18
Bangladesh	35	46	64	26	32	30	32	19
Barbados	1	3	4	3	3	4	2	2
Canada	11	8	11	9	20	10	13	6
Cyprus	6	4	5	7	2	6	4	10
Ghana	33	40	25	19	35	35	33	38
Guyana	1	6	2	6	3	7	2	3
Hong Kong	16	12	6	17	6	16	14	12
India	28	26	31	27	40	23	26	26
Jamaica	31	32	37	36	29	33	37	27
Kenya	18	20	14	9	20	12	19	20
Malaysia	21	16	33	39	50	22	39	16
Malta	1	1	—	—	—	2	5	—
Mauritius	16	11	19	14	13	9	18	15
New Zealand	8	14	11	18	16	6	14	11
Nigeria	121	119	91	85	55	62	67	96
Pakistan	25	30	18	22	32	28	20	37
Sierra Leone	25	23	22	22	15	20	36	37
Singapore	4	5	4	7	5	—	3	2
Sri Lanka	11	6	1	1	18	5	8	14
Tanzania	6	8	8	9	11	12	13	5
Trinidad and Tobago	5	6	2	5	4	4	5	8
Uganda	2	5	2	4	4	—	2	5
Zambia	6	2	3	5	9	7	5	4
Zimbabwe	16	11	5	9	7	10	8	9
British Overseas Citizens	2	—	1	3	2	4	3	3
Other Commonwealth	41	35	42	34	23	33	25	42
Other foreign								
Algeria	29	20	11	11	14	20	20	17
Argentina	8	—	11	5	7	6	9	8
Austria	3	5	7	4	11	12	9	2

Nationality	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
Brazil	44	39	46	46	46	44	41	45
Bulgaria	5	1	3	1	1	3	4	3
Chile	2	1	7	4	3	7	4	3
China	—	5	8	2	6	5	—	7
Colombia	30	24	48	26	30	37	24	30
Cuba	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	1
Czechoslovakia	12	12	19	25	15	43	84	30
Egypt	—	5	3	1	5	1	2	2
Ethiopia	2	2	3	4	—	3	4	4
Finland	2	4	5	4	6	4	6	4
Hungary	18	7	11	15	10	20	14	14
Indonesia	—	1	—	1	4	1	2	1
Iran	18	17	23	4	13	9	16	25
Iraq	8	—	1	4	3	—	1	—
Israel	7	8	8	15	12	8	11	14
Japan	10	10	14	10	11	16	13	16
Jordan	1	1	—	2	—	3	3	1
Kuwait	1	1	—	1	—	1	—	—
Lebanon	11	9	6	2	10	4	20	44
Libya	3	2	1	—	1	—	6	4
Mexico	4	9	3	7	2	9	11	14
Morocco	7	5	9	11	9	8	5	16
Norway	4	7	2	3	3	5	1	6
Peru	4	3	3	12	12	9	10	9
Philippines	6	13	6	6	8	9	12	22
Poland	6	4	7	3	16	8	235	139
Romania	6	5	5	5	3	13	21	8
Saudi Arabia	1	—	1	1	1	1	1	6
Somalia	7	8	4	—	—	3	4	1
South Africa	26	25	38	38	37	46	31	42
Sudan	1	—	2	1	2	1	1	—
Sweden	9	3	6	9	12	19	14	12
Switzerland	7	5	11	7	5	3	6	5
Syria	1	2	2	2	—	6	1	2
Thailand	1	6	4	4	2	10	2	3
Tunisia	4	1	2	4	3	1	2	2
Turkey	19	22	16	18	20	17	18	20
USA	78	71	79	89	82	80	84	68
USSR	9	2	15	6	3	7	12	27
Uruguay	1	—	1	1	—	3	6	1
Venezuela	3	1	1	4	3	—	4	3
Yugoslavia	74	48	59	51	77	58	49	8
Other foreign countries	96	78	73	81	73	83	73	97
Stateless	95	109	88	82	83	73	132	107
All nationalities	1,211	1,124	1,161	1,116	1,162	1,152	1,518	1,403

[1] Persons claiming to be EC nationals.

Prison Service

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column 453, what assessment he has made of the change in costs of catering in prisons resulting from the introduction of contracts with commercial companies.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The dietary allowances for inmates are the same in all prisons including those where catering has been contracted out. Catering has only been contracted out in new prisons, therefore for these prisons there is no historical data on which to assess changes in other costs associated with catering. Future assessments of different methods of providing catering will balance the quality of the service against the costs.

Banknotes

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will make a statement on forgeries of banknotes;

(2) how many forged *(a)* £5, *(b)* £10, *(c)* £20 and *(d)* £50 banknotes he estimates have been released in the United Kingdom during the past 12 months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not possible to estimate accurately the number of forged notes of different denominations in circulation, but it is unlikely to exceed a small fraction of 1 per cent. of the total number of bank notes in circulation.

The national criminal intelligence service works with the police both to seize the forgeries before they circulate and to identify and bring to justice those who are responsible for this criminal activity.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many asylum seekers *(a)* came to the United Kingdom, *(b)* wilfully destroyed their documentation and *(c)* arrived with inadequate documentation in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what percentage of asylum applicants apply at the port of entry; and of those what percentage have been seen to destroy their nationality documents;

(3) how many of those who claim asylum enter the United Kingdom *(a)* without documents, *(b)* as visitors, *(c)* students and *(d)* pre-entry cleared asylum seekers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: For information on the total asylum applications to the United Kingdom by location, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 20 October 1992 at columns *261-62*.

In the first half of 1992, 26 per cent. of all asylum applications to the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, were made at ports. Available information on these cases, as a percentage of total port asylum applications is given in table A.

About 75 per cent. of all applications were made in-country. Available information on these cases is given in table B.

Table A

Applications made at ports for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, January to June 1992

Percentages

	Percentage of total port applicants
With genuine documents	33
With forged documents	15
With mutilated documents	3
With no documents	48

Table B

Applications made in country[1] for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, January to June 1992

Percentages

	Percentage of total in-country applicants
Applicants who were admitted to the United Kingdom as visitors[2]	53
Applicants who were admitted to the United Kingdom as students[2]	5
Other in-country applicants[1 3]	43

[1] Includes also a small number of applications recorded as made overseas; this number may be underrecorded.

[2] Includes those who applied after their leave as a visitor or student had expired.

[3] Includes also, inter alia, applications made by illegal entrants, cases with no documents, and cases where the immigration status is not known or not yet recorded.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 20 October, *Official Report*, columns *261-62*, what proportion of the figures quoted in respect of exceptional leave to remain represent second or subsequent applications for *(a)* extension of leave and *(b)* upgrade to asylum.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The figures referred to are just of first grants of exceptional leave following determination of the asylum application. They exclude decisions on applications for subsequent extensions of exceptional leave or for upgrading to asylum.

Court Escort Service

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in selecting a contractor to operate the court escort service in Humberside and the east midlands.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 5 February my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary announced that invitations to tender for the provision of the court escort service in Humberside and the east midlands, under provisions contained within the Criminal Justice Act 1991, had been issued to 12 private sector contractors. The contract will cover all prisoner movements to and from court except for those of high security prisoners.

After carefully considering all the proposals submitted, the Government today signed a contract with Group 4 Court Services Ltd. for the operation of the court escort service within the designated area. The signing follows a three-month development phase, during which representatives of Group 4 have visited prisons, police stations and court premises in the area to familiarise themselves with all the agencies concerned and their requirements from the service to be provided.

The new service is due to start in April 1993 using staff who are statutorily and contractually required to be properly trained and vetted. It will free up prison and police officers to concentrate on duties more appropriate to their particular skills and training.

The Government will, in due course, consider extending the contracting out of court escorting to other areas of the country.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the past three years; for each of the past three years, how many reports from external consultants to his department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Information on reports produced by external consultants working in the Home Office during the past three years could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Channel Islands

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will now provide a substantive answer to the written question of 22 October from the hon. Member for Walsall, North regarding when the documents relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel islands will now be released;

(2) when he now intends to release into the public domain the present classified document relating to the Nazi occupation of the Channel islands.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answers 5 November 1992 and 22 October 1992]*: The review of Home Office records relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands should be completed shortly. I will make a statement about the results of the review later this month.

European Community

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Community.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 3 November 1992]*: Approximately 60 officials spend all or most of their time on work within the European Community or between the member states. A number of others spend smaller proportions of their time engaged in this area of work.

DEFENCE

Press Releases

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make available on request to hon. Members his departmental press releases on the day of release.

Mr. Rifkind: The main method of distributing the MOD's and other Government Departments' press releases is through the Central Office of Information's electronic news distribution service. This ensures that material becomes available to hon. Members and noble Lords through the computerised parliamentary on-line information system (POLIS) at the same time that it is released to the media.

In addition, my Department sends press releases to the House of Commons Library by facsimile as soon as practicable after electronic distribution. Copies are also sent direct to Opposition defence spokesmen and to the Clerk of the Select Committee on Defence.

I believe that these are the most cost-effective means of keeping each House informed of press announcements.

Nuclear Warheads

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom experience of the disposal of fissile nuclear materials recovered from dismantled nuclear warheads.

Mr. Aitken: The United Kingdom has the appropriate facilities for, and extensive experience in, the dismantling of redundant nuclear warheads. Fissile material recovered is re-used where this is necessary and possible; otherwise, the material is stored in safe and secure facilities.

United States Military Bases

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what United Kingdom health, safety and environmental legislation applies to United States military bases and storage depots in Wales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All relevant United Kingdom health, safety and environmental legislation applies to United States military bases in Wales.

Atomic Weapons Establishments

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current status of the A91 building at AWE Aldermaston; and on what date it is expected that this building will become operational.

Mr. Aitken: A project definition study into the scope of the work needed to overcome the corrosion problem is under way, and is due to report by the end of March 1993. This study will confirm the date on which the building will become fully operational.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the present status of the programme to appoint a contractor to operate the atomic weapons establishments.

Mr. Aitken: Three tenders were received on 1 September 1992 and are being evaluated. We expect to announce the successful tenderer in early 1993.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the distinction made by his Department between the separate buildings of the A90 complex at AWE Aldermaston; when each of these will be fully operational; what buildings and facilities at AWE Aldermaston will be superseded by the A90 complex; and which of these buildings and facilities will be demolished.

Mr. Aitken: A90 is the designation of the new plutonium processing building at AWE Aldermaston and its immediate support facilities. The plutonium processing laboratories in A90 and their support systems are currently going through a comprehensive commissioning process prior to becoming operational. A90 will replace Aldermaston's existing plutonium processing facilities, which will them be progressively decommissioned and, if necessary, demolished.

Departmental Vehicles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State For Defence what was the cost of the truck cargo heavy duty vehicles recently delivered to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Around £11 million.

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which facilities owned or operated by his Department are inspected by the nuclear installations inspectorate; and from which areas in these facilities the nuclear installations inspectorate inspectors are excluded.

Mr. Aitken: The only facilities falling into this category are the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth which are owned by my Department but operated by contractors. These are licensed sites under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 and are therefore subject to inspection by the nuclear installations inspectorate. Arrangements for such inspections are a matter for the contractors and the inspectorate who may have access to all facilities covered by the licence.

RAF Greenham Common

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the wake of the United States Air Force's decision to withdraw from RAF Greenham Common, alternative defence uses for the station are being investigated. It is not yet possible to say whether the station will be retained or declared surplus to defence requirements although I expect firm decisions to be announced shortly.

Imber

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will reconsider his Department's requirement for the village of Imber and the lands that surround it.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The level of training in the United Kingdom is likely to increase as a result of the return of combat units from Germany. The Department's requirement for the Salisbury Plain training area including Imber village and surrounding lands is expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

Experiments on Primates

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many scientific procedures have been carried out on primates in laboratories under the control of his Department in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from G. Pearson to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 6 November 1992:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking how many scientific procedures have been carried out on primates in laboratories under the control of his Department in each of the last 10 years (Questions 16, Order Paper 29 October 1992) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. As information on the number of scientific procedures carried out on primates can assist a potential aggressor in assessing the current state of development of our medical countermeasures against the threat of attack by chemical or biological weapons, it is not in the national interest to provide such information.

3. It is important to consider the use of animals in scientific procedures in the context of the role and function of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment. Our role is to carry out research to ensure that the Servicemen and Servicewomen of our Armed Forces are provided with adequate protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. The United Kingdom does not possess chemical or biological weapons and all work related to such weapons ceased in the late 1950's. Nevertheless, we do have to recognise that other countries still produce and maintain considerable stocks of chemical weapons; they were possessed by Iraq during the Gulf war. It is vital that the protective measures provided for our Service personnel should have been developed and tested to ensure that they are effective and safe. Such work, which may involve the use of animals for experimental purposes is of considerable importance to the nation.

4. The number of experiments carried out in any one year at CBDE is relatively small and is less than one half of one per cent. of all animal experiments carried out in the United Kingdom. No animal experiments are carried out in order to improve weapons or ammunition or to practice surgery.

5. Animal experiments are only carried out after careful consideration has been given to alternatives. Where none are found to be an adequate substitute, it is essential to carry out some experiments involving animals; the majority involve mice, rats or guinea-pigs. It is important to select an animal that is representative of man and for some studies the marmoset or monkey is the most appropriate animal. Such studies with marmosets or primates are particularly important in evaluating a proposed new medical countermeasure prior to assessment of its acceptability in man. We have also been active in the area of environmental enrichment as this is very beneficial to the animals concerned.

6. All experiments involving the use of animals at CBDE fully meet the spirit and the letter of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. CBDE is a registered place under the Act and all experiments are done under Home Office approved project licences by staff holding a personal licence. Unannounced visits are made by the Home Office Inspectors to satisfy themselves that the requirements of the Act are met.

Our aim is to provide the Armed Forces with medical countermeasures that meet the same standards of safety as the drugs supplied to the public.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what category of nuclear waste are glove boxes that have been used for handling plutonium at Aldermaston and Burghfield atomic weapons establishments; and if he will make a statement on the means by which glove boxes that have been used for handling plutonium at AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield are disposed of.

Mr. Aitken: Decommissioned glove boxes which have been used for handling plutonium are categorised as intermediate level waste (ILW). Such waste is currently stored on site at AWE in special containers and buildings, pending decisions on a national disposal method for ILW.

Nuclear-Powered Warships Safety Committee

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual budget of the nuclear-powered warships safety committee.

Mr. Aitken: About £38,000.

Nuclear Weapons (Safety)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he make a statement on his Department's progress in implementing the recommendations contained in the Oxburgh report on nuclear weapons safety.

Mr. Aitken: The Minister of Defence has accepted all the recommendations of the Oxburgh report and is proceeding with their implementation.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual budget of the nuclear weapons safety committee.

Mr. Aitken: About £37,000.

Nuclear Plant (Decommissioning)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the expenditure by his Department, in current and in then-year prices, since 1979, on the decommissioning of nuclear and nuclear-related plant and installations of his Department; and from which subheads of which votes this expenditure was accounted.

Mr. Aitken: I will write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Strategic Force

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the expenditure by his Department on the nuclear strategic force in current and in then-year prices, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Estimated costs—in millions of pounds—of the nuclear strategic force from 1979-80 to 1992-93 are shown in the table. Figures for years up to and including 1991-92 are derived from tables published in the statistical volume of the annual statement on the Defence Estimates prior to 1992. The estimate for the current year is the product of an ad hoc exercise to identify the capital and operating costs associated directly with the strategic deterrent.

	Outturn at outturn prices[1]	At 1992-93 prices[1]
1979-80	126	318
1980-81	165	354
1981-82	269	519
1982-83	327	585
1983-84	382	645
1984-85	384	610
1985-86	509	770
1986-87	658	949
1987-88	882	1,205
1988-89	1,072	1,385
1989-90	1,158	1,415
1990-91	1,480	1,683
1991-92	[2]1,445	1,510
1992-93	—	1,245

[1] Outturn prices have been uprated using defence specific deflators.

[2] The 1991-92 figures are based on a breakdown using 1991 Supply Estimates.

Nuclear Accident Response Organisation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role and function of the Nuclear Accident Response Organisation; what is its annual budget; how many personnel are assigned to it; in what year it was first established; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The role and function of the Nuclear Accident Response Organisation is to ensure, in conjunction with the appropriate civil agencies, an effective response to safeguard the general public and MOD personnel in the unlikely event of an emergency involving defence nuclear materials. In addition to a small full-time staff in MOD Headquarters, it would draw upon the skills of a range of teams and personnel from units and establishments across the armed forces and the MOD to respond to the particular circumstances of an incident. Contingency arrangements to deal with a range of accidents have existed for as long as the MOD has used nuclear material. The annual cost of the seven full-time MOD staff in MOD HQ is some £230,000. Details of costs and numbers for the specialist teams and personnel which might be called upon, and who are largely involved in other duties in normal circumstances, are not held centrally.

Trident

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the designation of the warhead used for the British Trident programme.

Mr. Aitken: The Trident warhead has no special designation.

Nuclear Weapons (Transport)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent information his Department has received about the consequences of a possible accident between a nuclear weapons convoy and a petrochemical transporter on the M25, M1, M6, M4 or A1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Nuclear weapons are transported by road only in specialised military vehicles and are always carried in containers that are designed and tested to resist the effects of severe impact and prolonged fuel fire, such as could occur in the situation mentioned. A fire tender always accompanies nuclear weapon convoys. The recent review of nuclear weapon safety conducted by my Department's chief scientific adviser confirmed that these arrangements

> "give a high degree of confidence in the safety and security of the load even in the case of a severe accident",

and confirmed that internal containment and protection are satisfactory. A copy of this review is in the Library of the House.

Precision Cleaning

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department is taking to reduce the level of solvent used by the armed forces for precision cleaning.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: MOD is investigating possible alternatives to ozone-depleting chlorinated solvents currently used for the precision cleaning of delicate instruments, surfaces made of metal, plastic or glass or combinations of materials where cleanliness is of critical importance. Alternative cleaning agents will be introduced into service as soon as their technical suitability has been determined. The amount of ozone-depleting solvents being procured is being reduced by this Department in line with the requirements of the Montreal protocol.

Gibraltar

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those buildings in Gibraltar, in the ownership of his Ministry, of historic or architectural interest, which will now be surplus to requirements when "Options for Change" is fully implemented.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The future disposition of our remaining forces in Gibraltar is currently under review, as is the extent of the estate necessary to support those forces. Meanwhile, the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, formed in 1989 by the Government of Gibraltar, is carrying out a revision of the buildings it has listed as being of architectural or historic interest. It is, therefore, not yet possible to predict which historic buildings in MOD ownership will be surplus to our requirements.

RAF Chilmark

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* service and *(b)* civilian jobs are affected by the proposed closure of RAF Chilmark; what are the principal tasks carried out there; where they will be carried out in future; what net savings are anticipated over the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is a matter for the RAF Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency under its chief executive, Air Vice-Marshal French. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from N. Carter to Mr. John Home Robertson, dated 5 November 1992:

1. In the absence on duty of the Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency Chief Executive, Air Vice-Marshal French, I am responding to your recent Parliamentary Question, Number 7307F.

2. The principal tasks of RAF Chilmark are the storage and maintenance of RAF non-guided aircraft weapons and ammunition, together with the bulk storage of RAF packed petroleum products. Following the closure of RAF Chilmark, the weapons and ammunition storage and maintenance task will be transferred to Army Department Ammunition Storage Depots in the UK, whilst the petroleum stores task will be transferred to an RAF Equipment Supply Depot—either at RAF Quedgeley, RAF Carlisle or RAF Stafford. The outcome of current studies will determine which depot this will be.

3. Fourteen Service and 250 civilian jobs will be affected by the closure of RAF Chilmark. The Conventional Armament Study Team's report estimated the net savings accruing from the closure of RAF Chilmark as £44 million over 10 years.

Plymouth Urban Development Corporation

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, columns *612-13*, from what vote and subhead it is proposed to find the £20 million to be transferred to the proposed Plymouth urban development corporation; what are the normal financial channels for transfer of his Ministry's funds to such a corporation; on what previous occasions funds have been transferred from his Department to an urban development corporation or local authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is currently intended that MOD funding for the proposed Plymouth urban development corporation (UDC) is made available by means of four annual transfers of funds to the DOE effected as part of the public expenditure survey (PES) process. The funding required will be deducted from the Department's overall PES settlement rather than charged to specific MOD vote sub-items. There is no record of funds being transferred from the MOD for a similar purpose in the past to either other UDCs or local authorities.

RAF Ground Training

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals there are for the rationalisation of ground training in the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of our programme to create a more efficient structure for the RAF under "Defence for the 90s", a comprehensive study into the RAF's ground training organisation has been carried out. The aim of the study is to eliminate spare capacity and maximise efficiency by meeting future requirements for trained manpower in the most cost-effective way.

The proposals resulting from the study involve concentrating aircraft engineering training at RAF Cosford; recruit and administration training at RAF Halton; and, subject to further review, ground communications training at RAF Locking. It is proposed to close RAF Swinderby by July 1993; RAF Hereford by July 1994; and to reduce RAF Newton to an enclave by March 1995. It is also proposed wherever practicable to market test support services at the remaining stations.

The proposed future organisation will provide better value for money in terms of cost savings and suitability to meet our future training requirements.

All possible measures will be taken to minimise civilian redundancies at the locations concerned. Any staff leaving prematurely under voluntary or compulsory redundancy terms would receive appropriate compensation and be eligible for the services provided by the MOD redundancy counselling and outplacement service.

These proposals are subject to consultation with trade unions and a final decision will be taken in the light of any representations. A consultative document has been passed to the trade unions and is being made available to all members of staff at the stations concerned today. I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Chile

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which defence research agency, or other defence establishments have been used in the past 10 years by the armed forces in Chile.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is not available centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 9 November 1992

DEFENCE

RAF Hercules

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many relief flights have been made by RAF Hercules aircraft into Sarajevo airport; how many Hercules aircraft are devoted to this task; what information he has on the number of flights by other nations' air forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at [illegible] November, RAF Hercules aircraft have made a total of 193 flights into Sarajevo. We have made available to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees four C-130 Hercules aircraft for use in accordance with Security Council resolution 758. The airlift co-ordinated by UNHCR and United Nations protection forces began on 3 July when one of our Hercules aircraft left Zagreb for Sarajevo. The other three aircraft remain on standby at RAF Lyneham. The information we have on total flights by other nations as at 5 November 1992 is as follows:

Country	*Number of flights*
Algeria	1
Belgium	28
Canada	160
Denmark	18
France	290
Germany	218
Greece	5
Italy	149
Kuwait	2
Netherlands	13
Norway	10
Portugal	1
Saudi Arabia	4
Spain	6
Sweden	27
Tunisia	1
Turkey	21
United States	309
MED du MONDE (Contractor)	1

RAF Missiles

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF service and civilian jobs will be lost as a result of the move of in-depth maintenance of RAF missiles to royal naval armament depots; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Some depot level maintenance of RAF missiles has been carried out at Royal Navy armaments depot—RNAD—facilities for many years efficiently and effectively. Our plan to move more work to RNADs is expected initially to save in the order of 16 service and three civilian posts. Some service posts are planned to be civilianised once the new arrangements are established.

Sentry Aircraft

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether RAF E-3 Sentry aircraft are to receive an equivalent advanced passive sector system refit to that to be provide[illegible] equivalent USAF and NATO E-3 aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: RAF E-3D Sentry aircraft already have an advanced passive sector system equivalent to that to be provided for United States Air Force and NATO aircraft. There is no requirement for a refit.

Ministry Committees

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the committees that operate within his Ministry, giving the objective and membership in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The principal committees operating within the Ministry of Defence are listed in a publication entitled "The Ministry of Defence", a copy of which is available in the Library. The current edition is, however, out of date and is being revised. I have, therefore, also placed in the Library an updating paper listing the main MOD committees, their objectives and membership. A number of other committees exist in the Department or are convened from time to time as required, but these could be included in the paper only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Ministry Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the sites of Ministry land that have been sold to wildlife or landscape conservation organisations in each of the past five years, giving the name of the sites, to whom they were sold, the hectarage involved and whether the land was designated for conservation purposes; and what was the type of designation in each case.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HMS Drake

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to his Department of running HMS Drake; how much was spent in each of the last five years on hyperbaric medicine at HMS Drake; how many patients have attended in the past two years; and how many patients were sent from HMS Drake to the diving diseases research centre at Fort Bovisand in each of the past two years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost of running HMS Drake in the financial year 1991-92 was £27 million. No money has been spent on hyperbaric medicine at HMS Drake in the last five years. A total of 16,976 patients attended HMS Drake in 1991 and to date in 1992, 21,475 patients have attended. No patients have attended for hyperbaric treatment at HMS Drake or been referred to the diving diseases research centre at Fort Bovisand in the last two years.

Mr. W. L. Martin

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects to pay Mr. W. L. Martin of Blackdown goat farm, Loddeswell, Kingsbridge, compensation for the loss of a cow resulting from a low-flying helicopter on 5 February; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to reply to the two letters written by Mr. John Janes of Messrs. How and Janes, solicitors, Fore street, Kingsbridge, South Devon, regarding the claim for compensation submitted by Mr. W. L. Martin of Blackdown goat farm, Loddeswell, Kingsbridge.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A letter was sent to Mr. Martin's solicitors, Messrs. How and Janes, on 28 October offering a sum in payment of his claim.

Redundancies

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the redundancy terms offered to civilian employees of the Ministry of Defence and contracted employees made redundant as a result of reductions in defence expenditure or relocation and rationalisation.

Mr. Aitken: Civil servants' redundancy payments are made under the terms of the principal civil service pension scheme and the benefits are based on reckonable service and pensionable pay. Generally, those aged 50 or over receive an immediate payment of their superannuation lump sum and an annual compensation payment, in lieu of and equal to their pension, and calculated using enhanced reckonable service. They also receive a compensation lump sum of up to six months' pensionable pay. Those under 50 have their pension benefits preserved to the minimum retirement age and receive an immediate compensation payment of up to three years' pensionable pay. A commercially run redundancy counselling and outplacement service has been set up to help civil servants who have been made redundant identify new opportunities.

My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will write to the hon. Member about the redundancy terms offered to contracted employees.

17 Training Regiment, Royal Artillery

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what estimate he has made of the number of civilian redundancies that will occur if the 17 Training Regiment, Royal Artillery, moves from Woolwich;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future of the 17 Training Regiment of the Royal Artillery in Woolwich.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No final decision has been made on the future of 17 Training Regiment.

Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make a statement on the future of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital in Woolwich.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) on 19 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *158*.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many houses and flats in the ownership of his Department are currently vacant in each of the London boroughs; and how many have been vacant for more than three months, more than six months and more than one year;

(2) if he will list the number of residential properties in the ownership of his Department in each of the London boroughs showing separately the number of houses and flats.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will write to the hon. Member.

Trident

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral answer of 27 October to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), *Official Report*, columns 860-61, suggesting a figure of 500 warheads, if he will now publish the number of nuclear weapon warheads to be deployed on Trident by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rifkind: No. We have long emphasised that our Trident submarines will enter service carrying no more than 128 warheads each, but that the actual number to be deployed will be decided in the light of circumstances at the time.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Bailiffs

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received on the organisation and management of bailiffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On 30 October 1992, when the consultation period closed, 98 responses to the consultation paper on the organisation and management of civil enforcement agents had been received by this Department. Some additional late responses are also expected. The views expressed are now being considered, but have not yet been analysed in detail.

Magistrates

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates there are in England and Wales; how many are *(a)* women, *(b)* from the ethnic minorities and *(c)* ethnic minority women.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total number of magistrates in England and Wales at 1 January 1992 was 29,441 of whom 13,336 were women. The total number from the ethnic minorities is not recorded centrally but of 2,017 appointments made in 1991, a total of 97—4·8 per cent.—were from the ethnic minorities, of whom 40 were women. All these figures include appointments made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will give the political balance for each magistrates bench in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Duchy Accounts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what date he expects to publish the latest accounts of the duchy.

Mr. Waldegrave: Duchy of Lancaster accounts are placed in the Library of the House in late January.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants are currently employed by all Departments and agencies at each of the grades from grade 7 upwards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the total number of non-industrial civil servants at each of the grades from grade 7 upwards, as employed by all Departments and agencies, at 1 April 1992.

Grade	*Staff*[1] *in post*
1	36
2	130
3	487
4	280
5	2,557
6	4,569
7	13,321
Total	21,379

[1] Full-time equivalents (part-time staff are counted as half units).
Source: Mandate and departmental returns.

These grades represent just over 4 per cent. of the non-industrial civil service.

Banking Supervision

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to appoint the head of the new investigations unit in connection with banking supervision from a firm which has not been criticised by the Department of Trade and Industry inspectors.

Mr. Nelson: The appointment of the head of the new special investigations unit is a matter for the Governor of the Bank of England.

Banknotes

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will consult the Governor of the Bank of England concerning changing the colour of the new £20 and £10 banknotes so as to avoid confusion between them.

Mr. Dorrell: The design of Bank of England notes is the responsibility of the Bank. It advises that it has no plans to change the colours of the new £20 and £10 notes, which are predominantly purple and orange-brown respectively. As well as different overall colours, the distinguishing features of the new notes include a bold coloured symbol on the front, different historical portraits on the reverse and different sizes, both in terms of height and width.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will consult the Governor of the Bank of England concerning the redesign of United Kingdom banknotes or the use of different paper so as to reduce the risk of forgeries.

Mr. Dorrell: The design of Bank of England notes is the responsibility of the Bank. It advises that it has no plans to redesign its banknotes or to use different paper. The existing designs and the paper used take full account of the need for security against counterfeiting.

Tobacco

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *467*, what is the expected loss of United Kingdom revenues from tobacco duties arising from the removal of fiscal frontiers; what increased level of tobacco imports this represents; and what action he will take in response to these changes.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 5 November 1992]*: The removal of fiscal frontiers will improve trade opportunities for both imports and exports. However, commercial imports of tobacco and other excise goods will remain subject to United Kingdom rates of duty before they can be sold in the United Kingdom and there will therefore be no change in the volume of commercial imports or exports arising from the difference between United Kingdom rates of duty and duties in other member states.

The removal of fiscal frontiers is expected to result in an increase in levels of cross border shopping for personal consump[illegible]. An estimate of £250 million for the revenue loss associated with personal importation of all excise goods was included in my right hon. Friend's 1992 Budget judgment—see "Budget Report and Financial Statement 1992-93", page 56.

To adapt to the new circumstances of the single market, Customs have developed a new control strategy based on flexible anti-smuggling teams. As the focus of controls on EC trade is moved away from the physical frontiers, these mobile teams acting on intelligence, focused risk assessment and profiling will replace traditional systematic Customs checks at ports and airports.

Financial Services (Regulation)

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association on the operation of self-regulation arising from the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Dorrell: *[holding answer 6 November 1992]*: Matters relating to FIMBRA and the other bodies recognised by the Securities and Investments Board under the Financial Services Act are primarily for the board.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Modernisation

37. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has to modernise the operations of the House.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

Electronic Voting

42. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what consideration he has given to changing the system of voting in the Chamber by the introduction of an electronic system.

Mr. Newton: None.

Departmental Select Committees

43. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many reports have been produced by Departmental Select Committees arising out of work undertaken by these bodies in the 1987-1992 Parliament; and how many of these reports dealt exclusively with Northern Ireland matters.

Mr. Newton: Departmental Select Committees agreed to 317 reports, excluding special reports, during the 1987-1992 Parliament, of which five dealt exclusively with Northern Ireland matters.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

East Timor

3. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 October to the hon. Member for Norwood, (Mr. Fraser) *Official Report,* column *697,* what steps he has taken as chairman to refer the question of human rights in East Timor to the European Foreign Affairs Council.

Mr. Goodlad: None. European Community Ministers have considered and expressed a view on this subject, most recently in the presidency's statement to the 47th session of the UN General Assembly.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the framework guidelines implemented by Her Majesty's Government to cover the transfer or retransfer of plutonium from the United Kingdom to foreign states under article 9 of the International Atomic Energy Agency INFCIRC/254/REVI part 1, on nuclear export controls.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to the then hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield on 31 March 1976. The relevant paragraphs state:

"When considering the export of nuclear equipment, material or technology we shall study each case on its merits. Our first consideration will always be the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Euratom Treaty, and whether or not the prospective customer has concluded a Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Our detailed requirements will include the application of IAEA safeguards or comparable safeguards which are verified by the IAEA to exported nuclear equipment and material: an assurance that whatever we export will not be used to manufacture nuclear explosives for any purpose: an assurance that our exports will be adequately protected against the possibility of theft or sabotage; and assurances that if the equipment or material that we export is re-exported then the new purchaser will be required to give the same assurances on safeguards, non-explosive use and physical protection as were given by the original customer."—[*Official Report,* 31 March 1976; Vol. 908, c. *513.*]

The safeguards requirement in these guidelines was subsequently expanded by the statement issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 24 September 1991:

> "As part of our policy of seeking further to strengthen the barriers against nuclear proliferation, the British Government has decided with immediate effect to adopt a policy of full-scope safeguards as a condition of supply. This means that in future Britain will not allow the export of any significant new nuclear supplies or materials to any country, other than the nuclear weapon states, where there are any unsafeguarded nuclear installations."

Tunisia

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make an estimate of the number of British tourists who visited Tunisia during the past year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no detailed figures available from Government records of the numbers of British tourists visiting Tunisia in the past year. However, the Tunisian tourist office in London says that 120,326 British tourists visited Tunisia in 1991 and that it expects that around 200,000 British tourists will have visited Tunisia by the end of 1992.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the reports of Amnesty International in March and October concerning human rights abuses in Tunisia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of the Amnesty International reports and have raised the question of human rights with the Tunisian Government.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those states that have ratified or acceded to the non-proliferation treaty since 1 January, including the date of ratification or accession for each state.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following states have become parties to the non-proliferation treaty this year:

	1992
Estonia	7 January
Latvia	31 January
China	9 March
Slovenia	7 April
Uzbekistan	7 May
France	3 August
Azerbaijan	22 September

	1992
Namibia	2 October
Niger	9 October

Israel

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to invite Prime Minister Rabin of Israel to visit London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As I told the House on 28 October, at column 1008, the Israeli Prime Minister will visit London in December.

Regional and Minority Languages

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are Her Majesty's Government's intentions regarding signing the European charter for regional or minority languages.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are still considering whether to sign the European charter on minority or regional languages.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy not to approve the proposal to establish a clothing manufacturing plant on St. Helena unless it has the support of the local population.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We understand that the proposal did not gain the support of St. Helenians. It has accordingly been rejected by the Saint Helena Government.

Angola

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken within the international community to help bring about a return to peace and constitutional rule in Angola following the recent election; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have been working closely with the United Nations Security Council and our EC partners, as evidenced by United Nations Security Council resolution 785 adopted on 30 October and an EC statement issued on 4 November, copies of which have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

In Luanda, our ambassador and his staff were instrumental in supporting the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to broker the cease fire which came into force on 1 November. They continue to be very active in support of efforts by the United Nations special representative in Angola to consolidate the cease fire.

IAEA

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money has been allocated by Her Majesty's Government to the International Atomic Energy Agency to undertake monitoring work in relation to the non-proliferation treaty in 1992-93; what plans he has for the allocation of money for this purpose in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 8 July 1992 at *Official Report*, column *211*. For 1992-93 the United Kingdom has contributed £5·1 million to the Agency's regular budget. The Government will continue to meet its obligations as a member of the agency. Financial provision for the payment of future subscriptions will be sought through the main Supply Estimates.

EDUCATION

Parents in Partnership

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received concerning the future of Parents in Partnership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have received several letters from Parents in Partnership about future funding arrangements. This Department undertook to provide transitional funding for a limited period. Now that the three-year period has come to an end, it is for the London boroughs to support local and regional voluntary groups as they see fit.

St. Paul's Secondary School, Abbey Wood

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding the future of St. Paul's Roman Catholic secondary school in Abbey Wood; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received one letter about St. Paul's school and I have replied to one previous question. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) on 19 October, *Official Report*, column *8*.

Schools, Chelmsford

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for each school in the Chelmsford parliamentary constituency, the amount of money given to each school under the local management of schools formula in the last financial year and the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Details of schools' budget shares are contained within part 2 of the section 42 budget statements prepared and published by each local education authority. A copy of the statements for 1991-92 and 1992-93 published by Essex county council have been placed in the Library.

Determination of budgets for a local authority's schools has to be in accordance with the local management of schools formula devised by the LEA within the national policy framework.

Examination Results

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much his Department plans to spend on the compilation and publication of comparative tables of school examination results.

Mr. Forth: We now estimate that the total cost to the Department of compilation, publication and distribution to meet the expected demand for school-by-school comparative tables of examination results will be some £1·4 million.

Consultants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all of the reports his Department has commissioned from external consultants in each of the last three years; for each of the last three years, how many reports from external consultants to his Department led to further consultancy work being commissioned, stating for each of these who were the original and subsequent consultants and briefly describing the subject matter of the consultancy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 15 July, *Official Report*, column 727. The majority of consultancies listed for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 in my earlier reply led to reports, some of which were for internal use; some of which were published. The following consultancies—asterisked—were either renewed or led to further work being commissioned:

		Consultancy Commissioned
1990		
*90/7.	Peter Pierce-Price	Quality assurance of BCCTIS 2000 Contract renewed on 31 March 91 and 31 March 92
*90/24.	SSADM (SCOLL)	Productivity Improvement Programme
90/25.	Lalcrest	Productivity Improvement Programme
91/13.	LBMS Ltd	Development of Productivity Improvement Initiative
*90/31.	BIS	Project review of Enhanced Technical Data Service (ETDS)
90/32.	ORACLE	Evaluation of software for ETDS
90/33.	Henley	Feasibility of ETDS
91/49.	BBT	ETDS data conversion
91/79.	Coopers Lybrand Deloitte	ETDS and DCPS business case
91/80.	Insight	ETDS CRAMM review
*90/36.	Kinesis	Facilitator in implementation of IT Records Management System
90/37.	Coopers Lybrand Deloitte	Management of change for IT Records Management System
*90/38.	Amtec	Feasibility Study for Policy Branch Information System
91/71	EIS	Policy Branch Information System
*90/46.	EIS	Full Study for replacement of Data Collection Processing System (DCPS)
90/47	ORACLE	Benchmark of hardware for DCPS
91/82	Sema	DCPS
1991		
*91/1.	Robson Rhodes	Selection and implementation of Financial Management System for Teacher's Pensions Agency
	Robson Rhodes	Operation of FMS system
91/28.	Michael Gill	Quality assurance of PROSPECT Contract renewed on 31 March 92
91/36.	ORACLE	HMI management system
77/91.	Datafax	HMI management system

University Staff

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many readers and professors there are in each of Britain's universities;

(2) whether he will publish a list showing the numbers of *(a)* academic and *(b)* non-academic staff at each university.

Mr. Forman: The latest published details of academic staff are contained in "University Statistics 1989-90, Volume One, Staff and Students", published by the Universities Statistical Record—USR—and in "The Academic Staff in Polytechnics and Colleges: 1991", an information document published by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council—PCFC. I understand that copies of the USR publication are available in the Library and copies of the PCFC document will be placed in the Library. Details of non-academic staff at individual institutions are not available centrally.

PRIME MINISTER

Library and Information Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Prime Minister what inter-departmental co-ordination of Government policy towards library and information services exists; and what steps he is taking to improve such co-ordination.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage liaises with colleagues on library and information matters where these are not within a specific departmental interest. Department of National Heritage officials have close working relations with other Government Departments. The National Heritage Secretary is considering how far these links need to be strengthened, and will initiate action as necessary.

Security Services

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy in regard to permitting serving members of the security services to give evidence in court cases held in the United Kingdom on matters related to their responsibilities.

The Prime Minister: There is no objection of principle to serving members of the security and intelligence services giving evidence in court cases held in the United Kingdom on matters relating to their responsibilities, subject to considerations of the public interest, including protection of identification, and to the condition of relevance being satisfied.

European Parliament

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in regard to examining reports produced by the European Parliament committees.

The Prime Minister: Departments in London closely follow European Parliament—EP—developments on subjects within their responsibilities. Councils in Brussels take account of EP resolutions relating to their current business. Each Foreign Affairs Council considers resolutions recently approved by the European Parliament and the presidency draws attention to resolutions of particular importance.

Edinburgh Summit

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government will support the proposals to be made at the Edinburgh summit by the Government of Denmark.

The Prime Minister: The proposals submitted by the Danish Government on ratification of the Maastricht treaty will form the basis for our discussions with other member states. Our objective is to agree the framework for a solution at Edinburgh.

Indonesia

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister if he will review the Government's opposition to an arms embargo against Indonesia.

The Prime Minister: No. I do not believe that a review is necessary.

European Union

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what opportunities exist for citizens of the United Kingdom to make suggestions to the European Commission for proposals to the Council under the provisions of the treaty on European Union.

The Prime Minister: Any citizen of a member state may make suggestions to the Commission.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he will put forward to enable the Danish request for exemption from part two of the treaty on European union, concerning citizenship, to be met.

The Prime Minister: A memorandum was presented by the Danish Government to Community member states on 30 October. This will now be discussed within the Community.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister in what areas of policy covered by the treaty on European union will the Commission's role be solely advisory.

The Prime Minister: There are provisions in the treaty on European union for the Commission to be consulted on a proposal by another party; for example, article 168a—court of first instance—and article N—amendment of the treaty.

Government Employees

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Prime Minister what is the number of persons employed in general Government using the figures for *(a)* 1961 and *(b)* 1991; and what is the percentage increase that the 1991 figure represents.

The Prime Minister: The information required is available in the Central Statistical Office publication "Economic Trends", December 1991—Table D of "Employment in the public and private sectors". A copy is available in the Library.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

The Prime Minister: About 30 files of papers on open deposit at the Public Record Office are currently requisitioned for departmental use in London as permitted under the legislation, but the number may change from day to day. They have mainly been requisitioned for purposes of official historical research. A member of the public applying for access to any such file has only to cite its title and number, by reference to the shelf lists held at the Public Record Office, and arrangements can normally be made for its early return to the public reading room for as long as may reasonably be required.

Health Pay Review Boards

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to suspend the health pay review boards; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 6 November 1992]*: The Government see a continuing role for these review bodies, whose advice it has greatly valued. We have made clear to the review bodies, and more generally, the importance we attach to tight control over public spending and borrowing. As part of this, the Government will be seeking to maintain firm downward pressure on growth in the pay of public sector employees, including those whose pay is subject to the recommendations of the pay review bodies.

President Yeltsin

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make representations to President Yeltsin concerning the Russian seal cull at his forthcoming meeting; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 5 November 1992]*: The Russian authorities are well aware of public concern in the United Kingdom about seal culling. The EC banned the import of harp and hooded seal pup skins in 1983. The United Kingdom persuaded the Community to extend the ban indefinitely in 1989.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what official visits the Minister for Overseas Development has made over the last three weeks; what visits she plans over the next three weeks; which countries she visited; and for how long in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is as follows:

Official Visit	*Days*
Last three weeks	*Duration of visit*
Geneva	1
Russia and the Ukraine	3
Japan	4
Brussels	1
Next three weeks	*Expected duration*
Spain	1
Brussels	1½
New York	2

The durations of the visits do not include time spent travelling to the destination.

Tanzania

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of aid to Tanzania broken down by project.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Gross bilateral aid to Tanzania in 1991 was £40·344 million. Of this, £957,000 was project aid, £17·977 million programme aid, £13·196 million technical co-operation, and £8·214 million other types of aid, such as flows from the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

The table lists the capital and technical co-operation projects currently supported.

Project	*Total cost of project £000*
Agriculture and Livestock	
West Kilimanjaro Farms Dairy Project	495
Zanzibar Clove Disease Research Project	799
Armyworm Control Project	726
Lindi/Mtwara Goat Development Project	360
Sunflower Research Project	300
National Agricultural Research Project (NARP)	1,572
Livestock Development	120
Kilimanjaro Farms Coffee Project	30
Zanzibar Cash Crops Project (Phase II)	2,666
World Bank Agricultural Study	300
Forestry	
Cashew Nuts and Coconut Tree Crops Project	3,510
Kilombero Hardwood Study	91
Conservation	
Ruaha Wildlife Conservation Project	800
Fisheries	
Lindi/Mtwara Fisheries Project	212
Energy	
Mufindi Electrification Project	2,067
Roads	
Songea-Makambako Road Post-Construction Maintenance Project (Phase II)	1,573
Regional Road Maintenance	3,786
Highway Sector Field Manager	70
Aveling Barford Road Maintenance	5
Tanzam Highway Study	150
Railways	
Tanzania Railways Corporation (TRC)	10,969
TRC Operations Improvement Plan	502
Water Transport	
Tanzanian Harbours Authority	2,000
Tanga Port Rehabilitation	5,470
Finance	
Financial Sector Adjustment Credit	200
Assistance Tanzania Development Financial Company (T.D.F.L.)	100
Assistance to National Board of Commerce (NBC) and Co-operative and Rural Development Bank (CRDB)	265
Privatisation Workshop	30
Computerisation of Foreign Aid Account	40
Assistance to Bank of Tanzania	70
Public Administration and Good Government	
Local Government Service Commission	1,401
Institute of Development Management	422
Zanzibar Civil Service Training Institute	373
Government Audit Project	1,246
Police Training	358
Constitutional Reform	24
Paralstatal Reform	1,000
Social Development Adviser	40
Planning Commission	130
Personnel Control and Information Systems	90
Public Sector Adjustment	144
Education	
Zanzibar English Language Training	1,441
Tenger Agricultural Tutors	290
University Support Project Applied Zoology	509
Agricultural Engineering (Sokoine)	383
(ELT) Support Project (Phase II)	5,580
Population Census Support Project	447
Medium Term AIDS Plan	3,000
Adult Mortality/Morbidity	1,139
Family Health Project	100
Mbeya Health and Nutrition District Support (HANDS)	646

Tropical Forestry

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts have been undertaken by the Overseas Development Administration to press for the reform of the tropical forestry action plan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In many international meetings since November 1990 the Overseas Development Administration has argued strongly for the reform of the tropical forestry action plan. Our aim continues to be to make it more responsive to the needs of local people and forest conservation and to focus it more on capacity building and policy development in developing countries. We have also argued for the establishment of a broad-based consultative group to oversee its operations.

Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the latest situation in Somalia generally and in the Republic of Somaliland in particular in the light of the resignation of Ambassador Sahnoun; and what representations the British Government have made to the Secretary-General of the United Nations as a result.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development met representatives from non-governmental organisations on 3 November to discuss the situation in the light of Ambassador Sahnoun's resignation. The security and relief situation in central and southern Somalia is volatile. In the north, the situation is more settled.

Acting bilaterally and on behalf of our Community partners, we have impressed upon the United Nations Secretary-General and his new special representative in Somalia, Mr. Ismat Kittani, the need for United Nations troops to be deployed quickly and for the United Nations' 100-day plan to continue. We have assured Mr. Ismat Kittani that we shall give him our full support.

TRANSPORT

Coal Imports

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what port facilities are currently under construction for the purpose of handling bulk imports of foreign coal; and what public funds are being spent on these facilities or related rail or road infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Norris: The development of bulk handling facilities suitable for importing foreign coal is a matter for individual ports. I understand that such facilities are under construction at present at Gladstone dock, Liverpool, Royal Portbury dock, Avonmouth, and Kingston Terminal, Hull.

There are no improvements to the road network directly related to these developments. The provision of rail infrastructure is a matter for the commercial judgment of British Rail, However, the Department of Transport will be paying for widening a railway bridge across the M5, under a legally binding agreement with British Rail entered into when the M5 was being built. The current estimated cost is £2·35 million.

At Hull, construction of associated rail facilities is being assisted under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 in recognition of the environmental benefits of distributing the product by rail rather than by road. The grant agreed was £226,000.

Bus Services

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies in Scotland have *(a)* started operating bus services and *(b)* ceased operating bus services since the implementation of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many companies in England and Wales have *(a)* started operating bus services and *(b)* ceased operating bus services since the implementation of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

Information on the number of operators of local bus services is not available.

Public Transport (Women)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines are currently provided by his Department to transport planners and providers concerning the provision of safe public transport for women.

Mr. Norris: The remit of my Department's standing panel on assaults on bus staff has been extended to include the monitoring of data on assaults on bus passengers and possible remedial measures. The panel has recommended that bus operators install radios and video cameras in their vehicles to protect both employees and passengers.

We have also co-sponsored the passenger guidance leaflet published by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, "Travel Safely by Public Transport". The leaflet contains practical safety tips for women using all forms of public transport.

Travel Cards

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make it his policy that whole system travel cards should continue to be provided within the proposed franchising system after rail privatisation;

(2) if he will make it his policy to extend the requirement on carriers to participate in the west midlands travel card scheme beyond the current three-year provision.

Mr. Freeman: Travel cards are attractive to customers and have marketing advantages for operators. Our objective following privatisation is that travel cards should be sufficiently attractive commercially that franchisees will wish to participate in them.

Preston-Colne Railway

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects British Rail to be in a position to run new rolling stock on the Preston to Colne line.

Mr. Freeman: The service is already operated by modern Pacer units.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the quality, speed, comfort and reliability of the train service between Preston and Colne.

Mr. Freeman: These matters are primarily for the British Railways Board. However, I understand that, while services have operated reasonably well over recent months, there is still room for improvements. British Rail's passengers charter provides for compensation to be paid to passengers where performance falls significantly below agreed standards.

London Underground

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what stage London Underground Ltd.'s discussions on its proposals for the East London line extensions with the local boroughs along the route of the project have reached; and when, subject to the project meeting his Department's criteria, he expects London Underground Ltd. to seek parliamentary and planning approval under the powers contained in the Transport and Works Act 1992.

Mr. Norris: Over recent months, London Underground Ltd. have held a number of formal borough consultation meetings to discuss the principle of the project. These have been supported by meetings addressing specific issues. The project is currently being considered by the boards of London Underground and London Transport and no decision has yet been taken on when any powers should be sought.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he proposes Rail Track will raise investment income to maintain and extend the network; and if he will make a statement on the impact of franchise costs.

Mr. Freeman: Investment will largely be financed over its life from charges to operators. However, the

Government are also ready to provide direct support for investment in the railway for schemes which, although not earning an adequate financial return, provide a satisfactory cost-benefit return when wider benefits are taken into account. The benefits of investment, as well as the costs, for franchisees will of course differ from case to case.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of his privatisation proposals for British Rail on exploitation of the opportunities to improve the north-south rail service in the Coventry travel-to-work area and Coventry station.

Mr. Freeman: I expect the introduction of franchising to enable private sector operators to respond more flexibly to customer need.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure that the financial regime governing the post-privatisation rail service will require local service and local economic factors to be taken into consideration in investment decisions.

Mr. Freeman: Privatisation will help the railways to give passenger and freight customers the services they expect. The Government have made clear that they fully recognise the social and other benefits of regional and commuter passenger services and are committed to providing continuing subsidy to support them.

Railway Regulator

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the statutory provision governing the operation of the railway regulator with effect from 1 January 1993.

Mr. Freeman: We shall shortly lay before the House regulations under section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972 to implement European Council Directive 91/440 on 1 January 1993. The regulations will provide for the establishment of an international rail regulator to oversee access to the rail network by international services.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the net income left currently after payment of tax and national insurance, and deduction of housing benefit, community charge benefit and where applicable family credit, for *(a)* a single person in employment and *(b)* a family with children, of whom one adult is in employment, for every extra £1 of earnings while benefit entitlement remains, and how this would change were the housing benefit tapers to be adjusted to (i) 50 per cent., (ii) 55 per cent., (iii) 60 per cent., (iv) 70 per cent., (v) 75 per cent. and (vi) 80 per cent.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the tables. The following assumptions have been made:

1. The single employed person is over age 25.
2. The family with children contains two children aged 6 and 4.
3. The starting level of gross earnings in each case is that which gives a net income after housing costs around the level of net income after housing costs if in receipt of income support.

All other assumptions are as in the published tax benefit model tables.

Married couple with two children aged 6 and 4
Net income after payment of tax, national insurance and deductions of housing benefit and community charge benefit and family credit

				Taper			
Gross earnings £	*50 per cent.* £	*55 per cent.* £	*60 per cent.* £	*65 per cent.* £	*70 per cent.* £	*75 per cent.* £	*80 per cent.* £
108	89·04	86·99	84·94	82·89	80·85	79·54	79·54
109	89·60	87·54	85·48	83·42	81·36	80·21	80·21
110	90·17	88·10	86·03	83·96	81·89	80·89	80·89
111	90·75	88·67	86·59	84·51	82·43	81·57	81·57
112	91·32	89·23	87·14	85·04	82·95	82·25	82·25
113	91·89	89·79	87·69	85·59	83·49	82·93	82·93
114	92·47	90·36	88·24	86·13	83·61	83·61	83·61
115	93·03	90·91	88·79	86·66	84·28	84·28	84·28
116	93·60	91·47	89·34	87·20	84·96	84·96	84·96
117	94·18	92·03	89·89	87·75	85·64	85·64	85·64
118	94·75	92·60	90·44	88·29	86·32	86·32	86·32
119	95·31	93·15	90·98	88·82	86·99	86·99	86·99
120	95·89	93·71	91·54	89·36	87·67	87·67	87·67
121	96·46	94·28	92·09	89·90	88·35	88·35	88·35
122	97·03	94·84	92·64	90·44	89·03	89·03	89·03
123	91·61	95·40	93·19	90·98	89·71	89·71	89·71
124	98·18	95·96	93·75	91·53	90·39	90·39	90·39
125	98·75	96·52	94·26	92·06	91·06	91·06	91·06
126	99·32	97·08	94·84	92·60	91·74	91·74	91·74
127	99·89	97·64	95·39	93·14	92·42	92·42	92·42
128	100·47	98·21	95·95	93·68	93·10	93·10	93·10
129	101·04	98·77	96·49	93·78	93·78	93·78	93·78
130	101·60	99·32	97·04	94·45	94·45	94·45	94·45
131	102·18	99·88	97·59	95·13	95·13	95·13	95·13
132	102·75	100·44	98·14	95·81	95·81	95·81	95·81
133	103·32	101·01	98·69	96·49	96·49	96·49	96·49
134	103·90	101·57	99·25	97·17	97·17	97·17	97·17
135	104·46	102·13	99·79	97·84	97·84	97·84	97·84
136	105·03	102·69	100·34	98·52	98·52	98·52	98·52
137	105·61	103·25	100·89	99·20	99·20	99·20	99·20

				Taper			
Gross earnings £	50 per cent. £	55 per cent. £	60 per cent. £	[1]65 per cent. £	70 per cent. £	75 per cent. £	80 per cent. £
138	106·17	103·81	101·44	99·87	99·87	99·87	99·87
139	106·70	104·33	101·95	100·50	100·50	100·50	100·50
140	107·23	104·85	102·46	101·13	101·13	101·13	101·13
141	107·77	105·37	102·97	101·76	101·76	101·76	101·76
142	108·30	105·89	103·48	102·39	102·39	102·39	102·39
143	108·83	106·41	103·99	103·02	103·02	103·02	103·02
144	109·36	106·93	104·50	103·65	103·65	103·65	103·65
145	109·89	107·45	105·01	104·28	104·28	104·28	104·28
146	110·42	107·98	105·53	104·91	104·91	104·91	104·91
147	110·95	108·50	106·04	105·54	105·54	105·54	105·54
148	111·48	109·02	106·17	106·17	106·17	106·17	106·17
149	112·01	109·54	106·80	106·80	106·80	106·80	106·80
150	112·54	110·06	107·43	107·43	107·43	107·43	107·43
151	113·08	110·58	108·06	108·06	108·06	108·06	108·06
152	113·61	111·10	108·69	108·69	108·69	108·69	108·69
153	114·14	111·62	109·36	109·32	109·32	109·32	109·32
154	114·67	112·14	109·95	109·95	109·95	109·95	109·95
155	115·20	112·66	110·58	110·58	110·58	110·58	110·58
156	115·74	113·20	111·22	111·22	111·22	111·22	111·22
157	116·27	113·72	111·85	111·85	111·85	111·85	111·85
158	116·80	114·24	112·48	112·48	112·48	112·48	112·48
159	117·33	114·76	113·11	113·11	113·11	113·11	113·11
160	117·86	115·28	113·74	113·74	113·74	113·74	113·74
161	118·40	115·80	114·37	114·37	114·37	114·37	114·37
162	118·93	116·32	115·00	115·00	115·00	115·00	115·00
163	119·46	116·84	115·63	115·63	115·63	115·63	115·63
164	119·99	117·36	116·26	116·26	116·26	116·26	116·26
165	120·52	117·88	116·89	116·89	116·89	116·89	116·89
166	121·05	118·41	117·52	117·52	117·52	117·52	117·52
167	121·58	118·93	118·15	118·15	118·15	118·15	118·15
168	122·11	119·45	118·78	118·78	118·78	118·78	118·78
169	122·64	119·97	119·41	119·41	119·41	119·41	119·41
170	123·17	120·04	120·04	120·04	120·04	120·04	120·04
171	123·71	120·67	120·67	120·67	120·67	120·67	120·67
172	124·24	121·30	121·30	121·30	121·30	121·30	121·30
173	124·77	121·93	121·93	121·93	121·93	121·93	121·93
174	125·30	122·56	122·56	122·56	122·56	122·56	122·56
175	125·83	123·19	123·19	123·19	123·19	123·19	123·19
176	126·36	123·82	123·82	123·82	123·82	123·82	123·82
177	126·89	124·45	124·45	124·45	124·45	124·45	124·45
178	127·42	125·08	125·08	125·08	125·08	125·08	125·08
179	127·95	125·71	125·71	125·71	125·71	125·71	125·71
180	128·48	126·34	126·34	126·34	126·34	126·34	126·34
181	129·02	126·97	126·97	126·97	126·97	126·97	126·97
182	129·55	127·60	127·60	127·60	127·60	127·60	127·60
183	130·09	128·24	128·24	128·24	128·24	128·24	128·24
184	130·65	128·90	128·90	128·90	128·90	128·90	128·90
185	131·21	129·56	129·56	129·56	129·56	129·56	129·56
186	131·77	130·22	130·22	130·22	130·22	130·22	130·22
187	132·33	130·88	130·88	130·88	130·88	130·88	130·88
188	132·99	—	—	—	—	—	—
189	133·32	—	—	—	—	—	—
190	133·65	—	—	—	—	—	—

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[1] Current Housing Benefit taper.

Single person aged 25 or over

Net income after payment of tax, national insurance and deductions of Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit

				Tapers			
Gross earnings £	50 per cent. £	55 per cent. £	60 per cent. £	[1]65 per cent. £	70 per cent. £	75 per cent. £	80 per cent. £
40	38·95	38·95	38·95	38·95	38·95	38·95	38·95
41	39·95	39·95	39·95	39·95	39·95	39·95	39·95
42	40·95	40·95	40·95	40·95	40·95	40·95	40·95
43	41·95	41·95	41·95	41·95	41·95	41·95	41·95
44	42·95	42·95	42·95	42·95	42·95	42·95	42·95
45	43·95	43·95	43·95	43·95	43·95	43·95	43·95
46	44·95	44·95	44·95	44·95	44·95	44·95	44·95
47	45·95	45·95	45·95	45·95	45·95	45·95	45·95
48	46·59	46·56	46·53	46·50	46·48	46·45	46·42
49	46·94	46·86	46·78	46·70	46·63	46·55	46·47
50	47·29	47·16	47·03	46·90	46·78	46·65	46·52

Single person aged 25 or over

Gross earnings £	Net income after payment of tax, national insurance and deductions of Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit: Tapers: 50 per cent. £	55 per cent. £	60 per cent. £	[1]65 per cent. £	70 per cent. £	75 per cent. £	80 per cent. £
51	47·64	47·46	47·28	47·10	46·93	46·75	46·57
52	47·99	47·76	47·53	47·30	47·08	46·85	46·62
53	48·34	48·06	47·78	47·50	47·23	46·95	46·67
54	48·32	48·04	47·77	47·49	47·22	46·95	46·67
55	48·63	48·31	47·99	47·67	47·35	47·04	46·72
56	48·95	48·58	48·22	47·85	47·49	47·12	46·76
57	49·27	48·86	48·45	48·04	47·63	47·22	46·81
58	49·59	49·13	48·67	48·22	47·76	47·31	46·85
59	49·90	49·40	48·90	48·40	47·90	47·40	46·89
60	50·23	49·68	49·13	48·59	48·04	47·49	46·95
61	50·54	49·95	49·36	48·76	48·17	47·58	46·99
62	50·86	50·22	49·58	48·94	48·31	47·67	47·03
63	51·18	50·50	49·81	49·13	48·45	47·77	47·08
64	51·50	50·77	50·04	49·31	48·58	47·85	47·12
65	51·81	51·04	50·26	49·49	48·71	47·94	47·17
66	52·14	51·32	50·50	49·68	48·86	48·04	47·22
67	52·40	51·54	50·68	49·82	48·97	48·11	47·25
68	52·65	51·76	50·86	49·97	49·08	48·19	47·29
69	52·90	52·97	51·04	50·11	49·18	48·25	47·32
70	53·14	52·18	51·21	50·25	49·28	48·32	47·36
71	53·40	52·40	51·40	50·40	49·40	48·40	47·40
72	53·64	52·61	51·57	50·54	49·50	48·47	47·43
73	53·89	52·81	51·74	50·67	49·60	48·53	47·46
74	54·14	53·03	51·93	50·82	49·72	48·61	47·50
75	54·39	53·24	52·10	50·96	49·82	48·68	47·54
76	54·64	53·46	52·29	51·11	49·93	48·76	47·58
77	54·89	53·67	52·46	51·25	50·04	48·82	47·61
78	55·13	53·88	52·63	51·39	50·14	48·89	47·64
79	55·39	54·10	52·82	51·53	50·25	48·97	47·68
80	55·63	54·31	52·99	51·67	50·35	49·04	47·72
81	55·88	54·52	53·17	51·81	50·46	49·10	47·75
82	56·13	54·74	53·35	51·96	50·57	49·18	47·79
83	56·44	55·01	53·58	52·16	50·73	49·31	47·88
84	56·79	55·33	53·87	52·41	50·95	49·49	48·02
85	57·15	55·65	54·15	52·66	51·16	49·66	48·17
86	57·50	55·97	54·44	52·90	51·37	49·84	48·31
87	57·86	56·29	54·72	53·15	51·59	50·02	—
88	58·21	56·61	55·00	53·40	51·80	50·20	—
89	58·57	56·93	55·29	53·65	52·01	50·37	—
90	58·92	57·25	55·57	53·90	52·22	—	—
91	59·28	57·57	55·86	54·15	52·44	—	—
92	59·63	57·89	56·14	54·40	52·65	—	—
93	59·99	58·20	56·42	54·64	52·86	—	—
94	60·34	58·52	56·71	54·89	—	—	—
95	60·70	58·84	56·99	55·14	—	—	—
96	61·05	59·16	57·28	55·39	—	—	—
97	61·41	59·48	57·56	55·64	—	—	—
98	61·76	59·80	57·84	—	—	—	—
99	62·12	60·12	58·13	—	—	—	—
100	62·47	60·44	58·41	—	—	—	—
101	62·83	60·76	58·70	—	—	—	—
102	63·18	61·08	—	—	—	—	—
103	63·54	61·40	—	—	—	—	—
104	63·89	61·72		—	—	—	—
105	64·24	62·04	—	—	—	—	—
106	64·57	62·33	—	—	—	—	—
107	64·90	62·63	—	—	—	—	—
108	65·23	—	—	—	—	—	—
109	65·56	—	—	—	—	—	—
110	65·89	—	—	—	—	—	—
111	66·22	—	—	—	—	—	—
112	66·55	—	—	—	—	—	—
113	66·88	—	—	—	—	—	—

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[1] Represents current Housing Benefit taper.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision exists for financially assisting those seeking political asylum in the period between entry and the receipt by his Department of the standard acknowledgement letter proving identity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Income support is available to asylum seekers under the urgent cases rules from the date of their claim until their immigration status has been determined by the Home Office.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to speed up the delivery of cold weather payments this winter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No such plans are necessary as delays are already at a minimum. Last year's improvements to the cold weather payments scheme introduced automatic payments without the need to claim. As a result girocheques are posted on average within 11 days of a period of cold weather being declared, which is a considerable improvement on any previous scheme.

Early Retirement Pensions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ask the Occupational Pensions Board to review the imposition of early retirement reductions in many pension schemes.

Miss Widdecombe: No. It is a well-established principle that a member of an occupational pension scheme who retires before the scheme's normal retirement age usually receives a reduced pension. The amount of any reduction, which is calculated on an actuarial basis, is determined according to the rules of the scheme.

Community Care Grants

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if community care grants from the social fund are payable to help people without furniture or cooking facilities who are being rehoused from local authority temporary accommodation for the homeless.

Mr. Scott: Yes. People in these circumstances may receive a community care grant; but, as with all applications to the social fund, it is for the social fund officer to decide whether a payment can be made after taking account of all the factors in each case.

HEALTH

Health Inequalities

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made, and what specific measures have been taken to reach the World Health Organisation's target of a 25 per cent. reduction in health inequalities by the year 2000.

Dr. Mawhinney: The "Health of the Nation" Green Paper—Cm. 1523, appendix 1—reviewed progress towards the World Health Organisation "Health for All" targets. As illustrated in the subsequent White Paper—Cm. 1986—the Government have taken and are taking a wide variety of measures to continue the improvements in health that have been achieved across the board, and particularly to focus on people at greater risk.

Benzodiazepines

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* residential and *(b)* day centres have been set up over the past year to help people withdraw from benzodiazepines.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Hospital Beds

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds are bed-blocked at each of the general hospitals in London.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Tomlinson Report

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish her financial analysis on the capital cost of implementing the recommendations of the Tomlinson inquiry.

Dr. Mawhinney: We received Sir Bernard Tomlinson's report on 15 October, and we shall consider its recommendations carefully. We shall publish our proposals for action, and their financial implications, in the new year.

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the detailed evidence on which Sir Bernard Tomlinson based his view that St. Thomas's and Guy's hospital should merge on to one site without detriment to patient care in south London.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Bernard Tomlinson's report refers to meetings with more than 1,000 people, and to 127 written submissions. Sir Bernard distilled this material into the strategic report requested by Ministers.

Krypton-85

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been conducted by her Department into the health effects of Krypton-85.

Mr. Sackville: Assessments of the dose to a local population resulting from a release of the currently allowed does limit of Krypton-85 have been made by the National Radiological Protection Board, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. I am advised that the dose at this level would be of the order of one microSievert per annum and may be regarded as negligible in relation to the average natural background dose from all types of natural radiation of 2,200 microSievert per annum.

Vaccination

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she intends to make vaccination against Hepatitis B part of normal national health service vaccination procedure; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Hepatitis B immunisation is already recommended for a number of at-risk groups, and is kept under constant review, with expert advice from the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation and the advisory group on hepatitis. The continuing decline in laboratory reports of the disease is very welcome.

Hyberbaric Medicine

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of the budget of each regional health authority is spent on research into hyperbaric medicine; and what information he has on expenditure on hyperbaric medicine of other EC countries for each of the last three years;

(2) what percentage of the budget of each regional health authority has been spent on hyperbaric medicine for the last three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the extent of Government funding of research into hyperbaric medicine.

Dr. Mawhinney: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through the Office of Science and Technology under the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I understand that the MRC is currently funding a number of research projects into hyperbaric medicine at its clinical research centre at Northwick Park.

The Department of Health is not currently funding any research into hyperbaric medicine.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the start-up cost for each of the second and third wave hospitals and national health service unit trusts; and if she will state which budget has met this cost in each instance.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the second wave, £226,000 was allocated to each NHS trust as a start-up cost. This non recurring revenue addition, top sliced from vote 1, hospital and community health services, is paid to regions to help cover expenditure incurred by trusts during their shadow running period—the period immediately prior to their operational date when they have no access to money of their own. This covers shadow board costs, legal expenses connected with the transfer of assets, employment of staff and other miscellaneous expenses.

A similar sum will be allocated to third wave trusts.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *180*, how much grant was paid to each national health service unit applying for trust status for *(a)* training and *(b)* development costs during the application process.

Dr. Mawhinney: Training and development grants were not paid to individual units.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *180*, how much of the revenue grant paid to trusts during their shadow running period was for *(a)* shadow board costs, *(b)* legal expenses, *(c)* employment of staff and *(d)* miscellaneous expenses.

Dr. Mawhinney: This allocation is not broken down centrally and is for the trusts themselves to determine, depending on their individual circumstances.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *180*, how much each trust has spent on *(a)* shadow board costs, *(b)* legal expenses, *(c)* employment of staff and *(d)* miscellaneous expenses; and if she will define what costs are included under miscellaneous expenses.

Dr. Mawhinney: The amount spent by each trust on these individual items is not held centrally. Miscellaneous expenses include any expense connected with tasks necessary to take over full operational responsibility from 1 April.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *180*, how the revenue grant to trusts during their shadow running period is calculated.

Dr. Mawhinney: The amount allocated for top-sliced funding to meet start-up costs and consultation costs is divided on an equal basis and paid to successful trusts in each wave.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health further to her answer of 30 October, *Official Report*, column *936*, if she will list by Benefits Agency district the number of live births during 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Sackville: The boundaries of some Benefits Agency districts split postcodes and the data requested are therefore not available in the form requested.

NHS Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of redundancies among national health service staff by profession, that have taken place in each region for each of the last three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Data on redundancies in the national health service are not collected centrally, other than in respect of staff who are both over 50 years of age and have at least five years' reckonable service for superannuation purposes. These data are not broken down by grade.

Qa Business Services Ltd.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the operation of the Qa Business Services Ltd. pension scheme.

Dr. Mawhinney: Administration of the Qa pension fund, following the collapse of Qa Business Services Ltd., is being undertaken by the independent trustees, Bradstock Financial Services Ltd.

Grants

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish her Department's policy on the issuing of grants under its section 64 general scheme; and if she will make a statement on changes to the policy agreed for the last 12 months.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 29 October at columns *842-43*. Copies of the notes of guidance for applicants for 1993-94, together with the covering letter I sent to all voluntary organisations receiving, or applying for, a section 64 general scheme grant, have been placed in the Library.

NHS Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *180*, how much was spent by each region *(a)* on statutory consultation costs and *(b)* on conveyancing costs; and how much was spent by each trust (i) during their shadow running periods and (ii) on training and developmental costs.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make a statement on the future of regional health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are consulting interested parties over the future relationship between Ministers, the NHS Management Executive and NHS authorities and trusts.

Computerised Records

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the guidelines issued by her Department on the use of computerised patient records by general practitioners; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: No specific guidelines have been issued on the use of computerised patient records by practitioners. General practitioners are required by their terms and conditions of service to keep adequate patient records on forms supplied by family health service authorities. We will be reviewing the extent to which these terms of service should be amended to take account of new technology.

Drugs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on drugs in the national health service for 1990-91 and 1991-92; what is the latest estimate for expenditure in 1992-93; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Expenditure on drugs by the family health services in England amounted to £2,080 million in 1990-91 and £2,317 million in 1991-92. Provision in main estimates for 1992-93 is £2,444 million. A revised forecast will be available at the time of the Chancellor's autumn statement.

The annual accounts of health authorities in England record total expenditure on drugs of £460 million for 1990-911 An equivalent figure for 1991-92 will be available later this year. Analyses of expenditure are not collected in-year and any estimate for 1992-93 would therefore be speculative.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish *(a)* the proposed terms of reference for the inquiry into the London ambulance service, *(b)* the membership of the inquiry team, *(c)* the timetable for the inquiry's work and *(d)* the likely publication date of the inquiry's report; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) on 6 November at columns *445-46*.

NHS Management Executive

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times the chief executive of the National Health service Management Executive has visited the executive's headquarters in Leeds in the last six months.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Leeds headquarters of the National Health Service Management Executive—NHSME—have been occupied from 6 July 1992. The chief executive of the NHSME has visited the headquarters on six occasions since 6 July. His own office will be ready for occupation early in the new year.

Women's Refuges

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give an estimate on the numbers of places per 10,000 women in women's refuges throughout England and Wales for each year since 1979 and at present.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The Women's Aid Federation (England) Ltd. estimates that about 30,000 women and children are admitted to refuges each year. Refuge provision in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Vitamins

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information is held by his Department about problems which have arisen in the United Kingdom in each of the past 10 years for which figures are available which have involved incidents of poisoning or illness following self-overdosing with vitamin, mineral or other dietary supplements.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases there have been in each of the last 10 years when individuals suffered adversely as a result of self-overdosing wtih *(a)* vitamin C, *(b)* multi-vitamins, *(c)* vitamin and iron supplements and *(d)* salt.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

This information is not collected centrally. The Government are considering whether a spontaneous reporting scheme for adverse reactions in association with use of dietary supplements should be established.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) pursuant to her answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *201*, on the levels of wages received by those covered by wages councils, how many employers records were checked in the analysis, what was the date of the analysis, when it was carried out, how many wages councils were covered and what was the geographical distribution of the employers concerned;

(2) pursuant to her oral answer of 3 November to the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle), *Official Report*, columns 129-30, what was the source and date of the information about the proportion of people covered by wages councils who are paid more than the rate set by those councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: The estimate of around 3 to 4 per cent. of employees found to be underpaid is based on the annual statistics compiled by the wages inspectorate covering the inspection of some 30,000 establishments in all parts of the country. The estimate that two thirds of employees are paid significantly above the wages council minima is based on special information collected by wages inspectors in 1987 supplemented by up to date figures from the new earnings survey. The earlier information covered some 3,650 employers in all the inspectorate divisions. There are no separate details of the councils covered and their geographical distribution.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her oral answer to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns 130, whether the other sources of income referred to include benefits, earned income or unearned income, respectively.

Mr. McLoughlin: The 80 per cent. of wages council workers referred to are in households with two or more wage earners.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns 199-200, what was the basis of her approximation that two thirds of wages council workers are women.

Mr. McLoughlin: The estimate is based on the Department's quarterly statistics of employees in employment for industry headings covering the main wages councils.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases of underpayment of wages council workers were discovered by the wages inspectorate in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage this represented of premises inspected and of the number of workers in those premises.

Mr. McLoughlin: During 1991, the wages inspectorate discovered 12,812 cases of underpayment of wages council workers in 5,971 establishments. This represented 18·3 per cent. of all establishments checked and 4·5 per cent. of all workers covered by checks.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases of underpayment of wages council workers were reported to the wages inspectorate in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage that represented of premises visited.

Mr. McLoughlin: In 1991, 1,486 complaints of underpayment were received from wages council workers, which resulted in visits to 1,195 establishments, 6·5 per cent. of the total establishments visited.

Health and Safety Commission

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many members the Health and Safety Commission has; how many of them are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* from ethnic minorities and women.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Commission currently comprises the chairman and nine other members. At present, one member is a woman and none is from an ethnic minority.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many health and safety inspectors are *(a)* female or *(b)* from ethnic minority backgrounds; and in each case what proportion this figure is of the total number.

Mr. McLoughlin: At 1 November 1992, 209 or 14 per cent. of inspectors were women and 23 or 1·5 per cent. were from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Industrial Tribunals

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of industrial tribunals are (i) women and (ii) from ethnic minorities.

Mr. McLoughlin: The figures are as follows:

	Number
Chairmen	
Women	16
Members of the ethnic minorities	2
Lay members	
Women	592
Members of the ethnic minorities	77

ENVIRONMENT

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make it his policy to make representations to the Council of Ministers in order to allow EC member states to ban unilaterally waste imports and exports;

(2) what action is currently undertaken by his Department to ensure that all transfers of hazardous waste from the United Kingdom for recycling in non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Countries;

(3) if he will make representations to the Council of Ministers to secure that any ban on waste exports from the EC includes OECD green list wastes;

(4) if he will make it his policy to support measures to ban hazardous waste trafficking with developing countries;

(5) if he will make representations in the OECD to oppose the introduction of red, amber and green lists to cover transfers of hazardous wastes to non-OECD countries.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 27 October, *Official Report*, column *534*, with the addition of the following.

Under the regulation, before any green list waste for recovery is exported outside the OECD, the country of destination will be asked to state whether it will accept shipments without going through the amber, red or Basel control procedures. Where the country of destination regards a green list waste as hazardous, shipments of that waste will be subject to the appropriate control regime.

Household Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the results of his Department's national household waste analysis project.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 5 November, *Official Report*, column *374*.

Urban Regeneration Agency

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet representatives from Staffordshire county council to discuss the proposed urban regeneration agency.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have no plans for a series of meetings with individual authorities to discuss the urban regeneration agency. We have just concluded a wide-ranging consultation exercise to which many local authorities, including Staffordshire, submitted their comments. These have been taken into account in preparing the legislation currently before the House. They will also form a useful input to our future work on the development of the guidance under which the agency will operate.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends the urban regeneration agency to determine its strategy.

Mr. Robin Squire: The urban regeneration agency will determine its strategy in the light of its financial regime and the guidance we will issue to it.

Derelict Land

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that there will be no transfer of resources from existing derelict land reclamation undertaken by local authorities to prestigious projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: I am well aware of the good work done by local authorities in reclaiming derelict land with the aid of grants from my Department. The urban regeneration agency will operate a new, unified grant regime to build on the success of derelict land grant and the other programmes it will inherit. It is, however, too early to take decisions on the agency's first work programme. This will be for the agency to determine in the light of guidance we will issue to it.

Leasehold

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many court orders have been made in each year since 1988 under part III of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, approving the compulsory acquisition of premises whose landlord has been found to be in breach of obligations owed to their leaseholders; and how many leaseholders in total have benefited from such orders.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many court orders have been made in each year since 1988 under part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 appointing a manager to act in respect of premises whose landlords have been found to be in breach of their obligations; and how many tenants in total have benefited from such orders.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not collected centrally.

Housing Inspectorate

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to establish an independent housing inspectorate with responsibility for enforcing basic standards on housing improvements.

Mr. Baldry: No, the basic standard on housing improvements is laid down by section 604 of the 1985 Housing Act as amended by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the responsibility for enforcing this standard falls to the local housing authorities and ultimately to the courts.

Abandoned Mines (Water Pollution)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the National Rivers Authority assessment of data on water pollution from abandoned mines will include information on the 31 mines which British Coal had scheduled for closure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The content of the forthcoming report is a matter for the NRA. I am sure that the NRA will have regard to the circumstances of these mines.

Housing Waiting Lists

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department issues to local authorities to ensure that housing waiting list criteria reflect social need.

Mr. Baldry: The allocation of local authority accommodation is entirely the responsibility of individual local authorities. Section 22 of the Housing Act 1985 requires authorities to give reasonable preference to people in housing need, such as those living in unsatisfactory conditions. It is for each authority to consider whether an applicant is in housing need.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he intends to put to international colleagues in relation to the Montreal protocol with regard to reductions in the use of methyl bromide.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 5 November to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), *Official Report*, column 372.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reductions he forecasts would be achieved in ozone damage as a result of *(a)* a 25 per cent. reduction in the use of methyl bromide by 1995 and *(b)* a complete phasing out of the use of methyl bromide by 1995.

Mr. Maclean: An international science panel has recently assessed current understanding of the impact of methyl bromide on the ozone layer at the request of the United Nations Environment Programme on behalf of the contracting parties to the Montreal protocol. Estimates of the impacts of methyl bromide were not made in the exact terms asked for but indicated that immediate elimination of anthropogenic methyl bromide would provide ozone layer protection comparable to that of an advance of the chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) and carbon tetrachloride (CCl_4) phase-out schedule by about one and a half to three years.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that the air conditioning system of the new headquarters of his Department does not use chlorofluorocarbons as an integral part of the system.

Mr. Maclean: Environmental considerations are taken fully into account in the selection of new buildings for the Government estate. In the case of the proposed new headquarters for the Department of the Environment, none of the buildings that have been evaluated uses chlorofluorocarbons in its air conditioning systems.

Environment Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place in the Environment Council during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council of Ministers on the applications of the cohesion fund to environmental projects, as proposed by draft article 130d of the treaty of Rome, under the treaty of European union.

Mr. Maclean: None. Discussions on the draft regulations to establish the cohesion fund are being pursued in ECOFIN and the Foreign Affairs Council in the context of the review of the Community's future financing.

Council Tax

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the joint and several liability arrangements in respect of the council tax and the extent to which these differ from those in respect of the community charge.

Mr. Robin Squire: There is a separate personal community charge liability in respect of each individual. If payment is not received from a person, the local authority can also invoke joint and several liability to recover the amount due from his or her spouse or partner.

Under the council tax, there is only one liability in respect of each dwelling. The person responsible for this liability will generally be whichever resident of the dwelling owns or rents it. Joint owners or tenants will be jointly and severally liable. The spouse or partner of a liable person will also be jointly and severally liable if they are residents in the dwelling concerned.

Special arrangements apply to people who are severely mentally impaired. These mean that such people will not generally be held jointly and severally liable for the council tax on their home.

The principal difference between joint and several liability under the community charge and the council tax is therefore that under the former an individual may be liable for a bill relating to his or her partner, whereas under the latter an individual's liability relates to his or her own home.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce measures to protect those people living in property which they occupy solely because of their employment from bills relating to the capial value of the property, under the council tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: An employee will be liable for the council tax on a dwelling provided by his employer only if he has his main home there; otherwise, the owner of the dwelling—normally the employer—will be liable. If the employee is liable, council tax benefit may meet up to the full amount of his liability if he is on a low income.

Habitats Directive

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to issue the consultation paper on the implementation of the habitats directive.

Mr. Maclean: Member states were formally notified of the habitats directive on 5 July 1992 and are obliged to bring into force the provisions necessary to enable them to comply within two years of that date. The Government are considering what additional measures are necessary to enable them to fulfil their obligations and my right hon. and learned Friend expects to consult on the Government's proposals within the next few months.

Rents

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what records he keeps of those number of times rent offices increase rents above those recommended by housing associations.

Mr. Baldry: This information is included in the statistical returns made to the Department by all rent offices, but is not currently separately analysed.

Waste Disposal Sites

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the waste disposal sites in Lancashire and their anticipated lifespans; and what is the Government's assessment of the likely requirements for new waste disposal sites over the next 15 years.

Mr. Maclean: Lancashire county council, as a waste regulation authority, maintains public register with details of currently operational disposal sites in its area and will be able to advise on their anticipated lifespans.

Responsibility for assessing the future waste disposal needs in Lancashire presently lies with the county council which is required to draw up a waste management plan for its area.

In due course, when the environment agency has been set up, we envisage that the Secretary of State will issue a statement of waste policies and priorities on the advice of the agency, which will consider waste disposal needs in each region, and across the country as a whole over the next 10 to 15 years. Copies of the Department's consultation paper "Waste Disposal Planning under an Environment Agency" which sets out these proposals in more detail, have been placed in the Library.

Rating Revaluations

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if it remains his policy to hold a revaluation of non-domestic property in 1995;

(2) what progress is being made in the preparation for a revaluation of non-domestic property in 1995.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Finance Act 1988 provides that there will be a revaluation of non-domestic property in 1995. This will be based on 1 April 1993 values. The Valuation Office agency is taking the necessary steps to achieve this.

Library and Information Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the standard spending assessment for library and information services for each relevant local authority in England and in total for 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what was the year-on-year uprating in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: There is no separate standard spending assessment element for library and information services.

Water Pipes

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the working of the Water Act 1989, with particular reference to the charges levied on landowners for laying pipes when planning permission is gained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: None. The conditions governing charges for the provision of mains water and sewerage services contained in the Water Act 1989 were consolidated in the Water Industry Act 1991.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the latest figures for vacant local authority dwellings for *(a)* England, *(b)* London and *(c)* each London borough; and how many in each case were available for letting, awaiting minor repairs, awaiting major repairs, awaiting sale, awaiting demolition or occupied by squatters.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities report the number of their own dwellings which are empty in their annual housing investment programme (HIP1) returns.

The latest available figures, which are provisional at this stage, are for April 1992 and appear in columns A190, total vacant; A191, available for letting; A192, awaiting minor repairs; A193 and A194, awaiting major repairs; A195, awaiting sale; A196, awaiting demolition; and A20, dwellings in unlicensed occupation, of the "1992 HIP1 All Items Print", a copy of which is in the Library.

Safety for Women

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines are currently provided by his Department to buildings and estate designers to ensure that buildings and estates take women's safety needs fully into account.

Mr. Baldry: Documents approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of the Building Regulations 1991 provide practical guidance on the design of buildings so that reasonable safety standards are secured.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will answer the letter sent to him on 25 June by the director of the International Art Exhibition.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* Following consultations with colleagues in other Government Departments, a response was sent to the director of the International Earth Art Exhibition on 3 November.

Waterlogged Soil (Infant Mortality)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has commissioned on the relationship between waterlogged soils and variations in the infant mortality rate; what discussions he has had with the National Rivers Authority on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 5 November 1992]:* The Department has not commissioned any research on this subject. I understand that the National Rivers Authority has received a copy of a report on the matter by two scientists and is investigating further.

Cryptosporidium

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the expert group's recommendations made under the chairmanship of Sir John Badenoch for a collaborative research programme into cryptosporidium to report.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 5 November 1992]:* The drinking water inspectorate published an interim report, "Cryptosporidium in Water Supplies—Progress with the National Research Programme", in July 1992. Copies have been placed in the Library. The programme of research extends into 1993 and a further report will be made when it is complete.

Water Supplies

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to provide that payments for water services to domestic properties should be by charges linked to the valuation bands used for the council tax.

Mr. Maclean: No. It is for individual water companies to decide on their preferred system of charging for their services, subject to the overriding requirement, contained in their licence of appointment, that their charges do not show undue preference to, or unduly discriminate against, any class of customers or potential customers. Our consultation paper, "Using Water Wisely", sought comment on a proposal that water companies should not be able to link charges to the valuation bands for the council tax. They will not, after the year 2000, be able to use rateable values from the former rating system.

WALES

Tenants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will produce a charter for private rented sector tenants giving the tenants *(a)* first refusal to buy their houses, *(b)* the right to apply to the courts for a change of manager and *(c)* the right to apply to the courts for compulsory acquisition of the property by the local authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department is preparing a guide for tenants in the private rented sector which will explain their rights and responsibilities. It will also emphasise the support and best practise standards which those tenants can expect from their local authorities.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will produce new guidelines for local authorities on harassment within the private rented sector, placing a duty on local authorities to follow up complaints.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We have no plans to do so. Tenants already have statutory protection from harassment and illegal eviction under the provisions of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to establish a tenants charter in Wales to include *(a)* specified rights for tenants to ensure that landlords undertake essential repairs within a set time scale, *(b)* the elimination of discrimination against tenants in receipt of benefits, *(c)* consultation and committee representation rights for tenants and *(d)* new safe tenancies established for tenants in properties having absentee landlords.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The principal elements of policy here are set out in the recently published charter for tenants of council housing in Wales, and the tenants guarantee appropriate to housing associations. A guide for tenants in the private rented sector is in preparation.

Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to local authorities on the compiling of standardised housing waiting lists, to include all names of those awaiting rented accommodation in the local authority area;

(2) if he will issue guidelines on the standardisation of allocation policies on housing provision, and for homelessness services, between local authorities in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Our position on allocation policies and standardised housing waiting lists is set out in the published "Agenda for Action on Housing in Wales". We have issued guidance to local authorities on the discharge of their statutory responsibilities on homelessness in the revised "Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities".

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dwellings lacking one or more basic amenities exclusively house people over the age of 60 years in each *(a)* housing sector and *(b)* local authority area in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The estimated numbers of dwellings —based on the results of the 1986 Welsh house condition survey—which lacked the exclusive use of one or more basic amenities and which exclusively housed people over the age of 60 were as follows:

	Number
Owner occupied	13,700
Local authority/council/newtown	2,150
Private rented	4,700

An analysis of the total number of such dwellings in each authority is given in the table:

	Number
Aberconwy	200
Alyn and Deeside	300
Arfon	450
Blaenau Gwent	900
Brecknock	250
Cardiff	1,450
Carmarthen	350
Ceredigion	600
Colwyn	100
Cynon Valley	1,350
Delyn	250
Dinefwr	400
Dwyfor	450
Glyndwr	250
Islwyn	750
Llanelli	900
Lliw Valley	550
Meirionnydd	200
Merthyr Tydfil	1,000
Monmouth	350
Montgomeryshire	300
Neath	500
Newport	550
Ogwr	750
Port Talbot (Afan)	400
Preseli Pembrokeshire	300
Radnorshire	250
Rhondda	2,500
Rhuddlan	50
Rhymney Valley	700
South Pembrokeshire	200
Swansea	1,200
Taff-Ely	600
Torfaen	450
Vale of Glamorgan	100
Wrexham Maelor	450
Ynys Mon	550

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish a new formula for assessing affordability so as to develop a target level of housing costs for all tenures.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to establish a central housing agency to co-ordinate public and social housing strategies in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We have no plans to do so.

Pensioners

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many pensioner households in Wales have central heating; and what percentage of total pensioner households this represents.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has to date published only a selection of 1991 census results in the county monitor series, CEN 91 CM. Detailed information on households containing only pensioners is not yet available. The figures given are provisional as they are derived directly from rounded county statistics in the monitors. National level and more detailed results will be released by OPCS in November 1992 and in county reports this year and in 1993.

In Wales, an estimated 309,000 households with central heating in some or all rooms contained at least one pensioner and represented 76 per cent. of all households where pensioners lived.

Health Practices

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to promote improved health practices in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the strategic intent and direction for the NHS in Wales 10 health gain priority areas have been identified, where the service and its partners will focus their efforts to improve the health status of the people of Wales.

The Welsh Health Planning Forum is preparing detailed protocols for investment in health gain. Eight reports have already been issued. This material has been widely recognised as first class by other parts of the United Kingdom and beyond and complements the pioneering work of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

The protocol forms the basis for the local strategies for health being developed by the district health authorities and family health services authorities in partnership with other local organisations, including local government. The second round of local strategies is now complete, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider these early in the new year.

The various plans and strategies being developed by NHS Wales are being brought together into a unified 10 year strategy, so providing a clear and coherent framework for future action. This document, to be known as "Caring for the Future", is currently being discussed with a wide range of service interests. The aim is to publish it in December. Further debate on its key themes will take place next year.

The new health care environment introduced last year provides the appropriate structure for taking these important initiatives ahead in an efficient and effective way. The patients charter also plays a key role by ensuring that the NHS focuses clearly on the needs of individual patients.

Infant Deaths

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to cut the death rate among those aged under five years in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The "Protocol for Investment in Health Gain: Maternal and Early Child Health", which was issued in August 1991 by the Welsh Health Planning Forum, highlights those interventions which have been shown clearly to be capable of achieving a worthwhile health gain in respect of early child health. The protocols assist health authorities to develop their local strategies for health. Further important aspects of child health—respiratory disease, physical and mental handicap, congenital heart disease, childhood cancers and injuries—are considered in protocols dealing with other health gain areas.

Babies

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to reduce the number of babies born with major unexpected malformations or handicaps in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: One of the health gain targets of the "Protocol for Investment in Health Gain: Maternal and Early Child Health", is to reduce the number of children born with major unexpected malformations or handicaps by 10 per cent. by 2002 compared with 1995. This is being taken forward in local strategies for health.

Mothers and Children

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to improve the quality of childbirth and early childhood for both mother and child in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The "Protocol for Investment in Health Gain: Maternal and Early Child Health", identifies where further investment could bring worthwhile health gain and indicates to health authorities where current practices might be improved and redirection of funds might be considered.

Nitrogen Dioxide

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress is being made in Wales to meet the target of reducing nitrogen dioxide emissions by 30 per cent. by the year 1998.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Various measures are being taken throughout the United Kingdom to reduce nitrogen dioxide emissions, including the fitting of low NOx burners to major coal-fired power plants and new standards for road vehicles. Details are provided in "This Common Inheritance; The Second Year Report"—cm. 2068—which the Government published last month.

Further records on nitrogen dioxide emission levels in Wales is also being produced by the Welsh Office.

In order to gain a better picture of the current position on nitrogen dioxide emission levels in Wales, the Welsh Office is funding a survey of the Principality.

Sulphur Dioxide

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress is being made in Wales to meet the target of reducing sulphur dioxide emissions by 60 per cent. by the year 2003.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Various measures are being taken throughout the United Kingdom to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide, including retrofitting 800MW of power plant with flue gas desulphurisation equipment. Further details are provided in "This Common Inheritance; The Second Year Report"—cm. 2068—which the Government published last month.

Data on sulphur dioxide emissions are not separately available for Wales. However, information on atmospheric concentrations of sulphur dioxide is given in table 3.20 of the "The Environment Digest for Wales, No. 6 1991", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Coastal Planning

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will amend the planning policy guidance note produced by his Department so as to include a reference to the role of ports and harbours under the general development order and the scope of the Crown Estates Commissioners in coastal planning.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The planning policy guidance note on coast planning—PPG20—was published in September 1992. There is presently no intention to amend it.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to amend paragraphs 8.6 and 8.9 of planning policy guidance notes on coastal zones so as to ensure that ecological impact criteria are applied to all sites.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. Guidance is given to local planning authorities in the planning policy guidance note on coastal planning. Further advice will be contained in the forthcoming guidance note on nature conservation.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what role is envisaged by his Department for non-governmental organisations in the collection of data and analysis on coastal resources prior to the preparation of development plans.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for the local planning authority to determine what information it requires in the preparation of a development plan. The planning policy guidance note on coastal planning advises close involvement with a range of Government bodies. It also lists contact points in relevant voluntary organisations.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to encourage local authorities to adopt management policies and management plans for heritage coast areas in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: On 11 March 1992 the Government issued a statement setting out their position on heritage coasts. The statement, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House, supports the concept of preparing management plans. In addition the Government planning policy guidance note No. 20 "Coastal Planning", advises that local planning authorities should include policies for the protection and enhancement of heritage coasts in their development plans.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to encourage the adoption of coastal and estuarial management plans in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government have stated in their response to the second report from the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment, "Coastal Zone Protection and Planning" that they will encourage the preparation of management plans.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to amend the planning policy guidance notes produced by his Department so as to include a detailed report on his Department's coastal strategy; and how the strategy will be implemented.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. The planning policy guidance note on coastal planning, issued in September 1992, covers issues of relevance to the coastal zone. An interdepartmental group on which the Department is represented has been set up by the Government and this provides a mechanism for the continuing development of coastal policies.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to enhance the remit of the coastal strategic working group; and if he will make a statement on the effect of local government reform in Wales on the work of the working group.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I understand that the Assembly of Welsh Counties—AWC—is to submit advice to my right hon. Friend in the new year on the main strategic issues likely to affect Wales in the next 10 to 15 years. The work of the AWC's coastal strategy working group is expected to form an element of that report. A White Paper on local government reform will be published in due course.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to extend the remit of planning controls to cover the area below the low water mark in and around the coast of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In response to the second report from the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment, "Coastal Zone Protection and Planning", the Government gave a commitment to review regulation of activities below the low water mark and to issue a discussion paper.

Minerals Permissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times the powers introduced by the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981 have been utilised in Wales in each year since 1981.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the use of the powers by mineral planning authorities is not collected centrally; but one order, to prohibit resumption of mineral working, has so far been submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation and is currently under consideration.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will introduce legislation to reduce the life of mineral permissions from 60 years to 10 years;

(2) if he will make it his policy to place a statutory obligation on all new mineral permission applications to include conditions specifying the timing and content of subsequent reviews of such permission;

(3) if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines granting mineral planning authorities in Wales the right to revoke or substantially amend mining permissions without compensation where workings would *(a)* damage nationally-designated sites, *(b)* cause an unacceptable level of environmental change to important non-designated sites or *(c)* damage important water resources.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Responses to the consultation paper on old mineral permissions issued by the Government in March, in which various possibilities for dealing with problems were discussed, are under consideration. Further consultation is likely before detailed proposals are implemented.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to impose a statutory duty on mineral planning authorities in Wales to review all existing minerals permissions during the next four years; and if he will allow mineral planning authorities to request environmental assessments as part of such a review.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Responses to the Government's consultation paper on old mineral permissions issued in March, in which the possibility of a four-year review was discussed, are under consideration. Further consultation is likely before detailed proposals are implemented.

The Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 do not apply to existing permissions.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to mineral planning authorities on compensation levels and the use of enforcement powers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Guidance on these issues can be found in mineral planning guidance note—MPG2—"Applications Permissions and Conditions", MPG4, "The Review of Mineral Working Sites", and planning policy guidance note 18, "Enforcing Planning Control".

Initial consultation has taken place on the operation of the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981 and the compensation arrangements under it.

Planning Policy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to amend planning policy guidance note 7 produced by his Department so as to make reference to the design and quality expectations of industrial and commercial developments, including the utilisation of locally appropriate building materials, and the encouragement of the re-use of derelict buildings.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. Appropriate advice is already given in planning policy guidance note 7 and in annex A—design considerations—of planning policy guidance note 1.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will amend planning policy guidance note 7 to draw attention to the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The 1988 regulations are already referred to in paragraph 2.7 of the revised planning policy guidance note 7 issued in January this year.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will amend planning policy guidance notes to include a clear description of the special nature of rural developments.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. Planning policy guidance note 7, "The Countryside and Rural Economy", provides comprehensive policy guidance on development in the countryside generally, together with advice on the special considerations which apply in designated areas.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will delete the statement in planning policy guidance note 7 that planning authorities should consider the likely effect on the operation of the business when considering enforcement action.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Advice on enforcing planning control is found in planning policy guidance note 18. I see no reason to amend that guidance at present.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will amend planning policy guidance notes to indicate circumstances in which the use of development plan policies can be used to limit change of use rights.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Welsh Office circular 24/87 recognises that it may very exceptionally be appropriate for a local planning authority in determining a particular planning application to impose a condition restricting the use to which the land or buildings may subsequently be put. But development plans should not include policies which would generally restrict the freedoms available under the use classes order and the general development order to make certain changes of use without the need for specific planning permission.

Marine Unit

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish a specialist marine unit within his Department.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to issue guidance to local authorities on the practice of charging fees for pre-application advice on development proposals.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The courts have held that local planning authorities have no power to charge fees for providing pre-application advice about development proposals. The Government consider that pre-application discussions are beneficial and local planning authorities are encouraged to continue this practice.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the relationship between the proposed new independent national park authorities and the new unitary authorities proposed in the local government reform package.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government's proposals for establishing independent national park authorities are set out in the Government's statement on the policies for national parks issued in January 1992. Detailed proposals on the structure of such park authorities and other related issues are presently under consideration.

Neath and Port Talbot Hospital

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current status of the approval for the new Neath and Port Talbot hospital given by the Welsh Office in April 1991.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend's statement on 29 October made clear the continuing commitment to a new hospital on the Baglan site.

Mid Glamorgan Ambulance Service

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients were transported by Mid Glamorgan ambulance service; and how many ambulance journeys were logged by Mid Glamorgan ambulance service, in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No information is collected centrally on the number of patients transported by ambulance or the number of ambulance journeys made. However information on the number of patient journeys is collected and is given as follows.

Number of patient journeys[1] logged by Mid Glamorgan Health Authority

Year	*Number*
1987-88	300,866
1988-89	298,425
1989-90	197,933
1990-91	248,409
1991-92	277,691

[1] A patient journey relates to a single journey made by one person in an ambulance. Thus a return journey from a visit to a hospital is counted as a second patient journey and if an ambulance carried six patients at the same time it is counted as six journeys.

Heart Disease

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many deaths were attributable to heart disease in Wales in 1985, 1990 and 1991; what proposals he has to reduce heart disease in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of deaths to residents of Wales in 1985, 1990 and 1991, where the underlying cause of death was ischaemic heart disease—ICD 9th revision 410-414—was 10,265, 9,438 and 9,541 respectively (Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

In March 1985, Heartbeat Wales was launched as a national demonstration project to combat coronary heart disease. The project has since been subsumed into the comprehensive work programme of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

Additionally, in May 1991, the Welsh Health Planning Forum published advice to the NHS in Wales in the form of a protocol for investment in health gain in cardiovascular diseases. The protocol identifies where further investment could bring worthwhile health gain and indicates where current practices might be improved and redirection of funds might be considered. It is a key input in the production of local strategies for health by health authorities.

Typhoid Fever

[illegible] Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of typhoid fever in Wales were reported in 1988, 1990 and 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The data requested are presented in the table:

Cases of typhoid fever reported in Wales

	Cases of Number
[1]1988	0
[1]1990	2
[2,3]1992	2

Sources: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

[1] Communicable disease statistics (MB2 Series.)

[2] Weekly return (WR Series).

[3] To week ending 16 October 1992.

Mr. Stanley Gregory

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set up an independent inquiry concerning the case of Mr. Stanley Gregory, who was injured recently whilst in the care of Cartrefi Cymru; what proposals he has to set out guidelines on staffing for community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Mr. Stanley Gregory, was unfortunately injured in an accident at his home in Forden, Powys on Thursday 22 October 1992.

I understand that immediately following the accident Cartrefi Cymru the organisation employed to provide care and support for Mr. Gregory initiated an investigation into the circumstances that led up to the incident. That report has been made available to the Welsh Office, Powys health authority and Powys social services department. I further understand that a joint investigation will be set up immediately between the social services department, the health authority and Cartrefi Cymru further to investigate the incident, review procedures and training programmes and make recommendations for the future in order that such accidents are prevented. In addition, Cartrefi Cymru is also reviewing its own procedures and guidelines. Mr. Gregory has been provided with, and will continue to receive, independent advocate advice as to his rights and position in this matter. Until these investigations and reports are finalised, it would be premature to instigate an independent inquiry. I will require the findings to be sent to the Welsh Office and will take any appropriate action if we are not satisfied as to the findings and conclusions.

Policy and guidelines on the support and accommodation for people with a mental handicap are set out in Welsh Office circular 1/91, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Housing Associations

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to strengthen the role of housing associations in making sensitive provision to meet special needs and community needs in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am satisified that housing associations are already well aware of the sensitivities involved in providing such housing.

Domestic Rates

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many appeals are still outstanding relating to bills received under the old domestic rating system.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There is one outstanding lands tribunal appeal.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the Development Board for Rural Wales first told the Welsh Office that the Comptroller and Auditor General was considering qualifying the Development Board for Rural Wales's accounts.

Mr. David Hunt: On 21 August 1991.

Business Rates

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many appeals were still outstanding on 1 November relating to bills received under the uniform business rate.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In respect of the 1990 non-domestic rating list as at 31 October, the latest date at which the information is available, there were 22,600 outstanding proposals of which 20,300 had been passed by valuation offices to valuation tribunals as appeals.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list the non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries to which the United Kingdom transported hazardous waste for recycling for the latest year for which figures are available indicating the volume of the waste transported to each country;

(2) how many transfers of hazardous waste were transported for recycling from the United Kingdom to non-OECD countries for the latest year for which figures are available; and what was the total tonnage of the waste transported.

Mr. Eggar: The principal non-OECD countries to which the United Kingdom transported hazardous waste for recovery, and the tonnage to each, are listed.Begins table

Countries	*Tonnes*
South Africa	6,998
Indonesia	1,652
Dubai	1,562
Thailand	1,410
South Korea	991
Hong Kong	688
Saudi Arabia	678
Taiwan	696
India	553

The total tonnage of such waste exported from the United Kingdom to non-OECD countries in 1991 was 16,300 tonnes. Information on the number of transfers of hazardous waste for recovery from the United Kingdom to non-OECD countries is not held centrally and would be available only at disproportionate cost.

As the figures that the hon. Member is seeking may be subject to restrictions of commercial confidentiality, I shall write to the hon. Member more fully as soon as the most accurate picture can be established.

Electricity

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the average price increase for domestic electricity in 1990-91.

Mr. Eggar: The average price increase for domestic electricity in 1990-91, over the corresponding period 12 months earlier, was 8·6 per cent.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost per unit for domestic electricity consumption, adjusted for inflation, for each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. Eggar: The average prices per unit, including standing charges, for electricity supplied to domestic consumers for each of the last 10 years are given in the table.

Year	*Pence per KWh at 1991 prices*[1]
1982	8·31
1983	8·24
1984	7·96
1985	7·71
1986	7·55
1987	7·13
1988	7·01
1989	7·12
1990	7·11
1991	7·28

[1] Cash figures adjusted to 1991 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.

Figures for 1992 are not yet available. However, increases in domestic electricity prices in April 1992 averaged about 2 per cent., well below the rate of inflation.

Institution of Electrical Engineers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the survey of manufacturing industry by the Institution of Electrical Engineers; and what plans he has to commission further surveys from the institution.

Mr. Sainsbury: No formal response was asked for or has been made to the report from the public affairs body of the Institution of Electrical Engineers. However, my Department welcomes this interesting contribution.

Travel Agents

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward proposals for legislation under which all travel agents trading as public limited companies would be required to display their most recent balance sheet and profit and loss account in their trading offices.

Mr. Leigh: No.

Post Office Report

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his written answer of 2 November on the Kleinwort Benson report on the Post Office, if he will make available a copy of the report in confidence to the hon. Member for Neath.

Mr. Leigh: Any reports produced by the Government's advisers on the Post Office are internal Government documents. I do not intend, therefore, to make such documents available outside Government and I do not intend to make a copy of Kleinwort Benson's report on the Post Office available to the hon. Member for Neath.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements exist in his Department to trace whether nuclear materials originating from the United Kingdom have been exported for use in Iraq.

Mr. Needham: The Government have requested the United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Authority to give us confidentially details of any evidence of involvement by British companies in Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programmes, including the supply of nuclear materials. Any indication of wrongdoing will be urgently investigated and if export controls have been breached, it will be a matter for the courts.

Cleaner Technology Group

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the inter-departmental group on cleaner technology was set up; and how many times it has met so far.

Mr. Eggar: The interdepartmental liaison group on cleaner technology was established in December 1991. It has met twice and is next scheduled to meet in January 1993.

Aerospace Industry

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last visited British Aerospace at Woodford, Cheshire.

Mr. Sainsbury: During his time as President of the Board of Trade, my right hon. Friend has not visited British Aerospace at Woodford, Cheshire.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the total value of exports of aerospace products in each of the last 12 quarters for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: The most recent available data for the total value of exports of aerospace products, quarterly, not seasonally adjusted, are from the business monitor overseas trade statistics.

Values £ billion

	Exports
1990	
Q1	1·65
Q2	1·94
Q3	1·99
Q4	2·37
1991	
Q1	1·63
Q2	2·00
Q3	2·24
Q4	2·09
1992	
Q1	1·79
Q2	1·90
Q3	1·75

We have used parts of divisions 7, 8 and 9 of the standard international trade classification (revision 3) which cover aerospace systems, propulsion devices and equipment.

Tunisian Imports

Mr. Shersby: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of imports from Tunisia for the most recent 12 month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: In the 12 months ending September 1992, the value of United Kingdom visible imports from Tunisia was £42·3 million.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list, for each local authority area in South Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has no residential properties in south Yorkshire.

Business (Legislative Burdens)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will investigate a survey into costs imposed on small and rural businesses by legislation, local government requirements and Common Market directives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Under the deregulation initiative, assessments of compliance and enforcement costs are among the factors taken into account by Ministers when considering proposals for new regulation and in negotiations on EC measures. There is also a continuing programme of work across Whitehall aimed at reducing significantly existing administrative and regulative burdens on business, particularly small businesses, whether imposed by central or local government or the EC. Currently, all regulatory departments are considering their programmes of work under the initiative for 1993 and beyond.

Biofuels

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will include in his review of energy policy a study into the viability of biofuels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The terms of the review were announced in the answer of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 26 October, *Official Report*, column 522-23.

EC Used Machinery Directive

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the steps he is proposing to take to investigate the impact on farmers of the proposed used machinery directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: My Department has conducted wide-ranging consultations with sectors likely to be affected by a directive on used machinery, including the farming industry. We have concluded that no such directive is necessary and that new controls in this area could impose heavy costs. Following firm opposition from the United Kingdom and other member states, the European Commission has not put forward its proposal to the Council.

Reports

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now place in the Library the Oakes report, the Boyds report and the Rothschild report commissioned by his Department.

Mr. Eggar: No. The reports were commissioned on a confidential basis and contain detailed information which is commercially confidential.

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Eggar: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the chief executives of the 10 agencies for which my Department is responsible. I have therefore asked Mr. Mike Hoddinott, Accounts Services Agency; Mr. David Durham, companies House; Mr. Peter Joyce, Insolvency Service; Dr. Richard worswick, Laboratory of the Government Chemist; Mr. William Edgar, National Engineering Laboratory; Dr. Peter Clapham, National Physical Laboratory; Dr. Seton Bennett, National Weights and Measures Laboratory; Mr. Paul Hartnack, Patent Office; Mr. John Michell, Radiocommunications Agency; and Dr. Doug Cormack, Warren Spring Laboratory to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. J. Mitchell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

The President of the Board of Trade has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question of 27 October about staffing in the Radiocommunications Agency. The information you request is as follows:

Numbers of staff by grade in the Agency

	1991-92 Staff in post (March 1992)	*1992-93 Complement*
Grade 3	1	1
Grade 5	5	5
Grade 6	7	7
Grade 7	26·5	26·5
SEO	20·5	22
SPTO	21	25
STTO	9	9
HEO	25·5	28·5
HPTO	18	22
HTTO	36	40
Investigation officer	2	2
Librarian	1	1
Graduate trainee engineer	6	5
ATTO	27	30
EO	42	46
SPS	1	1
Typing manager	1	1
TTO	113	116
AO	53·5	56
PS	36·5	36·5
Support grade band 1	4	4
Support manager 3	1	1
T/TTO	4	3
AA	46	48
Typist	6·5	6·5
Process and general supervisory	1	1
Support grade band 2	12	12
	527	556

Please note that while the left-hand column above lists staff actually in post at the end of March 1992, the right-hand column shows our "complement" for 1992-93. At any one time the number of staff in post is likely to be less than complement due to natural turnover. The latest figure available to me is that as at 30 September 1992 we had 530 staff in post.

Staff costs

In the time available I am able to give you only aggregated staff cost figures. They are as follows:

	1991-92 Actual spend £	*1992-93 Forecast £*
Salary and wages	9,809,336	11,127,570
ERNIC	753,971	795,560
Superannuation	1,643,501	1,845,362
	12,206,808	13,768,492

Letter from Mike Hoddinott to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

In response to your recent Parliamentary Question to the President of the Board of Trade regarding numbers of staff and costs within Executive Agencies, the information in respect of Accounts Services Agency is as follows:

Staff Grade	*Numbers* 1991-92	1992-93
Grade 5	1	1
Grade 7	2	4
Senior Executive Officer	4	4½
Higher Executive Officer	9½	11½
Executive Officer	16½	15
Administrative Officer	38	33½
Administrative Assistant	15	10
Personal Secretary	1	1
Typist	2	1
Support Grade Band 2	2½	3
Total	91½	84½

The above figures relate to the average number of substantive staff in post for each year. The total cost of their remuneration, including superannuation contributions, was £1·4 million in 1991-92 and is expected to remain at the same level in the current year.

Letter from W. Edgar to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

I would refer to your Parliamentary Question dated 27 October to the President of the Board of Trade requesting that he list by grade the numbers of staff and their costs for 1991/92 and the estimated figures for 1992/93 for each Executive Agency for which he is responsible.

As the Chief Executive of NEL I provide the information requested in the schedule attached. I trust you will find this information to be satisfactory for your purposes.

Schedule
Numbers of staff by grade

Grade	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
G3	1	1
G4	1	1
G5	4	4
G6	6	6
G7	56	56
Senior Scientific Officer	56	54
Higher Scientific Officer	55·5	55·5
Scientific Officer	22	22
Assistant Scientific Officer	10·5	10·5
Senior Professional and Technology Officer	3	3
Higher Professional and Technology Officer	10	10
Professional and Technology Officer	15	15
Technical Grade 1	7	7
Higher Graphics Officer	1	1
Graphics Officer	1	1
Assistant Librarian	1	1
Chief Photographer	1	1
Principal Photographer	2	1
Senior Photographer	1	1
Support Manager 3	1	1
Support Grade Band 1	6	9
Senior Executive Officer	1	1
Higher Executive Officer	3	4
Executive Officer	7·5	6·5
Administrative Officer	23	23
Administrative Assistant	2	2
Stores Officer Grade D	1	1
Senior Personal Secretary	1	1
Personal Secretary	4	4
Typing Manager	1	1
Typist	13	12
Craftsman	41	43
Apprentice	7	7
Experimental Worker	16	12
Storeman	4	2
Messenger	3	0
Total No.	388·5	380·5
Staff Cost	£8,217k	[1]£8,919k

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[1] Estimate.

Letter from R. D. Worswick to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION 137: 27 OCTOBER 1992

To ask the President of the Board of Trade, if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

The Laboratory of the Government Chemist is an Executive Agency within the Department of Trade and Industry and in 1991-92 employed 353 staff of which 271 were scientific grades and the remaining 82 were administrative support staff. The cost of salaries including ERNIC and superannuation came to £7,346,000. Details of staff numbers and cost by grade are shown on the attached annex.

The estimated figures for 1992-93 are as follows: 360 staff, of which 284 are scientific grades, and 76 administrative support staff. Total pay costs are estimated to be £7·9 million.

I hope this information is of help.

Annex

Grade	*Number of staff*	*Total salaries by grade £k*	*Other payroll expenses*
G3	1	57	
5	3	104	
6	7	269	
7	26	716	
SEO	2	45	
HEO	4	72	
EO	8	118	
AO	31	335	
AA	4	26	
TYP	3	28	
PS	6	72	
A.LIB	1	15	
SGB 1	5	47	
SGB 2	14	111	
SPTO/SSO	44	1,050	
HPTO	2	64	
PTO	3	65	
SSO	0	0	
HSO	68	1,033	
SO	62	969	
ASO	59	603	
Total	353	5,799	5,799
Casuals			143
ERNIC			436
Superannuation			968
Grand total			7,346

Letter from Dr. P. B. Clapham to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992.

I am writing in response to your Parliamentary Question addressed to the President of the Board of Trade requesting details of staff numbers and costs for each Executive Agency. I have been asked to respond concerning my own Agency, the National Physical Laboratory.

For 1991-92 the average number of staff was 826, and for 1992-93 it is expected that the average number will be a little under 800. The numbers in each grade are shown in the enclosed list.

The pay costs of these staff are as follows:

£'000	*1991-92*
Salaries and wages	16,195
Employers' National Insurance Contributions	1,202
Superannuation	2,680
Total	20,077

The forecast total for 1992-93 is about £20·5 million.

National Physical Laboratory Executive Agency
Average number of staff in post 1991-92

Grade	*Number*
Grade 3	1
Grade 4	1
Grade 5	12
Grade 6	40
Grade 7	116
Senior Executive Officer	2
Senior Professional and Technology Officer	15
Senior Scientific Officer	117
Senior Information Officer	1
Senior Librarian	1

Grade	Number
Senior Photographic Officer	1
Higher Executive Officer	5
Higher Professional and Technology Officer	8
Higher Scientific Officer	128
Librarian	1
Higher Graphics Officer	1
Executive Officer	19
Professional and Technology Officer	7
Scientific Officer	84
Support Manager 2	1
Typing Manager	1
Senior Personal Secretary	1
Assistant Librarian	1
Graphics Officer	1
Graphics Technical Grade	1
Higher Photographic Officer	1
Process and General Supervisory Grade C	2
Administrative Officer	62
Assistant Scientific Officer	50
Technical Grade 1	4
Personal Secretary	13
Photographic Officer	2
Support Grade Band 1	5
Administrative Assistant	10
Typist	17
Support Grade Band 2	3

Grade	Number
Total non-industrial staff	735
Craftsman	28
Apprentice craftsman	12
Storeman	10
Experimental Worker	22
Driver	1
Messenger	12
Labourer	5
Cleaner	1
Total industrial staff	91
Total staff	826

Letter from Peter Joyce to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992:

I have been asked, as Chief Executive of The Insolvency Service, to let you have a substantive reply to the Parliamentary Question which you tabled on 27 October 1992 asking for details of staff employed in the Agency. I *attach* a breakdown by grade of staff numbers and costs for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

The Insolvency Service executive agency—staffing

Grade	Number in post on 31 March 1992	Cost 1991-92 £	Allocation 1992-93	Forecast cost 1992-93 £
Administrative				
G3 (Chief Executive)	1·0	55,182	1·0	60,467
G4 (DIG)	2·0	100,216	2·0	105,978
G5[1]	1·0	31,071	2·0	87,994
G7	3·0	97,762	3·0	103,773
SEO[1]	7·5	186,639	8·0	227,225
HEO[1]	17·5	334,886	17·5	397,986
EO[1]	112·5	1,775,083	124·5	1,863,949
AO[1]	407·5	4,306,187	394·5	4,698,989
AA[1]	164·5	1,123,064	162·0	1,228,782
Sub Total	716·5	8,010,090	714·5	8,775,142
Technical				
HPTO	1·0	8,176	1·0	25,132
PTO	0·0	0	1·0	25,075
Sub Total	1·0	8,176	2·0	50,207
Insolvency Grades				
Grade A	10·0	439,424	10·0	466,132
Grade B	50·0	1,797,725	52·0	2,005,343
Grade C[1]	106·0	3,121,071	104·5	3,292,220
Grade D[1]	280·0	6,410,781	278·0	6,751,898
Grade E[1]	144·0	1,807,173	142·5	2,041,269
Sub Total	590·0	13,576,174	587·0	14,556,862
Personal Secretary/Typing				
Personal Secretary[1]	13·0	217,593	15·0	254,109
Chief typing manager	2·0	30,237	2·0	46,085
Typing manager[1]	18·0	266,849	15·5	277,535
Typist[1]	156·5	1,811,978	159·5	1,956,907
Sub Total	189·5	2,326,657	192·0	2,534,637
Support				
SM3	1·0	28,010	1·0	15,347
SGB1	4·0	54,560	6·0	69,277
SGB2[1]	45·0	435,366	44·5	470,529
Sub Total	50·0	517,936	51·5	555,153
Permanent Staff Totals	1,547·0	24,439,032	1,547·0	26,472,000
Casual staff	189·0	752,000	138·0	1,860,000

Grade	*Number in post on 31 March 1992*	*Cost 1991-92* £	*Allocation 1992-93*	*Forecast cost 1992-93* £
Overtime		143,000		220,000
Grand Total	1,696·0	25,334,032	1,685·0	28,652,000

Note:

1. Costs are based on salaries costs, including ERNIC but not notional superannuation.
2.[1] Includes part time staff who are counted as half.
3. In addition special bonuses totalling £46,850 were paid to 321 staff in 1991-92.
4. Staff figures shown for 1991-92 are for staff in post on 31 March 1992. Actual man years worked in 1991-92 were 1,500 permanent staff and 85 casual staff.

Letter from D. Cormack to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992:

House of Commons Parliamentary Question 137

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

In response to your question to the President of the Board of Trade, I attach this Agency's figures for the periods in question.

Staff numbers by grade and costs for 1991-92

Grade	*Average in post*	*Cost £K*
Non industrial		
Grade 3	1	53
Grade 5	3	162
Grade 6	8	316
Grade 7	31	986
Senior Executive Officer	1	22
Higher Executive Officer	1½	42
Executive Officer	6	89
Administrative Officer	18	187
Administrative Assistant	6	55
Information Officer	1	18
Assistant Information Officer	2	27
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	2	39
Professional and Technical Officer	2	30
Process and General Supervisory Grade E	½	3
Senior Scientific Officer	55	1,175
Higher Scientific Officer	51	1,047
Scientific Officer	32½	480
Assistant Scientific Officer	26	264
Librarian	2	40
Assistant Librarian	1	13
Senior Personal Secretary	1	15
Personal Secretary	8½	112
Typing Manager	1	15
Typist	5½	59
Support Grade Band 1	3½	37
Principal Photographer	½	12
Senior Photographer	1	16
Technical Grade 1	1	7
Non Industrial Sub-Total	272½	5,321
Industrial	38½	369
Casuals	13	107
Overtime	—	135
Bonuses	—	1
Superannuation	—	892
Total	324	6,825

Notes: 1. Costs by grade include salary and ERNIC.

2. Superannuation costs are 17 per cent. for non-industrial staff and 16 per cent. for industrials.

Letter from P. Hartnack to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992

I am responding for the Patent Office to your Parliamentary Question about the number of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93.

The Patent Office relocated from Central London to Newport, Gwent in 1991. The relocation was largely complete by December 1991 but in the course of the year staff numbers fluctuated because of the need to maintain our output in two locations for a period of about nine months. In the course of the year we also reduced the number of IT consultants employed by the Office, following the introduction of a new computer system.

Because of the wide variations in staff in post in 1991-92 it would be difficult to compute averages for the year broken down by grade. The attached table has therefore been prepared in response to your question showing actual numbers of staff in post on 31 March 1992, and our total staff costs for the financial year 1991-92, with corresponding estimates for the current financial year. The cost figures cover salaries, employers related national insurance contributions, overtime and the accruing superannuation liability charge.

Patent Office staff 1991-92 and 1992-93

Grade	*1991-92*		*1992-93*	
	Staff numbers at 31 March 1992	*1991-92 costs £k*	*Estimated staff numbers at 31 March 1993*	*1992-93 costs £k*
Comptroller	1·0	66	1·0	75
Assistant Comptroller	2·0	582	2·0	610
Grade 4	1·0		1·0	
Grade 5	2·0		2·0	
Grade 6	6·0		6·0	
Superintending Examiner	8·0	491	8·0	498
Principal Examiner	30·0	1,706	29·0	1,604
Senior Examiner	181·0	8,877	173·0	8,287
Examiner	32·0	586	38·0	672
Grade 7	8·0	294	8·0	290
Senior Executive Officer	27·5	784	29·5	888

Grade	1991-92 Staff members at 31 March 1992	1991-92 costs £k	1992-93 Estimated staff members at 31 March 1993	1992-93 costs £k
Higher Executive Office	57·5	1,352	59·5	1,374
Executive Officer	182·0	3,179	177·5	3,109
Admin Officer	247·5	3,076	250·0	3,220
Admin Assistant	177·5	1,734	179·5	1,675
Personal Secretary	9·5	152	10·0	184
Typing Manager	1·0	448	2·0	439
Typist	28·5		27·5	
Support Manager 2	1·0	209	1·0	191
Support Grade 1	9·0		9·0	
Support Grade 2	56·0	828	60·5	665
IT Consultants	25·0	3,499	20·0	1,475
Total	1,093·0	27,863	1,094·0	25,256

Letter from Jon Cowdock to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

My Chief Executive has been asked to respond to you directly with the information you requested in Parliamentary Question 137, tabled on 27 October. I am responding in his absence.

The details of NWML grades, numbers and costs that you request are set out in the attached table. I hope that this information meets your requirements.

Staff and Costs—by grade—National Weights and Measures Laboratory

Grade	1991-92 Staff in post	1991-92 Pay costs £	1992-93 Staff in post	1992-93 Pay costs £
Grade 5	1	44,212	1	45,980
Grade 7	5	151,033	5	157,075
Senior Executive Officer	0·5	11,760	1	24,462
Higher Executive Officer	2	41,798	2	43,470
Executive Officer	2	29,115	2	30,280
Administrative Officer	4	47,195	4	49,083
Administrative Assistant	1	10,295	1	10,706
Administrative Assistant—Part time	4	24,048	4	25,010
Senior Professional Technical Officer	7	205,858	7	214,092
Higher Professional Technical Officer	8	148,823	8	154,775
Professional Technical Officer	4	66,433	4	69,090
Senior Scientific Officer	1	23,284	1	24,219
Higher Scientific Officer	1	18,199	2	34,760
Scientific Officer	3	45,900	2·5	39,780
Personal Secretary	1	13,290	1	13,821
Typist—Part time	3	22,713	3	23,622
Technical Grade I	2	24,172	2	25,138
Sandwich Student	1	3,562	—	
Vacation Student	1	985	3	4,000
Total		932,675		989,363

Letter from D. Durham to Mr. Martin Redmond dated 2 November 1992:

You recently put down a Parliamentary Question to the President of the Board of Trade asking him to list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

The information you have requested is set out on the attached Schedule.

Staff numbers by grade full-time equivalent

Grades	Average 1991-92	Estimated 1993
G4	1·0	1·0
G5	3·0	2·0
G6	1·0	3·0
G7	9·5	9·1
SEO	17·0	17·0
HEO	60·2	55·8
EO	137·1	117·2
AO	362·3	324·6
AA	205·1	183·2
SPS	1·0	1·0
TM	1·5	1·0
PS	4·0	5·0
TYP	19·1	19·5
SM2	4·0	3·0
SM3	16·5	17·0
SG1	61·75	51·4
SG2	278·6	263·4
Total	1,182·6	1,074·2

Staff costs

£000

	1991-92	Estimated 1992-93
Total	15,570	14,713

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what where the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. Eggar: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the chief executives of the 10 agencies for which my Department is responsible. I have therefore asked Mr. Mike Hoddinott, Accounts Services Agency; Mr. David Durham, Companies House; Mr. Peter Joyce, Insolvency Service; Dr. Richard Worswick, Laboratory of the Government Chemist; Mr. William Edgar, National Engineering Laboratory; Dr. Peter Clapham, National Physical Laboratory; Dr. Seton Bennett, National Weights and Measures Laboratory; Mr. Paul Hartnack, Patent Office; Mr. John Michell, Radiocommunications Agency; and Dr. Doug Cormack, Warren Spring Laboratory, to arrange for replies to be given.

Letter from D. Durham to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

You recently put down a Parliamentary Question to the President of the Board of Trade asking him to list, fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency; and what were the findings resulting from each visit. Following the answer given by Mr. Eggar, I am replying in respect of Companies House.

I visited the United States and Canada in late April, early May 1992. The visit was aimed at improving my understanding of quality management and image technology.

I visited the US Patents Office in Washington, the United Services Automobile Association (a major insurer) in San Antonio and the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Consumer and Commercial relations in Toronto and Thunder Bay. All three organisations use image technology and have pioneered its use in different ways. Although Companies House had decided recently not to continue with its own image project, it is still a longer-term possibility to replace our microfiche system. I gained a valuable insight into the use of image technology, both its problems and its benefits.

The USAA has a world-wide reputation for quality and it conducts monthly seminars to pass on this knowledge to other organisations wishing to improve their quality management. Companies House were at that time in the middle of their own total quality management programme and attendance at the seminar provided a valuable insight into how improvement could be brought about. Much was also learned about the USAA's introduction and use of image technology.

Letter from M. J. Michell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

You have recently tabled two Parliamentary Questions to the President of the Board of Trade, concerning papers published and fact finding visits by the Chief Executives of DTI Agencies. The President has asked me to write to you on these matters in relation to the Radiocommunications Agency.

I have not myself published any papers since this Agency was established in 1990. However the Agency as such has published a large number of technical papers, reports and so forth. I am not sure this kind of publication is what you had in mind in your Question but I have enclosed details of publications over the past 12 months should these be of interest. I am also enclosing a copy of the Agency's latest annual report.

In the last twelve months I have not made any fact finding visits as such. During the course of my work I have visited a number of UK companies to discuss matters of business, as well as visiting different Agency establishments. I have made one overseas visit to Australia and New Zealand, to discuss with the authorities there certain radical changes in radio spectrum management policy they have introduced or are in course of introducing, in order that I may better advise Ministers on future policy in this country. As you may know, the Government has announced its intention of issuing a consultative document on future radio spectrum management in due course.

I hope this is helpful.

Letter from M. Hoddinott to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

In response to your recent Parliamentary Question to the President of the Board of Trade, I have been asked to advise you of fact finding visits I have made in the last twelve months as Chief Executive of Accounts Services Agency.

I have made no such visits. Visits have been made to colleagues in DTI and other Government Departments to discuss the delivery of the Agency's services and management or similar issues.

Letter from W. Edgar to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I would refer to your Parliamentary Question tabled on 22 October to the President to the Board of Trade asking that he produce a list of the fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by the Chief Executive of each Agency for which he is responsible and that he identify the findings resulting from each visit.

As the Chief Executive of NEL I can confirm to you that I have not made any purely fact finding visits in the last 12 months. All my trips outside the office are, in the interests of maintaining a cost effective operation, of the multi-purpose variety whereby I visit clients, make presentations on NEL's capability, attend meetings with partners in various joint ventures and also include a host of other activities. Where fact finding/market research initiatives are required these are normally carried out and coordinated by the marketing department or operating divisions and are normally combined with a number of other tasks carried out simultaneously.

Letter from Dr. P. B. Clapham to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I am writing in response to your Parliamentary Question addressed to the President of the Board of Trade requesting a list of fact finding visits made in the last 12 months by Agency Chief Executives. I have been asked to respond concerning my own Agency, the National Physical Laboratory.

I have not made any fact finding visits in the usual sense of the phrase. I have, however, attended two meetings in the last 12 months concerned with increasing the level of European collaboration within the sphere of the Agency's interests—primarily measurement standards. These discussions are 'on-going', so there are no specific findings to report. The final outcome will depend in part on the priorities placed on measurement and testing in the European Community's Fourth Framework Programme.

Letter from R. D. Worswick to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

I am writing to you in reply to your PQ about 'fact finding visits" made by the Chief Executives of the Department's Agencies.

Since my appointment as Chief Executive of LGC in May 1991 I have visited several organisations in the UK and Europe concerned directly or indirectly with the work of the Laboratory.

Further afield I led a high level mission on analytical instruments to Japan last year. I also visited the National Institute of Science and Technology in the United States.

I hope this is helpful.

Letter from P. Joyce to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of The Insolvency Service, I have been asked to let you have a substantive response to the

Parliamentary Question (No. 125) which you tabled on 22 October 1992. This concerned 'fact finding' visits made by Chief Executives of Agencies.

The Insolvency Service has 36 offices throughout England and Wales, principally Official Receivers' offices, together with one in Edinburgh. I and my senior management colleagues will between us hope to visit all these offices in the course of any 12 months. These are not fact finding visits as such but rather the means by which I and my colleagues can keep in touch with what is going on at a local level. I and my senior colleagues also visit Insolvency Practitioners from time to time, which enables us to take the views of the insolvency profession on the practical application of insolvency law.

Letter from D. Cormack to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992:

Warren Spring Laboratory is a non-monopoly supplier of scientific and technical services to government and other customers, who themselves operate competitive tendering. We therefore only do what we can recover the costs of through contracts.

I have not been contracted to take part in any fact finding visits and consequently have not been involved in any, although I am aware that fact finding missions to foreign countries are from time to time organised by the relevant divisions of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Letter from P. R. S. Hartnack to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I am writing in response to your Parliamentary Question number 125 of 22 October 1992 about fact finding visits. I have made no such visits in the last 12 months.

Letter from S. Bennett to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I have been asked by the President of the Board of Trade to let you have details of any fact finding visits made during the last 12 months.

I have made no such visits in the last year.

Coal

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidance he has given to British Coal in respect of the introduction of compulsory measures in respect of pits where voluntary redundancy arrangements are already in place and volunteers are available.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* Following discussions with the Department, British Coal has given further details about its redundancy arrangements in a letter to the mining unions, dated 30 October 1992, which is reprinted in the November 1992 issue of "Coal News".

EC Funding

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many areas in the United Kingdom that are part of the United Kingdom's assisted areas map are recognised by the EC for regional development funding; and if he will list them.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* There are 89 whole travel-to-work areas (TTWAs) and four part-TTWAs in the United Kingdom which are both assisted areas and qualify for EC regional development funding.

The whole TTWAs include: in England—Accrington and Rossendale, Barnsley, Bishop Auckland, Blackburn, Bodmin and Liskeard, Bolton and Bury, Bradford, Bude, Darlington, Doncaster, Durham, Falmouth, Gainsborough, Grimsby, Hartlepool, Helston, Hull, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Morpeth and Ashington, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Newquay, Oldham, Penzance and St. Ives, Plymouth, Redruth and Camborne, Rochdale, Rotherham and Mexborough, Scunthorpe, Sheffield, Stockton-on-Tees, Sunderland, Telford and Bridgnorth, Walsall, Widnes and Runcorn, Wigan and St. Helens, Wirral and Chester, and Wolverhampton; in Scotland—Alloa, Arbroath, Ayr, Badenoch, Bathgate, Campbeltown, Cumnock and Sanquhar, Dumbarton, Dundee, Dunfermline, Dunoon and Bute, Falkirk, Forres, Girvan, Glasgow, Greenock, Invergordon and Dingwall, Irvine, Kilmarnock, Kirkcaldy, Lanarkshire, Lochaber, Newton Stewart, Skye and Wester Ross, Stewartry, Stranraer, Sutherland, Western Isles and Wick; in Wales—Aberdare, Bangor and Caernarfon, Bridgend, Cardiff, Cardigan, Ebbw Vale and Abergavenny, Fishguard, Flint and Rhyl, Haverfordwest, Holyhead, Lampeter and Aberaeron, Llanelli, Merthyr and Rhymney, Neath and Port Talbot, Newport, Pontypool and Cwmbran, Pontypridd and Rhondda, Porthmadoc and Ffestiniog, Pwllheli, South Pembrokeshire, Swansea, and Wrexham.

The part-TTWAs include: Birmingham, Coventry and Hinckley, Dudley and Sandwell, and Manchester.

Silverhill Colliery

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has received from British Coal about *(a)* its former strategic plan for the Silverhill colliery and *(b)* its prospective profitability for each of the next four financial years.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* The issues which the hon. Member raises are matters for British Coal.

Energy Review

Mr. Rooker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to visit a coal mine during the period of the energy review.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 5 November 1992]:* I have no such plans at present.

Customs Brokers

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to support the proposal of the European Commission to establish a special fund to alleviate the problems that will be faced by employees of customs brokers following the completion of the European single market on 1 January 1993.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 5 November 1992]:* The Government have serious reservations about the Commission's proposals. It would appear to duplicate assistance available from the EC structural funds: particularly under the cross-border Community initiative INTERREG—in Kent and Northern Ireland—and from January 1993, when assistance under objective 3 of the structural funds will be made available to all redundant customs agents, from the European social fund.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Child Care

29. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *381-82*, if he will outline the progress made towards the establishment of a day nursery in the Palace of Westminster or its precincts.

31. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what progress has been made towards the establishment of a day nursery in the Palace of Westminster for hon. Members and staff.

32. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what progress he has made towards establishing a creche in the House.

33. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make a statement outlining progress on child care facilities for Members and staff in the Palace of Westminster.

34. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what progress is being made in the provision of nursery facilities for children of House of Commons staff and Members.

Mr. Beith: I refer the hon. Members to the oral reply I gave to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) earlier today.

Disabled People

30. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make a statement on the policies of the House of Commons Commission with regard to the employment of people with disabilities.

Mr. Beith: The policy of the Commission remains as set out in its statement of April 1982—that disablement is no bar to recruitment to, or advancement in, the House of Commons service, and that every opportunity is taken to employ disabled people.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Vining Peas

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on vining peas and the vining pea areas within the set-aside regime for 1993; and if he will clarify the proposals.

Mr. Curry: We did not support the Commission's decision to make vining peas eligible for area aid under the new arable support regime. Following pressure from the United Kingdom and a number of other member states, we understand from the Commission that it now intends to reverse this decision. That would be a satisfactory outcome, and it is one for which we will continue to work.

Departmental Payments

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to co-ordinate the payments his Department makes to landowners under all the schemes for which he is responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department operates a range of schemes which offer payments to landowners. These schemes have different purposes and take different formats reflecting those purposes. There is therefore limited scope for co-ordinating payments under them.

Biofuels

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is carrying out into the viability of growing biofuels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department is sponsoring research in a number of relevant areas, including work on improved varieties of traditional crops, such as rapeseed and on potential solid biofuel crops such as miscanthus. Agricultural aspects of liquid biofuel manufacture—for example, biodiesel and bioethanol—have generally passed the research stage. However, our economic and scientific research raises doubts about their ability to compete with fuels from fossil sources, even when grown with the benefit of area or set-aside payments. Biodiesel, for example, costs two or three times as much to produce as conventional diesel.

Set-aside

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to encourage pilot schemes of alternative uses of land currently under set-aside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Land currently entered into the non-agricultural use or woodland options of the voluntary five-year set-aside scheme can be planted with trees or put to other appropriate alternative uses.

The EC regulations governing the new arable area payments scheme, under which land will be set aside for the first time from this winter, allow such land to be used to grow a wide range of crops for specified non-food uses, subject to suitable controls. Though optional for member states this year, we are implementing these arrangements in full from the outset.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on permanent and rotational methods of headland set-aside; and how he plans to protect viable headlands.

Mr. Curry: Set-aside of headlands and field margins can bring environmental benefits. We were able to secure provision in the Community rules for the set-aside of such areas provided they meet minimum width and area requirements.

Member states are required to apply appropriate agronomic and environmental safeguards to all land set-aside under the new arable area payments arrangements. Our management requirements are listed in the booklet on the area payments scheme, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. These requirements will be reviewed to reflect the choice between rotational and non-rotational set-aside, which is due to be introduced in 1993.

Intervention Wheat Stocks

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a table of all intervention stocks of wheat held in each member state of the Common Market, stating the relative quality and cost of buying into intervention in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The latest data that are available on a member state basis are at 7 June 1992, when EC intervention stocks of wheat were as follows:

('000 tonnes)

Member state	*Common wheat*	*Feed wheat*
Belgium	121	0
Denmark	109	42
Germany	4,237	53
Greece	4	0
Spain	0	0
France	3,939	0
Ireland	0	0
Italy	8	0
Luxembourg	3	0
Netherlands	0	0
Portugal	7	49
United Kingdom	0	9
Total	[1]8,430	153

[1] Total does not add due to rounding.

Currently there are around 6·64 million tonnes of common wheat and 200,000 tonnes of feed wheat in intervention in the EC.

Cereals purchased into intervention must meet the minimum quality standards as prescribed in EC Commission regulation 689/92. They are purchased at the intervention buying-in price applicable at the time of delivery, to which must be added the actual costs of physically taking the stocks into store. However, as some of this wheat has been in intervention for several years, it is not possible to estimate, with any degree of accuracy, the costs associated with purchasing it into intervention.

Foie Gras

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will show the volume of imports of foie gras into the United Kingdom and their countries of origin for each year since 1985.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is shown in the table. For years from 1988 onwards, figures are for fresh or chilled fatty livers of geese and ducks only. For years 1985 to 1987, the available figures refer to fatty liver of geese and ducks whether fresh, chilled, frozen, salted or in brine.

Imports of fatty liver of geese or ducks by country of origin (kg)

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Total	6,015	8,459	13,091	17,118	23,704	24,723	24,072
of which imported from:							
France	5,991	8,459	13,091	17,118	23,675	24,723	21,622
Phillipines	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
Canada	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Belgium/Luxembourg	0	0	0	0	29	0	0
Netherlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,450

Source: HM Customs and Excise.

Dietary Supplements

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from *(a)* right hon. and hon. Members and *(b)* other individuals and organisations concerning the proposed European draft directive on dietary supplements; how many of those representations in each case have been broadly in favour of allowing such supplements to continue to be widely available to consumers; and how many have endorsed calls for the introduction of restrictions upon the sale of such products.

Mr. Soames: Responses to the consultation exercise earlier this year on the EC discussion paper on this subject, including those from consumers, enforcement authorities, the health food trade and manufacturers, generally favoured EC regulation in this area. Since then, from 1 April this year, the Department has received 147 representations from right hon. and hon. Members on behalf of their constituents, many of whose letters have been expressed in identical terms. Sixty-two letters have been received from individuals and organisations. All these representations have been broadly in favour of maintaining the status quo.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the expected scope of the forthcoming European directive on dietary supplements; and what information he has about the possible inclusion of salt and sugar.

Mr. Soames: On the basis of the discussion paper produced by the European Commission last December, I anticipate that the draft proposals will cover supplements in a concentrated form—that is, vitamin and mineral pills and, possibly, herbal extracts. There is no indication that salt or sugar would be within the scope of a directive on dietary supplements.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the retail value of those vitamin, mineral, and other dietary supplements which are consumed annually in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 8 July in the *Official Report*, column 234.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the number of individuals who use vitamin, mineral or other dietary supplements on a regular basis.

Mr. Soames: Data from the dietary and nutritional survey of British adults, 1986-1987, indicated that 13 per cent. of consumers took some kind of dietary supplement. However, I am aware that sales have been increasing and a recent report in the market research magazine "Market Intelligence", September 1992, gave a figure of 30 per cent. for households which had purchased vitamins or dietary supplements in 1992.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek derogation for the United Kingdom from the forthcoming European directive on dietary supplements.

Mr. Soames: We have made our views on future legislation known to the European Commission in the form of an outline draft directive on dietary supplements. In negotiations, we will press for a Community regime that strikes the right balance between ensuring public health and maintaining the availability of safe products for which there is clearly a strong public demand.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will meet the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy to discuss the forthcoming draft directive on dietary supplements.

Mr. Soames: Arrangements for this are already in hand. Moreover, my officials have already met with most of the interested parties, including this body.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Food Safety Act 1990 and other legislation in preventing the marketing of dangerous food products, or the making of unsubstantiated claims about health benefits which may accrue through the consumption of particular food products.

Mr. Soames: Procedures are in place which aim to ensure that the Food Safety Act 1990 is enforced effectively and sensibly. The Government believe the Act is largely effective both in deterring the marketing of food products which might be unsafe and in allowing action to be taken against the marketing of products which are, or may be, in breach of its provisions. However, this is kept under review and, in particular, the Government are concerned that a small number of food supplements may pose a potential risk to health and also that consumers may be misled by unsubstantiated claims in relation to certain products. The Government have recently accepted recommendations from the independent Food Advisory Committee for the tightening of controls on claims which may be made for foods. These include the recommendations that a food must be able to fulfil the claim being made for it; adequate labelling information must be given to show consumers that the claim is justified and that manufacturers should be required to be able to produce for enforcement purposes information substantiating any claims, and that such information as is appropriate should also be available to interested parties, including consumers. A copy of the full recommendations is being placed in the Library of the House. The recommendations on claims are being taken forward within the European Community.

Diet

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what initiatives are currently being undertaken by his Department to encourage people to seek a balanced diet; and if he will indicate in each case the cost of that initiative.

Mr. Soames: A free booklet is available to the public advising on healthy eating as part of this Department's continuing Foodsense campaign. The publication contains dietary guidelines based on recommendations by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy. The costs related to the production of this publication so far amount to £99,000. In addition, this Department is involved in the nutrition task force, recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health which will draw up a co-ordinated action programme for achieving the dietary targets set out in "The Health of the Nation" White Paper. That programme will involve advising and encouraging the public to change the balance of their diet.

Methyl Bromide

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the report of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, relating to methyl bromide will be published prior to the Montreal protocol negotiations starting on 17 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Advisory Committee on Pesticides evaluation document on residues of methyl bromide in some vegetables is now available. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many reports have been received in each of the last six years of adverse human reaction to sheep dip products licensed by his Department.

Mr. Soames: The information requested for each of the past six years is as follows:

	Number of reports received
1986	10
1987	11
1988	19
1989	9
1990	6
1991	138

For 1992, a total of 121 reports have been received up to 31 October. A significant proportion of the reports received since 1990 are historical cases where a suspected adverse reaction had occurred more than one year previously. These figures should be set in the context of in excess of 1 million dippings since 1985.

Ectoparasiticide Medicinal Products

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made in his Department's review of licensed ectoparasiticide medicinal products.

Mr. Soames: Apart from sheep dips, the review of licensed ectoparasiticide medicinal products has almost been completed. For outstanding products, companies have been asked to provide the necessary data as soon as possible.

On sheep dips, since the announcement of the completion by the independent Veterinary Products Committee of the initial phase of its review, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate has had dicussions with the pharmaceutical companies concerned about further work that is required to bring the review to a conclusion. The companies have been asked to progress this work as speedily as possible. It is however, unlikely that the review of these products will be complete before mid-1993.

Bass

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to conclude his study into the effect on bass stocks of seismic surveys.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry expects to be able to publish a report by the end of summer 1993 which will include an assessment of a bass tagging programme undertaken on behalf of Elf Enterprise Caledonia Ltd.

The tagging programme, which was funded by Elf, was carried out by Fawley Aquatic Research Laboratories under the guidance of MAFF fisheries scientists.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give an undertaking to purchase only ozone-friendly fridges that do not contain chlorofluorocarbons or hydrochlorofluorocarbons for his Department.

Mr. Curry: The policy of the Department is not to purchase new fridges containing substances harmful to the ozone layer as set out in the Montreal protocol and its revisions.

When existing fridges containing substances harmful to the ozone layer are to be replaced, fridges which are understood to be ozone friendly will be purchased.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures have been taken to ensure that any ozone-destroying substances in use by his Department identified as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 do not reach the atmosphere.

Mr. Curry: The disposal of controlled waste is governed by the Duty of Care Regulations which came into force on 1 April 1992 under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. These regulations put a responsibility on producers of controlled waste to ensure that it is disposed of safely and legally. There is no Crown immunity from these regulations and the Department takes care to observe them.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many refrigeration and air conditioning systems in his Department are equipped with automatic leak detection systems.

Mr. Curry: Ten per cent. of buildings occupied by MAFF are provided with in-built refrigeration or air conditioning systems. Most installations have been in use for five or more years and none are currently equipped with automatic leak detection systems. All such installations are subject to a rigorous maintenance regime, performance is regularly monitored and defects are attended to promptly.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much funding has been allocated or spent to specifically deal with measures to reduce his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Curry: It is not possible to say how much money has been spent across the whole Department in reducing consumption of ozone-depleting substances because the programme is funded from many budgets and cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which current uses of ozone-depleting chemicals by his Department are considered essential.

Mr. Curry: We would not consider any uses for which ozone-friendly alternatives are available and it is the Department's policy to purchase such alternatives wherever possible.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many catastrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances have occurred within his Department buildings in the past five years.

Mr. Curry: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by what date his Department's use of ozone-depleting chemicals will conform to European Community regulations on limits on these chemicals.

Mr. Curry: Both the Montreal protocol and the EC regulations seek to control the production, but not the use, of substances which deplete the ozone layer. However, the Department is playing its part in helping to phase out these substances by wherever possible not purchasing them.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to designate an environmentally sensitive area in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: There are already 10 environmentally sensitive areas in England and two in Wales. My right hon. Friends the Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales plan to make announcements on the timing of further designations in the near future.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pursuant to his oral statement of 14 July, *Official Report*, column 1027, on the entry into force of limitations of days at sea, whether the effective steps to be taken by other EC states refers to days at sea limitations or to other means such as decommissioning schemes.

Mr. Curry: All member states must agree on multi-annual guidance programme targets. The contribution to be made by effort control and the overall targets themselves are still under discussion. "Effective Steps", therefore refers to action to achieve agreed targets.

Fishermen (Hairnets)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received over the terms of the proposed European legislation involving the possibility of fishermen being required to wear hairnets at sea.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

None. There is no such requirement.

The EC directive on health conditions for the production and placing on the market of fishery products, which come into force from 1 January 1993, requires those handling fishery products in working areas on factory vessels to wear clean working clothes and headgear which encloses the hair.

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Gummer: Responsibility for this matter is delegated to the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, the Central Science Laboratory, the Central Veterinary Laboratory, the Intervention Board executive agency and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. I have asked their respective chief executives to write to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Letter from G. Stapleton to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 7 November 1992:

I refer to your recent Written Parliamentary Question to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about the number of staff by grade employed by executive agencies for which he is responsible and the associated staff costs for the 1991-92 and 1992-93 years. As the Minister promised in his reply I am now writing to let you have the information for this Agency.

The Intervention Board employed 999 staff during the 1991-92 year and our estimated projected manpower figure for the current year is 1,037 staff. I attach a table which provides a breakdown of these staff totals by grade.

I enclose a copy of the Agency's Annual Report which I hope you will find of interest. Page 23 provides details of our administration expenditure and you will see that staff costs, ERNIC and pensions, accounted for £15,394,000 during 1991-92. Our estimated forecast for the current financial year, which includes a factor for inflation, is £17,716,000.

Intervention Board—staff figures by grade

	Actual 1991-92	*Estimated 1992-93*
Grade 3	1	1
Grade 5	5	5
Grade 6	5	5
Grade 7	20	19
Senior Executive Officer	43	45
Higher Executive Officer	104·5	107·50
Executive Officer	197·5	211
Administrative Officer	415·5	433
Administrative Assistant	127	131·50
Support Grade Band I	8·5	9·50
Support Grade Band II	26	25·5
Superintendent Telex	1	1
Specialist Telex	4·5	4
Chief Typing Manager	1	1
Typing Manager	2	2
Typists	22	20
Personal Secretaries	11·5	12
ADAS 1	2	2
ADAS 2	2	2
	999	1,037

Letter from Dr. T. W. A. Little to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 9 November 1992:

Question:

"To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible."

As you know the Minister has asked that Chief Executives of executive agencies for which he is responsible write to you direct with their answer to your question.

The number of staff by grade employed at the Central Veterinary Laboratory during 1991-92, and the estimated figures for 1992-93, are listed below at Annex 1.

The staff costs during 1991-92 were £10,561,000 and the estimate for 1992-93 is £11,467,000.

Annex I

Central Veterinary Laboratory
Number of staff by grade for 1991-92 and 1992-93

Grade	*Number*[1] *1991-92*[2]	*1992-93*[3]
Grade 3	1	1
Grade 4	1	1
Grade 5	3	3
Grade 6	10	12
Grade 7	15	14
Senior Executive Officer	3	2
Higher Executive Officer	6	8
Executive Officer	11½	12
Administrative Officer	36	34
Administrative Assistant	45	49
Senior Personal Secretary	1	1
Personal Secretary	2	2
Chief Typing Manager	—	1
Typing Manager	1	1
Typist	11½	11½
Senior Librarian	1	1
Librarian	1	1
Assistant Librarian	3	2
Stores Officer Grade D	1	1
Higher Photographic Officer	1	1
Photographic Officer	1	1
Process and General Supervisory:		
A	1	1
B	1	1
D	10	11
E	2	1
Experimental Worker I	23	22
Experimental Worker II	17½	25½
Experimental Worker III	13	9
Experimental Worker IV	2	3
Senior Research Officer II	23	19
Veterinary Research Officer	27½	24½
Senior Scientific Officer	38	32½
Higher Scientific Officer	56	57
Scientific Officer	66	63½
Assistant Scientific Officer	110	126
Support Grade Band 1	17	17
Support Grade Band 2	61	66½
Sandwich Course Student	12	11
Total	635	650

[1] Part-time staff counted as half units.

[2] Average weekly number of employees during 1991-92.

[3] Estimated weekly number of employees for 1992-93.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Rutter to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their costs for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

In his reply to the above question about Executive Agencies in MAFF, the Minister said that as this was a matter which was the direct responsibility of Chief Executives, he would ask them to write to you direct. I am doing so as Chief Executive of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

The numbers of staff by grade and their costs for 1991-92 are set out on pages 47 and 42 respectively of the VMD's Annual Report and Accounts, a copy of which was enclosed with my letter to you dated 26 October.

The estimated figures for 1992/93 are 91·5 staff and £2·202m staff costs; the actual figures will be included in the VMD's Report and Accounts for 1992/93 due to be published in July 1993.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Walsh to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 9 November 1992:

Parliamentary Question: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

ADAS was established as an executive agency on 1 April this year. The enclosed figures for 1991-92 are therefore based on the number of ADAS staff in MAFF at 1 October 1991. These figures do not include MAFF administrative staff who were also engaged on ADAS work, many of whom transferred across to ADAS from 1 April 1992. As the figure for 1992-93 is based on the number of ADAS staff in post on 1 October 1992 the figures for the two years are not directly comparable. The figures provided relate only to "non industrial" staff. About 135 "industrial" staff, e.g. farm workers and craftsmen, were employed by MAFF on ADAS work on 1 October 1991, compared to an ADAS staff in post figure of 98 on 1 October this year.

ADAS staff numbers and annual salary cost 1991-92

Grade	*Number of staff*[1]	*Total annual salary cost*[2] £
Unified Grades	167·5	7,242,052
Advisory Grades	703·5	18,865,412
Science Grades	330·5	5,686,826
Professional and Technology Grades	334·0	8,293,304
Mapping and Charting Grades	43·0	814,008
Research Officer Grades (Resource and Planning)	24·5	511,855
Graphics Officer Grades	1·0	18,616
Photographer Grades	2·0	43,080
Administrative and Typing Grades	171·0	2,801,262
Support Grades	12·0	123,156
Process and Supervisory Grades	10·0	158,790
Totals	1,799·0	44,558,361

[1] Figures extracted from MAFF Personnel databases

[2] Total Annual Salary Cost comprises pay, ERNIC and PCSPS costs

ADAS staff numbers and annual salary cost 1992-93

Grade	*Number of staff*[1]	*Total annual salary cost*[2] £
Unified Grades	150·0	6,737,185
Consultancy Grades	1,006·5	28,963,777
Science Grades	304·0	5,247,713
Professional and Technology Grades	51·0	1,041,035
Mapping and Charting Grades	39·5	773,898
Information/Librarian Grades	1·0	23,654
Graphics Officer Grades	4·0	81,780
Photographer Grades	2·0	45,665
Administrative and Typing Grades	578·5	7,574,783
Support Grades	47·0	532,661
Process and Supervisory Grades	8·0	134,656
Totals	2,191·5	51,156,807

[1] Figures extracted from MAFF Personnel database, which is in the process of being updated to reflect the new ADAS structure.

[2] Total Annual Salary Cost comprises pay, ERNIC and PCSPS costs.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Unified Grades
Grades 3-7 plus ADAS I.

Consultancy Grades[1]
Advisory Officer/Science Specialist II-IV Senior Consultant, Consultant and Team Leader.

Professional and Technical Grades
SPTO-PTO, Graduate Surveyor and Farm Manager.

Mapping and Charting Grades
SMCO-MCO (trainee).

Research Officer Grades
SRO-RO.

Administrative and Typing Grades[2]
SEO-AA.
Typing Manager, SPS-Typist.

Support Grades[2]
SGB 1 and 2.

Photographic Grades
Principal and senior photographer.

Process and Supervisory Grades
Sample tester.

[1] Advisory Officer, Science Specialist, SPTO, HPTO, SRO and RO grades have been absorbed into the restructured Consultancy Grades in the 1992-93 figures.

[2] The number of administrative and support grade staff go up in 1992-93 because MAFF staff engaged on ADAS work are not included in the ADAS 1991-92 figures.

Letter from Dr. P. I. Stanley to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he will list by grade the number of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

The numbers of staff employed by the Central Science Laboratory on a permanent basis, by grade, for 1991-92 and the estimated numbers for 1992-93 are as follows:

Grade	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
3	1·0	1·0
5	1·0	1·0
6	9·8	12·2
7	34·6	30·0
SEO/SSO and equivalent grades	48·2	48·9
HEO/HSO and equivalent grades	73·4	75·7
EO/SO and equivalent grades	70·8	83·7
AO/ASO and equivalent grades	80·5	79·1
AA	22·5	22·3
Industrial	28·1	30·0
Totals	369·8	383·9

In addition, there are a number of students and staff employed on a casual basis as follows:

	1991-92	1992-93
Students	22·8	11·7
Casuals	29·4	36·0
Totals	52·2	47·6

Staff costs for 1991-92 are £7,141 million and are estimated for 1992-93 to be £7·9 million.

SCOTLAND

Coastal Erosion

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what planning policy guidance he gives to local authorities over coastal erosion.

Mr. Stewart: There is currently no planning policy guidance available to local authorities on the subject of coastal erosion. Following a review of the priorities for planning guidance, coastal planning has been identified as requiring attention and we accept the need to extend guidance in this area. Revised guidance will be drawn up to take forward the approach set out in the Government response to the Environment Select Committee's report on coastal zone protection and planning. A copy of the response has been placed in the library of the House.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff hours were involved in preparing to the Scottish local government reform proposals.

Mr. Lang: Preparation of the proposals has involved staff in many parts of the Scottish Office. Detailed information on staff hours devoted to particular subjects would take too many staff hours to calculate.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was paid to Touche Ross for its consultancy report on the reorganisation of Scottish local government.

Mr. Lang: The figure is £38,000.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of all the published documents, maps and videos which were produced at the launch of the Scottish local government reorganisation proposals.

Mr. Lang: The cost, excluding Scottish Office staff costs, of preparing and reproducing 15,000 consultation papers, 700 videos, 1,000 posters and 110,000 leaflets was approximately £115,000.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many acres of land are held by each regional and island water authority; what percentage, in each case, falls within areas designated for environmental protection such as evironmentally sensitive areas and areas of natural beauty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 27 October.

Japanese Language

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many teachers qualified to teach the Japanese language are currently employed by education authorities in the maintained sector and teaching in secondary schools to *(a)* ordinary level and *(b)* higher level; and if he will make a statement on the teaching of Japanese in Scottish schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* The information requested is not held centrally. A small number of Scottish schools teach elementary Japanese as part of Japanese Studies courses. SCOTVEC also offers national certificate modules which include elements of the Japanese language. I have no plans to advise education authorities on the teaching of Japanese to Scottish Certificate of Examination standard, but I believe this is a subject worthy of further consideration, and I will keep it under review.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for each local enterprise company, the number of jobs each local enterprise company has created since coming into operation for *(a)* adult males, *(b)* adult females, *(c)* young males and *(d)* young females.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 6 November 1992]:* Oversight of the activities of the local enterprise companies is the responsibility of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands respectively. I have therefore asked the chairmen of these two bodies to write to the hon. Member about the information which he has requested. Such information as they are able to provide is likely to reflect the fact that it is individual employers who create jobs; and that the role of the enterprise bodies is to help foster the conditions for employment growth rather than direct job creation.

Regional Financial Assistance

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amounts of regional financial assistance were given to industry in the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow, by way of regional development grants, regional selection assistance and regional, enterprise grants, in each financial year since 1989-90; and what is the sum to be paid in the year 1992-93.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* The information requested is given in the table. Expenditure in the remainder of 1992-93 will depend on claims made by companies in respect of progress with projects which have been the subject of individual offers of grant.

Gross expenditure on regional assistance to industry in Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency

(£000s)

	Regional selective assistance	Regional enterprise grants	Regional development grants[1]
1989-90	424·1	30·5	2,475·4
1990-91	3,565·3	15·7	2·168·5
1991-92	3·578·5	19·5	848·4
[2]1992-93	380·0	12·8	602·9

[1] Includes expenditure on original and revised regional development grant schemes. The revised scheme was closed to new applications on 31 March 1988.

[2] To 28 October 1992.

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on his policy on the European Commission's proposals to reform the common fisheries policy, (COM (92) 387 final);

(2) what assessment he has made of the European Commission's proposal to repeal Council Regulation (EEC) No. 170/83, and of the implications of such a reform of the common fisheries policy for the Scottish fishing industry; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what action he will take to ensure consideration of the interests of the Scottish fishing fleet when considering changes in the common fisheries policy.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 5 November 1992]:* Fisheries Ministers agreed at the Councils held on 3 April and 9 June 1992 to maintain key elements of the common fisheries policy including relative stability and access to the 12 mile zone and the Shetland box. These elements have benefited our fishermen over the last 10 years. The chief changes in the Commission's proposed revision of Council Regulation 170/83 relate to multi-annual programmes integrating permitted catches and fleet structure, control, licensing and changes in the balance of decision making between the Council and the Commission.

We are considering the Commission's detailed proposal against the background of the earlier Council decisions with the overall objective of ensuring that fishermen in all parts of the UK can make of all the fishing opportunities obtained for them in 1983.

EC Funds

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much financial assistance has been awarded to *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Glasgow and *(c)* Strathclyde by way of each of the four objectives of the European Community's European regional development fund in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 5 November 1992]:* Strathclyde region benefits from European regional development fund (ERDF) assistance objectives 2 and 5b only. Within each of these objectives assistance is awarded to the eligible area as a whole. For the years 1989-91, some £149 million of ERDF assistance was awarded to the Strathclyde integrated development operation under objective 2. Argyll and Bute district and part of Cunninghame district are instead eligible for objective 5b assistance awarded to the Highlands and Islands, for which some £54 million was made available in 1989-91. In addition, for 1990 and 1991, the European Comision made further ERDF awards to the west of Scotland of £6.8 million under RENAVAL and £0.2 million under RECHAR.

War Crimes Act 1991

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are for legal action against Antony Gecas under the War Crimes Act 1991.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: *[holding answer 5 November 1992]:* It is not the practice to disclose whether proceedings against any individual are contemplated.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

12. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will consider merging the Broadcasting Complaints Commission and the Broadcasting Standards Council.

Mr. Brooke: I have no immediate plans to legislate for any changes in the status of either body but I will, of course, keep the matter under review.

22. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the current arrangements for the management of the BBC.

Mr. Brooke: This is a matter for the BBC, within the terms of the present royal charter and the licence and agreement.

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will make it his policy to use the opportunity of the review of the BBC charter to streamline the regulation of the broadcasting industry.

Mr. Brooke: I intend to publish a discussion paper in the next few weeks. This will set the framework for the public debate about the future of the BBC, including regulatory options. We shall want to hear the opinions of viewers and listeners, as well as those of the broadcasters and other interested parties, before we take decisions.

Public Libraries (Closures)

13. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many public libraries have been closed in the past year.

Mr. Key: Figures for the number of closures are not yet available for the past year.

Media Ownership

14. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent representations he has received on reform of the law on media ownership.

Mr. Brooke: The subject is raised in many of my regular meetings with broadcasters and the press.

"Managing England's Heritage"

15. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he became aware of the proposals of English Heritage outlined in the document "Managing England's Heritage"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Following my appointment as Secretary of State on 25 September, I was briefed about English Heritage's strategy proposals and discussed them with Jocelyn Stevens, the chairman of English Heritage, on 1 October.

English Sports Council

16. **Mr. Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage by what date the English Sports Council will be established.

Mr. Key: The successor bodies to the GB Sports Council, the United Kingdom Sports Commission and the Sports Council for England will be established on 1 October 1993.

Rugby League Clubs

17. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to assist Rugby League clubs.

Mr. Brooke: My Department's main agency for distributing grant aid to sports bodies in England is the Sports Council who do not assist professional bodies. However, they gave £172,000 in assistance to the British Amateur Rugby League Association in 1991-92. The Foundation for Sport and the Arts has given over £750,000 in grant aid to Rugby League clubs since its establishment last year following a reduction in pool betting duty.

Victoria History of the Counties of England

18. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received on the future of the Victoria History of the Counties of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Department of National Heritage has received four letters about the financial difficulties of the Victoria History of the Counties of England. I recognise the merits of this project, but it is for local councils to decide whether to continue their support for it, I am unable to offer support from my Department's funds.

British Library

19. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when the British Library will open on its new St. Pancras site.

Mr. Key: The opening dates for the new building are currently being reviewed by the Department of National Heritage and the British Library.

Arts Funding

20. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the amount of money being allocated to the arts in the current year; and what it was in 1979.

Mr. Brooke: For the current year the Government's grant in aid to the Arts Council of Great Britain is £221·2 million. For 1979-80 it was £63·125 million in cash terms or £153·1 million at today's prices. This represents a 44·5 per cent. increase in real terms.

Local authorities also contribute significantly to the arts. Although no reliable figures are yet available best estimates suggest that they contribute well over £200 million a year.

In addition, the arts receive funding from the private sector. For 1990-91, the latest year for which firm figures are available, annual business sponsorship reached £44·5 million to which can be added £12·5 million in corporate membership. My own business sponsorship incentive scheme has raised over £48 million for the arts since its inception in October 1984.

Bolsover Castle

21. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the proposals relating to English Heritage announced on 26 October as they affect Bolsover castle.

Mr. Key: English Heritage's new strategy for the 1990s envisages allocating three categories of importance to their historic estate, concentrating resources and improving facilities in the top two categories and passing properties in the third category to local management wherever possible.

Bolsover castle is to be in the first category and there are no plans to devolve its management.

Scottish Arts Council

23. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to seek an early meeting with the chairman and members of the Scottish Arts Council in order to seek their views on the role of the council and its relationship with the state.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans at present to meet the chairman and members of the Scottish Arts Council but I look forward to doing so when the opportunity arises.

Cricket

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to provide assistance towards the development of cricket within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: All Government funds for sport are channelled through the Sports Council who allocate these according to their policies and priorities. In 1991-92, the Sports Council provided £130,000 to cricketing governing bodies and a further £428,000 in grand aid for various regional projects aimed at developing the game in the United Kingdom. In addition, since its establishment last year the Foundation for Sport and the Arts has provided over £2 million to cricket projects. The Government also welcome a range of initiatives such as "Kwik Cricket" and "Capital Kids Programme", which are aimed at promoting cricket for young people.

Pitchford Hall

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what further representations he has received since 20 October on Pitchford hall.

Mr. Key: My Department has received two further letters from member of the public, both written before 20 October, about Pitchford hall.

Tourism

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage from which country the greatest number of tourists visited Great Britain during the current year.

Mr. Key: In the first quarter of 1992, the latest for which statistics are available, the United States of America generated the greatest number of visits to the United Kingdom, with 504,000 visits, 15 per cent. of the total.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list, for each local authority area in South Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. Key: None.

Industrial Heritage Sites

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list for the three counties of Yorkshire and for Humberside, what new initiatives he proposes to introduce to secure the preservation of sites of industrial heritage.

Mr. Brooke: Controls and grant mechanisms to protect the heritage are well established. English Heritage made special reference to our unique industrial heritage and maritime heritage in their recent strategy for the 1990s.

National Lottery

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the bodies with which the GAH Group consulted, prior to reporting to him on a national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: Many of the bodies contacted by the GAH Group responded on a confidential basis. I do not intend to publish a list.

Library and Information Services Council

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the membership of the Library and Information Services Council; and how many meetings it held in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Key: The Secretary of State appoints the members of his advisory body in their own right, but ensures that the full range of library and information interests is represented. The council met three times in 1991 and four times in 1992. The present membership is:

Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer
Brian Burch
Mrs. Gillian Cross
Chris Heinitz
Chris Koster
David Leabeater
Dr. Bob McKee
Mrs. Sylvia I. Martin
Nigel Oxbrow
John Sumsion
Stuart Brewer
Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healy
Miss Rosemary Gray
Dr. Phil L. Holmes
Dr. Brian Lang
Nigel S. Macartney
Mrs. Sally R. Marshall
Michael M. Messenger
Mrs. Sheila Pantry

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Key: My Department currently relies on other Government Departments for retrieval of records from the Public Record Office. They do not keep separate statistics on which papers are withdrawn for our use and, therefore, our records will be included in the numbers supplied by those Departments.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Ozone-destroying Substances

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide details from the maintenance and servicing record of the quantity and type of ozone—destroying chemicals used annually in his Department's refrigeration and air conditioning equipment for servicing and in leakages; and what proportion is removed for recycling;

(2) how many chlorofluorocarbon and hydrochlorofluorocarbon installations are contained within his Department's buildings;

(3) what quantity of HCFC 22 is purchased by his Department from ICI per annum;

(4) what the latest available figures are for his 3Department's total purchase of chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons;

(5) how many chlorofluorocarbon domestic fridges are contained within his Department's buildings;

(6) what is the quantity of ozone-depleting substances recycled within his Department and returned to the manufacturer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not recorded centrally.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which current uses of ozone-depleting chemicals by his Department are considered essential;

(2) if he will given an undertaking to purchase only ozone-friendly fridges that do not contain CFCs or HCFCs for his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are currently reviewing our policy on the use of such chemicals and of goods containing them.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action has been taken to ensure that ozone-destroying substances consumed by his Department are identified as controlled wastes when they are no longer in use;

(2) what measures have been taken to ensure that any ozone-destroying substances in use by his Department identified as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 do not reach the atmosphere;

(3) what proportion of his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances becomes controlled waste in terms of section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Most waste, of whatever nature, from Home Office premises is controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Section 34 of the Act (the duty of care) which came into force on 1 April 1992 requires any person subject to the duty who has controlled waste to take reasonable steps to prevent its illegal management. There is no Crown immunity under the Act, and the Department takes care to ensure that controlled waste having its possession is consigned only to authorised persons for treatment or disposal. Information is not recorded centrally about the Department's use of ozone-depleting substances or the disposal of controlled waste.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many refrigeration and air conditioning systems in his Department are equipped with automatic leak detection systems.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison service's five major vegetable cold stores all have leak detection systems, and 26 air-conditioned vehicles operated by the prison service also have leak detection systems. Only one other unit, at the Emergency Planning College, is known to have such a system.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what date his Department's use of ozone-depleting chemicals will conform to EC regulations on limits on these chemicals.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Both the Montreal protocol and EC regulations seek to control the production but not the use of substances which deplete the ozone layer. However, the Department is playing its part in helping to phase out these substances by not purchasing or using them unless no suitable alternative is available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many catastrophic leaks of ozone-depleting substances have occurred within his Department's buildings in the past five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what targets have been set for the recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals within his Department's buildings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance has been sought and received on alternatives or substitutes to the ozone-destroying chemicals in use by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My Department adheres to the guidance and specifications issued by the DOE and PSA, and pays close attention to relevant published research findings.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much funding has been allocated or spent to specifically deal with measures to reduce his Department's consumption of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Measures to reduce consumption of ozone-depleting substances are taken as part of the Department's general maintenance programme, and the costs involved are not separately identifiable.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how his departmental green Minister has promoted protection of the ozone layer with specific policy measures; and which possible measures have been considered and rejected, and on what grounds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has signed the declaration of commitment to responsible energy management on behalf of the Department; has set in hand a review of the Department's policy on the purchase of ozone-depleting chemicals and of goods manufactured with these substances; and is supervising the development of a green housekeeping strategy for the Department, in accordance with the commitments given in the 1990 White Paper, "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200), and subsequent White Papers.

Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Government measures to ensure the right to private and family life of all persons resident in the United Kingdom as set out in article 8 of the European convention on human rights.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government are satisfied that the United Kingdom meets its obligations under the European convention on human rights, including those set out in article 8. The United Kingdom is committed, where it is found to be in violation of the convention, to ensuring that its arrangements are consistent with those obligations.

Fire Extinguishers

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many portable halon fire extinguishers are contained within his Department's buildings; and what measures are being taken to ensure their recycling and replacement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Records of portable halon fire extinguishers are not held centrally. Practice on their recycling and replacement is being reviewed in the light of the relevant DOE guidelines.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions exist to explain their rights to asylum seekers at the port of entry; and what changes will occur to these arising from the passage of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Asylum seekers at ports are informed orally by the immigration officer, in a language with which they are familiar (through an interpreter if necessary), that their application will be treated in confidence, that it will be referred to the asylum division in Croydon, and that they are not obliged to leave the United Kingdom pending a decision. Asylum questionnaires contain a preamble supplementing these details in writing and inform applicants of the existence and function of the refugee legal centre. Detained asylum seekers have access to written information in ten languages.

The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill will not require any changes to these procedures.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the full text of the document or written advice given to someone who has been granted clearance abroad to enter the United Kingdom in order to make an asylum application.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is no provision for receiving applications for asylum from abroad, but we are prepared to consider granting entry clearance for the purpose of making an asylum application where a person falls within the definition of a refugee in article 1A of the 1951 UN refugees convention and has close ties with the United Kingdom such as to make it the most appropriate country of refuge.

There is no standard document or written advice for use in such circumstances.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many asylum seekers have been granted entry clearance abroad in each of the years for which figures are available since 1979;

(2) how many individuals have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* been granted asylum status by the United Kingdom before they have reached the United Kingdom for each of the last 15 years;

(3) how many times in each of the years for which figures are available entry clearance has been granted abroad for the purpose of making an asylum application.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Available information on principal applications for asylum made abroad is given in table A. This information may be under-recorded.

There is no provision to grant asylum to a person who is not in the United Kingdom. Figures for those granted entry clearance abroad either for the purpose of seeking asylum in the United Kingdom, or as dependants joining refugees or people with exceptional leave here, are not separately identifiable in the statistics.

Figures for grants of settlement to south east Asian refugees, who form a distinct group dealt with under a specific programme, are given in table B.

Table A: Applications[1] [2] for asylum in the United Kingdom received by British posts abroad and referred to the Home Office for decision, 1986-91

Year	*Number*
1986	30
1987	35
[3]1988	35
[3]1989	30
[3]1990	35
1991	35

[1] Excluding dependants.

[2] Figures may be under-recorded. Rounded to nearest 5. 1991 figure is provisional.

[3] In addition, about 1,695 applications in 1988, 35 in 1989, 55 in 1990 and 15 in 1991 by nationals of Afghanistan to the British High Commission in New Delhi, and 40 applications in 1991 by nationals of Liberia to the British High Commission in Lagos, were processed locally.

Table B: Grants(1)(2) of settlement in the United Kingdom to south east Asian refugees

Year	*Settlement grants*
1979	3,150
1980	9,100
1981	2,000
1982	880
1983	1,220
1984	800
1985	530
1986	830
1987	440
1988	710
1989	720
1990	650
1991	480

(1) Includes dependants.

(2) All these grants were on arrival to the UK, except for a total of 2,700 during the years 1979-82 which were on removal of time limit.

Electoral System

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of people entitled to vote who were not on the electoral register for the current year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is estimated that 4·3 per cent. of the eligible population are not included in the 1992 register of electors. This estimate is based on the 1981 census results with an allowance for subsequent births, deaths and migration.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to publicise the availability of the postal vote for local and parliamentary elections.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A national television and newspaper campaign costing just under £500,000 was undertaken to let people know about postal and proxy voting arrangements at the recent general election. No decision has yet been taken about publicity for the next general election. The electoral registration form, form A, contains information about postal voting. We also produce publicity material for people who need an absent vote on an indefinite basis. Local government elections are the responsibility of local authorities and we do not provide publicity for absent voting at those elections.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what publicity will be given to electors' right to check if they are on the draft register of electors when it is published at the end of November.

Mr Peter Lloyd: Electoral registration officers are required to place notices in prominent places within their area telling people where they can inspect the draft register and how to make a claim for their name to be included in the register. Many electoral registration officers also place advertisements in local newspapers. In addition, a press release about the publication of the draft register will be distributed shortly to all national daily and Sunday newspapers and the major television companies and through the Central Office of Information news distribution system.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to introduce a voters charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the expenditure on *(a)* electoral registration within the United Kingdom and *(b)* registration of overseas residents eligible for the United Kingdom electoral register in each of the last 10 years; and if he will also list the expenditure on electoral registration for both of the above categories in each local authority district areas as (i) a total figure in 1992 terms, (ii) as a percentage of local authority expenditure and (iii) on a per capita basis.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Details of spending by some local authorities on electoral registration on a per capita basis may be found in the report of a survey by OPCS, "Compiling the Electoral Register 1991", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), *Official Report*, 30 October, column *931*, if he will make it his policy to publish the list of members of the five working groups of the Home Office joint committee on electoral matters in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will require his working group on electoral affairs to give detailed consideration to *(a)* the concept of a rolling register, *(b)* additional powers for electoral registration officers to seek and find eligible citizens, *(c)* other countries' electoral registration procedures, *(d)* the impact of the poll tax upon levels of electoral registration and *(e)* the effectiveness of the current level of public spending on electoral registration.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Bar (Mr. Rooker) on 30 October, *Official Report, columns 931-32)*. Within those remits, the working groups will be able to consider any matters which are relevant.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy for his working group on electoral affairs to take evidence from *(a)* Liberty, *(b)* Mencap, *(c)* the Royal National Institute for the Blind, *(d)* the Spastics Society, *(e)* Shelter, *(f)* CHAR and *(g)* other interested bodies.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have recently written to MENCAP and to MIND to seek their views on a draft practice note for electoral registration officers on the registration of mentally ill and learning disabled people. Before the general election we circulated to acting returning officers guidance produced by the RNIB on helping blind people to take part in the electoral process. We have also written to the Spastics Society offering to do the same in respect of people with physical disabilities.

Where appropriate, we will consult other voluntary groups about matters in which they have an interest; and we are always prepared to consider the views of such groups when they are submitted to us.

Island Prisons

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the breathing apparatus to be made available to island prisons; and if he will make a statement on the delay in providing the equipement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Governors of the three Island prisons were asked in October to assess the numbers of sets of short duration breathing apparatus required for their establishments as part of a service-wide initiative to replace smoke hoods. Parkhurst prison has been in possession of conventional breathing apparatus since 1988.

A programme of training is now planned and the Island prisons will be among the first to receive it in December 1992. Following training, equipment will be supplied to the establishments. The delay in the provision of equipment and training is a consequence of a delay in the signing of the relevant contract.

Gambling

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the most recent figures expressed as total expenditure and on a per capita basis, for gambling in the United Kingdom on *(a)* off-course and on-course betting, *(b)* gaming machines, *(c)* casinos, *(d)* bingo, *(e)* football pools and *(f)* small lotteries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimated figures for net consumer expenditure on gambling (i.e., amount staked less winnings) in the financial year 1991-92 are set out in the table. Those for off-course betting, pool betting and bingo are based on returns to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. Those for casinos and lotteries are taken from the annual report of the Gaming Board for Great Britain, although the latter includes only those lotteries registered with the Board.

The estimates for on-course betting and gaming machines cannot be calculated directly and should be treated with extreme caution. The turnover per head per annum is based on an estimated United Kingdom population of 57·4 million.

	Estimated net consumer expenditure/year £ million	*Expenditure/head/year £*
Off-course betting	1,205	21
On-course betting	103	1·8
Gaming machines	549	9·6
Casinos	367	6·4
Bingo	240	4·2
Pools	576	10
Lotteries	37	0·6

South Wales Police

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now agree to increase the establishment of the South Wales police force.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Applications for increase in police force establishments will be dealt with as soon as Ministers have decided on the level of resources for the police service for the coming financial year.

Chelmsford Prison

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners there were in Chelmsford prison at the latest available date;

(2) what further action is being considered to reduce overcrowding in Chelmsford prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 6 November there were 308 prisoners in Chelmsford prison. The establishment's certified normal accommodation (that is its uncrowded capacity) is 244. The prison service is considering how to meet the need for increased capacity in the prison, and I hope to be in a position to announce proposals on this in the near future.

Police Officers

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of police officers up to chief constable are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* ethnic minority women.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Prisoners' Mail

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice his Department has issued on the handling of prisoners' mail; to what extent the handling of mail is a matter for the discretion of the governor of each individual prison; and if he will set out the grounds on which mail may be withheld from prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Guidance to governors on the handling of prisoners' correspondence is set out in standing order 5 and circular instruction 10/1991, copies of which are in the Library.

Prisons (Drugs)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve prison officers' training in dealing with drugs problems.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Training in the care and treatment of drug misusers has been available for the last two years through the sponsorship of courses at Ruskin college Oxford and we are extending this provision this year to a specialist course designed specifically for prison staff of all disciplines. In addition a series of seminars have been introduced to familiarise staff with the Guidelines on the Throughcare of Drug Misusers published in 1991. An increasing number of health care staff now hold nursing qualifications and we have given priority to providing funding to enable nursing staff to attend professional courses on drug and alcohol dependency nursing.

Provision has also been made for prison medical officers to undertake professional training in the treatment of addictive behaviour.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out his plans for tackling the problem of drug dealing and drug abuse in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Peter Lloyd: We have developed a wide range of measures for tackling drug dealing in prisons. These include the routine searching of prisoners (including those returning from home leave), their cells and other areas. Prisoners and their visitors will also be searched if there is reason to believe that they may have drugs in their possession. Visitors' hand luggage is routinely searched. The police are called in if intelligence suggests that a particular visitor intends to smuggle drugs in to a prison. We have increased the number of prison dogs trained to detect drugs. And the Prison Service College have produced a drugs training package, which has been sent to all prisons, to help staff detect and identify drugs that find their way into prisons.

Guidelines on the throughcare of drugs misusers were first published in 1987 and revised and republished in 1991 in the form of circular instruction 12/1991. In addition a multidisciplinary resource manual entitled "Caring for Drug users" was compiled and published last year. Copies of both these documents are available in the Library. The guidelines provide for all prisons to have in place effective arrangements for identifying drug users and providing clinical care and detoxification programmes where necessary. Prisons are also encouraged to make full use of community drug agencies to provide counselling and preventative training; to ensure that drug users are given every possible opportunity to identify themselves; and to ensure that, where necessary, contact is maintained with community based drug agencies following discharge.

Wolds Remand Centre

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if a race relations officer has been appointed at the Wolds remand centre; and what training has been given on racism and race issues to prison officers at the Wolds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A race relations officer has been appointed at Wolds remand prison. All prisoner custody officers there must receive training in prisoner management which includes a minimum of four hours on racism and race issues during basic training and a further four hours of "anti-discriminatory" training during development training.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates are currently held at the Wolds remand centre; and what percentage are from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 5 November 1992, 237 prisoners were unlocked at the Wolds remand prison. Of these 9·7 per cent. were registered as being from ethnic minorities.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons has inspected the Wolds remand centre since its opening; and whether he is afforded the same powers to investigate and comment on all aspects of the establishment as in state managed prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons has not yet inspected the Wolds remand prison. He has exactly the same powers in respect of contracted-out prisons like Wolds as he has in relation to prisons managed by the state.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications were received by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board as a whole between 1979 to 1992; and how many and what proportion were made by *(a)* women, *(b)* members of ethnic minorities and *(c)* ethnic minority women; and if he will provide details of the percentage of applications successful in each category.

Mr. Jack: In the period 1 April 1979 to 31 March 1992 the board received 504,460 applications. I regret that the available records do not separately identify applications made by women or members of ethnic minorities.

Domestic Violence

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many domestic violence units have been established by the police in each of the police force areas per 10,000 women in their area.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Blundeston Prison

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the disturbance at Her Majesty's Prison Blundeston on 17 September; what evidence there is that the disturbance was drugs-related; and what action has been taken subsequent to the disturbance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 17 September there was a disturbance at Blundeston prison which consisted of a series of incidents amongst which were an assault by a prisoner upon another, three prisoners barricading themselves in an empty wing, and two fires. The fires were not related to the other incidents.

There is no firm evidence that the disturbance was drug related.

An inquiry has been held into these incidents as a result of which disciplinary charges have been laid against four prisoners; a charge under the prison service code of discipline has been laid against a prison officer; the prison's contingency plans have been amended and fire-fighting equipment replaced.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing for each police force area in England and Wales, and for the whole of England and Wales, the number of notifiable offences in the 12 months ended *(a)* June 1990, *(b)* June 1991 and *(c)* June 1992 and the percentage increase over the previous year in each case.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* The required information is published in table 6 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 31/90, table 2 of Bulletin 18/91 and table 2 of Bulletin 31/92, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing, for each category of crime *(a)* the number of notifiable offences recorded in each police authority area in the year to March 1992, and England and Wales as a total, *(b)* the figure for the 12 months to March 1991 and *(c)* the percentage increases in each case.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 28 October 1992]:* The information requested is contained in the following tables:

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area

Violence against the person

Police force area	*April 1990 to March 1991*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Change Number*	*Change Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	5,346	5,386	40	0·75
Bedfordshire	2,224	1,822	−402	−18·08
Cambridgeshire	2,440	2,509	69	2·83
Cheshire	2,440	2,673	233	9·55
Cleveland	2,721	2,696	−25	−0·92
Cumbria	1,963	1,854	−109	−5·55
Derbyshire	3,630	3,881	251	6·91
Devon and Cornwall	3,599	3,704	105	2·92
Dorset	1,564	1,483	−81	−5·18
Durham	2,131	2,242	111	5·21
Essex	4,054	4,028	−26	−0·64
Gloucestershire	1,533	1,565	32	2·09
Greater Manchester	8,889	9,518	629	7·08
Hampshire	4,188	4,933	745	17·79
Hertfordshire	1,732	1,794	62	3·58
Humberside	5,008	5,074	66	1·32
Kent	3,684	4,662	978	26·55
Lancashire	2,971	3,069	98	3·30
Leicestershire	3,123	3,475	352	11·27
Lincolnshire	2,119	2,081	−38	−1·79
City of London	189	146	−43	−22·75
Merseyside	5,406	6,417	1,011	18·70
Metropolitan Police District	36,495	38,346	1,851	5·07
Norfolk	1,891	1,883	−8	−0·42
Northamptonshire	2,102	2,011	−91	−4·33
Northumbria	5,541	5,809	268	4·84
North Yorkshire	2,021	2,150	129	6·38
Nottinghamshire	7,610	7,616	6	0·08
South Yorkshire	4,848	4,655	−193	−3·98
Staffordshire	5,354	5,594	240	4·48
Suffolk	1,725	1,949	224	12·99
Surrey	1,839	1,767	−72	−3·92
Sussex	3,280	3,220	−60	−1·83
Thames Valley	4,542	4,521	−21	−0·46
Warwickshire	1,096	1,215	119	10·86
West Mercia	3,371	3,111	−260	−7·71
West Midlands	10,244	10,984	740	7·22
West Yorkshire	9,347	10,136	789	8·44
Wiltshire	2,191	2,269	78	3·56
England	174,451	182,248	7,797	4·47
Dyfed-Powys	1,839	2,032	193	10·49
Gwent	2,108	2,230	122	5·79

Police force area	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Change Number	Change Percentage
North Wales	2,402	2,546	144	6·00
South Wales	4,481	5,180	699	15·60
Wales	10,830	11,988	1,158	10·69
England & Wales	185,281	194,236	8,955	4·83

Sexual offences

Police force area	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Change Number	Change Percentage
Avon and Somerset	672	686	14	2·08
Bedfordshire	327	321	−6	−1·83
Cambridgeshire	382	432	50	13·09
Cheshire	378	481	103	27·25
Cleveland	301	299	−2	−0·66
Cumbria	304	212	−92	−30·26
Derbyshire	488	444	−44	−9·02
Devon and Cornwall	824	751	−73	−8·86
Dorset	272	385	113	41·54
Durham	407	430	23	5·65
Essex	640	535	−105	−16·41
Gloucestershire	297	313	16	5·39
Greater Manchester	1,347	1,469	122	9·06
Hampshire	1,014	1,132	118	11·64
Hertfordshire	347	361	14	4·03
Humberside	854	883	29	3·40
Kent	734	958	224	30·52
Lancashire	606	563	−43	−7·10
Leicestershire	398	394	−4	−1·01
Lincolnshire	469	306	−163	−34·75
City of London	17	38	21	123·53
Merseyside	718	744	26	3·62
Metropolitan Police District	5,354	5,485	131	2·45
Norfolk	370	419	49	13·24
Northamptonshire	298	261	−37	−12·42
Northumbria	675	683	8	1·19
North Yorkshire	267	246	−21	−7·87
Nottinghamshire	1,083	1,121	38	3·51
South Yorkshire	612	630	18	2·94
Staffordshire	468	527	59	12·61
Suffolk	371	435	64	17·25
Surrey	363	457	94	25·90
Sussex	819	764	−55	−6·72
Thames Valley	830	959	129	15·54
Warwickshire	213	158	−55	−25·82
West Mercia	443	525	82	18·51
West Midlands	1,521	1,598	77	5·06
West Yorkshire	1,624	1,614	−10	−0·62
Wiltshire	425	371	−54	−12·71
England	27,532	28,390	858	3·12
Dyfed-Powys	339	366	27	7·96
Gwent	307	280	−27	−8·79
North Wales	346	420	74	21·39
South Wales	524	521	−3	−0·57
Wales	1,516	1,587	71	4·68
England & Wales	29,048	29,977	929	3·20

Robbery

Police force area	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Change Number	Change Percentage
Avon and Somerset	1,123	1,138	15	1·34
Bedfordshire	504	644	140	27·78
Cambridgeshire	198	259	61	30·81
Cheshire	143	249	106	74·13
Cleveland	127	212	85	66·93

Police force area	*April 1990 to March 1991*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Change*	
			Number	*Percentage*
Cumbria	57	91	34	59·65
Derbyshire	175	306	131	74·86
Devon and Cornwall	197	278	81	41·12
Dorset	131	127	−4	−3·05
Durham	111	147	36	32·43
Essex	395	405	10	2·53
Gloucestershire	173	285	112	64·74
Greater Manchester	2,587	3,669	1,082	41·82
Hampshire	401	469	68	16·96
Hertfordshire	217	263	46	21·20
Humberside	245	313	68	27·76
Kent	378	534	156	41·27
Lancashire	314	440	126	40·13
Leicestershire	456	734	278	60·96
Lincolnshire	68	77	9	13·24
City of London	56	69	13	23·21
Merseyside	1,697	1,887	190	11·20
Metropolitan Police District	18,599	22,535	3,936	21·16
Norfolk	150	218	68	45·33
Northamptonshire	175	318	143	81·71
Northumbria	585	881	296	50·60
North Yorkshire	81	130	49	60·49
Nottinghamshire	741	925	184	24·83
South Yorkshire	492	586	94	19·11
Staffordshire	223	329	106	47·53
Suffolk	101	140	39	38·61
Surrey	142	189	47	33·10
Sussex	432	478	46	10·65
Thames Valley	697	868	171	24·53
Warwickshire	86	124	38	44·19
West Mercia	153	203	50	32·68
West Midlands	3,155	4,312	1,157	36·67
West Yorkshire	1,270	2,171	901	70·94
Wiltshire	108	113	5	4·63
England	36,943	47,116	10,173	27·54
Dyfed-Powys	33	42	9	27·27
Gwent	92	127	35	38·04
North Wales	93	94	1	1·08
South Wales	244	358	114	46·72
Wales	462	621	159	34·42
England and Wales	37,405	47,737	10,332	27·62

Burglary

Police force area	*April 1990 to March 1991*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Change*	
			Number	*Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	28,785	33,210	4,425	15·37
Bedfordshire	12,289	13,800	1,511	12·30
Cambridgeshire	8,713	12,712	3,999	45·90
Cheshire	14,217	17,871	3,654	25·70
Cleveland	16,466	18,979	2,513	15·26
Cumbria	8,385	11,286	2,901	34·60
Derbyshire	14,116	19,540	5,424	38·42
Devon and Cornwall	23,327	25,929	2,602	11·15
Dorset	8,090	9,457	1,367	16·90
Durham	12,086	13,764	1,678	13·88
Essex	21,084	25,975	4,927	23·41
Gloucestershire	10,147	13,442	3,295	32·47
Greater Manchester	90,342	100,884	10,542	11·67
Hampshire	26,992	33,233	6,241	23·12
Hertfordshire	9,550	11,262	1,712	17·93
Humberside	27,707	34,075	6,368	22·98
Kent	21,103	28,152	7,049	33·40
Lancashire	22,768	26,107	3,339	14·67
Leicestershire	17,333	22,372	5,039	29·07
Lincolnshire	8,417	9,656	1,239	14·72
City of London	1,007	1,026	19	1·89
Merseyside	33,139	34,087	948	2·86
Metropolitan Police District	177,057	194,936	17,879	10·10
Norfolk	12,987	15,903	2,916	22·45

Police force area	*April 1990 to March 1991*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Change*	
			Number	*Percentage*
Northamptonshire	10,091	12,492	2,401	23·79
Northumbria	56,384	68,392	12,008	21·30
North Yorkshire	9,970	13,241	3,271	32·81
Nottinghamshire	25,788	32,428	6,640	25·75
South Yorkshire	28,675	36,531	7,856	27·40
Staffordshire	19,839	24,307	4,468	22·52
Suffolk	7,248	8,167	919	12·68
Surrey	10,529	11,450	921	8·75
Sussex	23,980	26,579	2,599	10·84
Thames Valley	28,816	35,686	6,8870	23·84
Warwickshire	7,718	11,273	3,555	46·06
West Mercia	11,132	15,237	4,105	36·88
West Midlands	70,309	89,158	18,849	26·81
West Yorkshire	62,342	83,971	21,629	34·69
Wiltshire	6,674	8,382	1,708	25·59
England	1,005,566	1,204,952	199,386	19·83
Dyfed-Powys	3,862	5,019	1,157	29·96
Gwent	5,715	7,914	2,199	38·48
North Wales	8,568	10,943	2,375	27·72
South Wales	29,648	37,618	7,970	26·88
Wales	47,793	61,494	13,701	28·67
England and Wales	1,053,359	1,266,446	213,087	20·23

Theft and handling stolen goods

Police force area	*April 1990 to March 1991*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Change*	
			Number	*Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	74,825	82,892	8,067	10·78
Bedfordshire	32,659	30,285	−2,374	−7·27
Cambridgeshire	27,985	35,949	7,964	28·46
Cheshire	28,582	35,978	7,396	25·8
Cleveland	41,286	44,017	2,731	6·61
Cumbria	18,746	22,963	4,217	22·50
Derbyshire	32,549	41,445	8,896	27·33
Devon and Cornwall	51,285	57,251	5,966	11·63
Dorset	30,350	29,257	−1,093	−3.60
Durham	28,674	33,699	5,025	17·52
Essex	54,330	61,007	6,677	12·29
Gloucestershire	25,124	35,116	9,992	39·77
Greater Manchester	174,371	194,749	20,378	11·69
Hampshire	69,762	83,345	13,583	19·47
Hertfordshire	26,917	33,126	6,209	23·07
Humberside	53,295	58,971	5,676	10·65
Kent	62,064	85,112	23,048	37·14
Lancashire	56,884	67,126	10,242	18·01
Leicestershire	41,962	49,241	7,279	17·35
Lincolnshire	22,710	25,281	2,571	11·32
City of London	4,969	5,049	80	1·61
Merseyside	71,444	78,096	6,652	9·31
Metropolitan Police District	422,089	466,983	44,894	10·64
Norfolk	31,495	37,071	5,576	17·70
Northamptonshire	27,074	30,632	3,558	13·14
Northumbria	97,656	99,276	1,620	1·66
North Yorkshire	28,644	30,210	1,566	5·47
Nottinghamshire	77,675	86,273	8,598	11·07
South Yorkshire	56,193	64,131	7,938	14·13
Staffordshire	35,462	42,519	7,057	19·90
Suffolk	20,088	23,391	3,303	16·44
Surrey	23,825	28,699	4,874	20·46
Sussex	55,720	64,068	8,348	14·98
Thames Valley	92,927	117,982	25,055	26·96
Warwickshire	19,659	22,278	2,619	13·32
West Mercia	36,734	42,959	6,225	16·95
West Midlands	138,274	150,723	12,449	9·00
West Yorkshire	129,829	153,871	24,042	18·52
Wiltshire	19,298	21,253	1,955	10·13
England	2,343,415	2,672,274	328,859	14·03
Dyfed-Powys	10,675	14,283	3,608	33·80

Police force area	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Change Number	Change Percentage
Gwent	17,927	21,844	3,917	21·85
North Wales	19,531	22,437	2,906	14·88
South Wales	76,933	82,642	5,709	7·42
Wales	125,066	141,206	16,140	12·91
England and Wales	2,468,481	2,813,480	344,999	13·98

Fraud and forgery

Police force area	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Change Number	Change Percentage
Avon and Somerset	6,947	6,623	−324	−4·66
Bedfordshire	2,505	2,313	−192	−7·66
Cambridgeshire	1,488	1,790	302	20·30
Cheshire	1,714	2,236	522	30·46
Cleveland	2,008	1,814	−194	−9·66
Cumbria	853	962	109	12·78
Derbyshire	1,223	1,277	54	4·42
Devon and Cornwall	3,952	3,693	−259	−6·55
Dorset	3,509	3,713	204	5·81
Durham	2,118	2,250	132	6·23
Essex	2,951	3,457	506	17·15
Gloucestershire	1,597	2,135	538	33·69
Greater Manchester	11,214	11,921	707	6·30
Hampshire	5,174	5,453	279	5·39
Hertfordshire	1,547	1,549	2	0·13
Humberside	2,993	3,374	381	12·73
Kent	2,731	3,887	1,156	42·33
Lancashire	3,317	3,456	139	4·19
Leicestershire	2,308	2,934	626	27·12
Lincolnshire	1,108	1,363	255	23·01
City of London	626	585	−41	−6·55
Merseyside	4,217	5,726	1,509	35·78
Metropolitan Police District	37,896	44,348	6,452	17·03
Norfolk	1,446	1,776	330	22·82
Northamptonshire	1,285	1,531	246	19·14
Northumbria	3,209	3,647	438	13·65
North Yorkshire	1,006	1,180	174	17·30
Nottinghamshire	3,436	3,846	410	11·93
South Yorkshire	2,070	2,054	−16	−0·77
Staffordshire	1,724	1,972	248	14·39
Suffolk	1,829	2,201	372	20·34
Surrey	1,838	2,134	296	16·10
Sussex	3,758	4,561	803	21·37
Thames Valley	5,696	7,727	2,031	35·66
Warwickshire	978	1,223	245	25·05
West Mercia	1,343	1,430	87	6·48
West Midlands	6,530	7,736	1,206	18·47
West Yorkshire	5,949	6,945	996	16·74
Wiltshire	1,554	1,679	125	8·04
England	147,647	168,501	20,854	14·12
Dyfed-Powys	1,357	1,192	−165	−12·16
Gwent	1,172	1,063	−109	−9·30
North Wales	1,198	1,436	238	19·87
South Wales	3,164	3,615	451	14·25
Wales	6,891	7,306	415	6·02
England and Wales	154,538	175,807	21,269	13·76

Criminal damage

Police force area	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Change Number	Change Percentage
Avon and Somerset	17,969	19,277	1,308	7·28
Bedfordshire	7,717	8,168	451	5·84
Cambridgeshire	5,502	6,838	1,336	24·28
Cheshire	8,917	9,794	877	9·84

Police force area	*April 1990 to March 1991*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Change Number*	*Change Percentage*
Cleveland	11,158	12,791	1,633	14·64
Cumbria	6,136	8,052	1,916	31·23
Derbyshire	11,217	12,748	1,531	13·65
Devon and Cornwall	13,503	14,706	1,203	8·91
Dorset	5,293	5,526	233	4·40
Durham	11,645	13,336	1,691	14·52
Essex	14,527	16,392	1,865	12·84
Gloucestershire	5,264	5,459	195	3·70
Greater Manchester	59,533	64,661	5,128	8·61
Hampshire	17,285	19,927	2,642	15·28
Hertfordshire	8,203	8,759	556	6·78
Humberside	16,490	17,630	1,140	6·91
Kent	17,618	22,974	5,356	30·40
Lancashire	21,490	26,716	5,226	24·32
Leicestershire	11,061	12,466	1,405	12·70
Lincolnshire	5,848	6,704	856	14·64
City of London	443	419	−24	−5·42
Merseyside	22,374	23,579	1,205	5·39
Metropolitan Police District	148,140	165,783	17,643	11·91
Norfolk	7,379	8,461	1,082	14·66
Northamptonshire	9,676	11,663	1,987	20·54
Northumbria	42,466	48,416	5,950	14·01
North Yorkshire	5,208	5,661	453	8·70
Nottinghamshire	20,932	23,077	2,145	10·25
South Yorkshire	16,825	19,717	2,892	17·19
Staffordshire	11,145	12,873	1,728	15·50
Suffolk	6,528	5,500	−1,028	−15·75
Surrey	5,956	6,483	527	8·85
Sussex	11,864	12,951	1,087	9·16
Thames Valley	22,284	26,562	4,278	19·2
Warwickshire	4,909	5,113	204	4·16
West Mercia	11,573	11,346	−227	−1·96
West Midlands	39,771	46,256	6,485	16·31
West Yorkshire	37,843	44,704	6,861	18·13
Wiltshire	5,565	5,547	−18	−0·32
England	707,257	797,035	89,778	12·69
Dyfed-Powys	3,957	5,077	1,120	28·30
Gwent	5,570	6,144	574	10·31
North Wales	7,233	7,604	371	5·13
South Wales	29,573	33,466	3,893	13·16
Wales	46,333	52,291	5,958	12·86
England and Wales	753,590	849,326	95,736	12·70

Other offences

Police force area	*April 1990 to March 1991*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Change Number*	*Change Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	716	741	25	3·49
Bedfordshire	297	211	−86	−28·96
Cambridgeshire	281	287	6	2·14
Cheshire	894	1,144	250	27·96
Cleveland	323	306	−17	−5·26
Cumbria	170	318	148	87·06
Derbyshire	467	565	98	20·99
Devon and Cornwall	435	560	125	28·74
Dorset	703	674	−29	−4·13
Durham	325	407	82	25·23
Essex	654	658	4	0·61
Gloucestershire	257	376	119	46·30
Greater Manchester	2,071	2,559	488	23·56
Hampshire	839	1,041	202	24·08
Hertfordshire	406	399	−7	−1·72
Humberside	354	524	170	48·02
Kent	902	1,112	210	23·28
Lancashire	972	1,088	116	11·93
Leicestershire	321	437	116	36·14
Lincolnshire	369	502	133	36·04
City of London	83	64	−19	−22·89
Merseyside	1,616	1,820	204	12·62
Metropolitan Police District	6,724	6,913	189	2·81

Police force area	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Change Number	Change Percentage
Norfolk	329	447	118	35·87
Northamptonshire	257	340	83	32·30
Northumbria	760	767	7	0·92
North Yorkshire	317	369	52	16·40
Nottinghamshire	708	560	−148	−20·90
South Yorkshire	739	1,072	333	45·06
Staffordshire	363	311	−52	−14·33
Suffolk	535	548	13	2·43
Surrey	287	246	−41	−14·29
Sussex	1,110	1,213	103	9·28
Thames Valley	963	1,068	105	10·90
Warwickshire	193	235	42	21·76
West Mercia	542	474	−68	−12·55
West Midlands	1,557	1,633	76	4·88
West Yorkshire	1,568	2,281	713	45·47
Wiltshire	269	392	123	45·72
England	30,676	34,662	3,986	12·99
Dyfed-Powys	211	239	28	13·27
Gwent	244	300	56	22·95
North Wales	271	337	66	24·35
South Wales	711	786	75	10·55
Wales	1,437	1,662	225	15·66
England and Wales	32,113	36,324	4,211	13·11

All offences

Police force area	April 1990 to March 1991	April 1991 to March 1992	Change Number	Change Percentage
Avon and Somerset	136,383	149,953	13,570	9·95
Bedfordshire	58,522	57,564	−958	−1·64
Cambridgeshire	46,989	60,776	13,787	29·34
Cheshire	57,285	70,426	13,141	22·94
Cleveland	74,390	81,114	6,724	9·04
Cumbria	36,614	45,738	9,124	24·92
Derbyshire	63,865	80,206	16,341	25·59
Devon and Cornwall	97,122	106,872	9,750	10·04
Dorset	49,912	50,622	710	1·42
Durham	57,497	66,275	8,778	15·27
Essex	98,599	112,457	13,858	14·05
Gloucestershire	44,392	58,691	14,299	32·21
Greater Manchester	350,354	389,430	39,076	11·15
Hampshire	125,655	149,533	23,878	19·00
Hertfordshire	48,919	57,513	8,594	17·57
Humberside	106,946	120,844	13,898	13·00
Kent	109,214	147,391	38,177	34·96
Lancashire	109,322	128,565	19,243	17·60
Leicestershire	76,962	92,053	15,091	19·61
Lincolnshire	41,108	45,970	4,862	11·83
City Of London	7,390	7,396	6	0·08
Merseyside	140,611	152,356	11,745	8·35
Metropolitan Police District	852,354	945,329	92,975	10·91
Norfolk	56,047	66,178	10,131	18·08
Northamptonshire	50,958	59,248	8,290	16·27
Northumbria	207,276	227,871	20,595	9·94
North Yorkshire	47,514	53,187	5,673	11·94
Nottinghamshire	137,973	155,846	17,873	12·95
South Yorkshire	110,454	129,376	18,922	17·13
Staffordshire	74,578	88,432	13,854	18·58
Suffolk	38,425	42,331	3,906	10·17
Surrey	44,779	51,425	6,646	14·84
Sussex	100,963	113,834	12,871	12·75
Thames Valley	156,755	195,373	38,618	24·64
Warwickshire	34,852	41,619	6,767	19·42
West Mercia	65,291	75,285	9,994	15·31
West Midlands	271,361	312,400	41,039	15·12
West Yorkshire	249,772	305,693	55,921	22·39
Wiltshire	36,084	40,006	3,922	10·87
England	4,473,487	5,135,178	661,691	14·79

Police force area	*April 1990 to March 1991*	*April 1991 to March 1992*	*Change* Number	Percentage
Dyfed-Powys	22,273	28,250	5,977	26·84
Gwent	33,135	39,902	6,767	20·42
North Wales	39,642	45,817	6,175	15·58
South Wales	145,278	164,186	18,908	13·02
Wales	240,328	278,155	37,827	15·74
England and Wales	4,713,815	5,413,333	699,518	14·84

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing for each category of crime *(a)* the number of notifiable offences recorded in each police authority area in the year to June 1992, and in England and Wales as a whole, *(b)* the figure for the 12 months to June 1991 and *(c)* the percentage increase in each case.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* The information requested is contained in the following tables:

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area

Violence against the person

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change* Number	Percentage
Avon and Somerset	5,537	5,321	−216	−3·90
Bedfordshire	2,102	1,804	−298	−14·18
Cambridgeshire	2,431	2,628	197	8·10
Cheshire	2,496	2,641	145	5·81
Cleveland	2,747	2,664	−83	−3·02
Cumbria	1,963	1,873	−90	−4·58
Derbyshire	3,708	3,958	250	6·74
Devon and Cornwall	3,621	3,809	188	5·19
Dorset	1,566	1,480	−86	−5·49
Durham	2,065	2,345	280	13·56
Essex	3,929	4,201	272	6·92
Gloucestershire	1,566	1,570	4	0·26
Greater Manchester	8,879	9,914	1,035	11·66
Hampshire	4,193	5,186	993	23·68
Hertfordshire	1,727	1,892	165	9·55
Humberside	5,031	5,141	110	2·19
Kent	3,839	5,129	1,290	33·60
Lancashire	2,966	3,198	232	7·82
Leicestershire	3,163	3,572	409	12·93
Lincolnshire	2,135	2,099	−36	−1·69
City of London	173	226	53	30·64
Merseyside	5,542	6,811	1,269	22·90
Metropolitan Police District	36,947	38,503	1,556	4·21
Norfolk	1,956	1,854	−102	−5·21
Northamptonshire	2,001	2,212	211	10·54
Northumbria	5,712	6,023	311	5·44
North Yorkshire	2,095	2,115	20	0·95
Nottinghamshire	7,542	7,994	452	5·99
South Yorkshire	4,720	4,776	56	1·19
Staffordshire	5,367	5,683	316	5·89
Suffolk	1,785	1,974	189	10·59
Surrey	1,845	1,882	37	2·01
Sussex	3,240	3,237	−3	−0·09
Thames Valley	4,451	4,754	303	6·81
Warwickshire	1,091	1,278	187	17·14
West Mercia	3,144	3,259	115	3·66
West Midlands	10,435	11,415	980	9·39
West Yorkshire	9,692	10,038	346	3·57
Wiltshire	2,118	2,488	370	17·47
England	175,520	186,947	11,427	6·51
Dyfed-Powys	1,955	2,107	152	7·77
Gwent	2,022	2,323	301	14·89
North Wales	2,401	2,608	207	8·62
South Wales	4,537	5,519	982	21·64
Wales	10,915	12,557	1,642	15·04
England and Wales	186,435	199,504	13,069	7·01

Sexual offences

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change*	
			Number	*Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	743	614	−129	−17·36
Bedfordshire	331	278	−53	−16·01
Cambridgeshire	400	432	32	8·00
Cheshire	415	492	77	18·55
Cleveland	264	316	52	−19·70
Cumbria	256	215	−41	−16·02
Derbyshire	492	429	−63	−12·80
Devon and Cornwall	791	719	−72	−9·10
Dorset	300	391	91	30·33
Durham	417	443	26	6·24
Essex	603	573	−30	−4·98
Gloucestershire	295	309	14	4·75
Greater Manchester	996	1,465	43	3·02
Hampshire	1,422	1,158	162	16·27
Hertfordshire	371	351	−20	−5·39
Humberside	882	836	−46	−5·22
Kent	699	1,097	398	56·94
Lancashire	634	524	−110	−17·35
Leicestershire	400	392	−8	−2·00
Lincolnshire	434	291	−143	−32·95
City of London	18	41	23	127·78
Merseyside	701	759	58	8·27
Metropolitan Police District	5,437	5,538	101	1·86
Norfolk	419	387	−32	−7·64
Northamptonshire	264	256	−8	−3·03
Northumbria	669	720	51	7·62
North Yorkshire	260	224	−36	−13·85
Nottinghamshire	1,135	1, 102	−33	−2·91
South Yorkshire	618	627	9	1·46
Staffordshire	477	487	10	2·10
Suffolk	401	433	32	7·98
Surrey	383	429	46	12·01
Sussex	733	800	67	9·14
Thames Valley	855	946	91	10·64
Warwickshire	192	178	−14	−7·29
West Mercia	470	498	28	5·96
West Midlands	1,533	1,586	53	3·46
West Yorkshire	1,657	1,506	−151	−9·11
Wiltshire	433	389	−44	−10·16
England	27,800	28,231	431	1·55
Dyfed-Powys	338	363	25	7·40
Gwent	306	271	−35	−11·44
North Wales	378	361	−17	−4·50
South Wales	500	518	18	3·60
Wales	1,522	1,513	−9	−0·59
England and Wales	29,322	29,744	422	1·44

Robbery

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change*	
			Number	*Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	1,204	1,157	−47	−3·90
Bedfordshire	585	558	−27	−4·62
Cambridgeshire	201	271	70	34·83
Cheshire	163	299	136	83·44
Cleveland	149	238	89	59·73
Cumbria	55	100	45	81·82
Derbyshire	205	298	93	45·37
Devon and Cornwall	204	294	90	44·12
Dorset	139	140	1	0·72
Durham	113	156	43	38·05
Essex	389	454	65	16·71
Gloucestershire	192	302	110	57·29
Greater Manchester	2,707	3,882	1,175	43·41
Hampshire	407	509	102	25·06
Hertfordshire	238	278	40	16·81
Humberside	245	330	85	34·69
Kent	424	548	124	29·25
Lancashire	342	470	128	37·43

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change* *Number*	*Percentage*
Leicestershire	505	756	251	49·70
Lincolnshire	64	82	18	28·13
City of London	57	65	8	14·04
Merseyside	1,705	1,963	258	15·13
Metropolitan Police District	19,804	22,970	3,166	15·99
Norfolk	153	226	73	47·71
Northamptonshire	210	317	107	50·95
Northumbria	621	941	320	51·53
North Yorkshire	84	135	51	60·71
Nottinghamshire	775	939	164	21·16
South Yorkshire	476	616	140	29·41
Staffordshire	237	354	117	49·37
Suffolk	106	138	32	30·19
Surrey	138	216	78	56·52
Sussex	458	490	32	6·99
Thames Valley	719	941	222	30·88
Warwickshire	97	133	36	37·11
West Mercia	172	209	37	21·51
West Midlands	3,387	4,531	1,144	33·78
West Yorkshire	1,439	2,386	947	65·81
Wiltshire	116	114	−2	−1·72
England	39,285	48,806	9,521	24·24
Dyfed-Powys	38	48	10	26·32
Gwent	97	121	24	24·74
North Wales	99	102	3	3·03
South Wales	266	375	109	40·98
Wales	500	646	146	29·20
England & Wales	39,785	49,452	9,667	24·30

Burglary

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change* *Number*	*Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	31,351	33,679	2,328	7·43
Bedfordshire	12,605	14,110	1,505	11·94
Cambridgeshire	9,668	13,125	3,457	35·76
Cheshire	14,743	19,001	4,258	28·88
Cleveland	16,496	19,757	3,261	19·77
Cumbria	9,011	11,563	2,552	28·32
Derbyshire	15,892	20,252	4,360	27·44
Devon and Cornwall	24,709	26,922	2,213	8·96
Dorset	8,500	9,631	1,131	13·31
Durham	12,696	13,462	766	6·03
Essex	22,461	26,410	3,949	17·58
Gloucestershire	10,906	14,432	3,526	32·33
Greater Manchester	93,405	100,720	7,315	7·83
Hampshire	29,208	32,963	3,755	12·86
Hertfordshire	10,254	11,548	1,294	12·62
Humberside	29,238	34,538	5,300	18·13
Kent	23,507	29,126	5,619	23·90
Lancashire	23,036	26,263	3,227	14·01
Leicestershire	18,943	22,262	3,319	17·52
Lincolnshire	8,547	10,150	1,603	18·76
City of London	1,077	1,000	−77	−7·15
Merseyside	33,799	33,742	−57	−0·17
Metropolitan Police District	182,485	194,338	11,853	6·50
Norfolk	13,510	16,225	2,715	20·10
Northamptonshire	11,007	12,401	1,394	12·66
Northumbria	58,995	68,385	9,390	15·92
North Yorkshire	10,836	13,804	2,968	27·39
Nottinghamshire	27,735	33,121	5,386	19·42
South Yorkshire	31,035	38,076	7,041	22·69
Staffordshire	21,612	25,318	3,706	17·15
Suffolk	7,417	8,403	986	13·29
Surrey	11,253	11,521	268	2·38
Sussex	24,637	27,340	2,703	10·97
Thames Valley	31,101	36,174	5,073	16·31
Warwickshire	8,386	11,956	3,570	42·57
West Mercia	12,095	16,102	4,007	33·13
West Midlands	74,163	92,394	18,231	24·58

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change Number*	*Change Percentage*
West Yorkshire	68,126	85,108	16,982	24·93
Wiltshire	7,257	8,595	1,338	18·44
England	1,061,702	1,223,917	162,215	15·28
Dyfed-Powys	4,428	4,999	571	12·90
Gwent	6,328	8,146	1,818	28·73
North Wales	8,872	12,093	3,221	36·31
South Wales	32,475	37,554	5,079	15·64
Wales	52,103	62,792	10,689	20·52
England and Wales	1,113,805	1,286,709	172,904	15·52

Theft and handling stolen goods

Police force area	*July 1990 to July 1991*	*June 1991 to June 1992*	*Change Number*	*Change Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	80,350	85,086	4,736	5·89
Bedfordshire	32,116	29,524	−2,592	−8·07
Cambridgeshire	30,316	36,512	6,196	20·44
Cheshire	29,392	36,854	7,462	25·39
Cleveland	41,740	45,018	3,278	7·85
Cumbria	20,503	21,992	1,489	7·26
Derbyshire	34,448	43,352	8,904	25·85
Devon and Cornwall	53,648	58,403	4,755	8·86
Dorset	31,138	29,187	−1,951	−6·27
Durham	30,714	33,843	3,129	10·19
Essex	57,202	61,954	4,752	8·31
Gloucestershire	26,280	36,670	10,390	39·54
Greater Manchester	184,125	191,642	7,517	4·08
Hampshire	73,752	83,961	10,209	13·84
Hertfordshire	28,417	33,262	4,845	17·05
Humberside	54,725	59,696	4,971	9·08
Kent	69,297	86,190	16,893	24·38
Lancashire	59,323	68,388	9,065	15·28
Leicestershire	44,860	49,843	4,983	11·11
Lincolnshire	24,146	24,927	781	3·23
City of London	5,133	4,954	−179	−3·49
Merseyside	73,480	78,131	4,651	6·33
Metropolitan Police District	434,816	465,768	30,952	7·12
Norfolk	32,961	37,097	4,136	12·55
Northamptonshire	28,710	30,319	1,609	5·60
Northumbria	99,992	96,144	−3,848	−3·85
North Yorkshire	29,256	30,453	1,197	4·09
Nottinghamshire	80,910	87,047	6,137	7·58
South Yorkshire	57,963	65,225	7,262	12·53
Staffordshire	37,975	43,555	5,580	14·69
Suffolk	20,745	23,625	2,880	13·88
Surrey	25,606	29,480	3,874	15·13
Sussex	58,459	65,585	7,126	12·19
Thames Valley	101,034	118,464	17,430	17·25
Warwickshire	20,807	22,577	1,770	8·51
West Mercia	37,954	44,685	6,731	17·73
West Midlands	142,192	150,562	8,370	5·89
West Yorkshire	138,419	151,597	13,178	9·52
Wiltshire	19,804	21,436	1,632	8·24
England	2,452,708	2,683,008	230,300	9·39
Dyfed-Powys	11,619	14,753	3,134	26·97
Gwent	19,362	22,291	2,929	15·13
North Wales	20,473	23,094	2,621	12·80
South Wales	79,157	82,789	3,632	4·59
Wales	130,611	142,927	12,316	9·43
England and Wales	2,583,319	2,825,935	242,616	9·39

Fraud and forgery

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change Number*	*Change Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	7,247	6,248	−999	13·79
Bedfordshire	2,357	2,252	−105	−4·45
Cambridgeshire	1,654	1,712	58	3·51
Cheshire	1,754	2,330	576	32·84
Cleveland	1,992	1,743	−249	12·50
Cumbria	901	949	48	5·33
Derbyshire	1,150	1,330	180	15·65
Devon and Cornwall	4,085	3,627	−458	−11·21
Dorset	3,353	3,885	532	15·87
Durham	2,071	2,429	358	17·29
Essex	3,088	3,673	585	18·94
Gloucestershire	1,678	2,230	552	32·90
Greater Manchester	11,624	12,227	603	5·19
Hampshire	5,518	5,403	−115	−2·08
Hertfordshire	1,531	1,560	29	1·89
Humberside	3,166	3,208	42	1·33
Kent	3,071	4,071	1,000	32·56
Lancashire	3,310	3,665	355	10·73
Leicestershire	2,577	2,984	407	15·79
Lincolnshire	1,137	1,363	226	19·88
City of London	643	526	−177	−18·20
Merseyside	4,629	5,489	860	18·58
Metropolitan Police District	42,129	42,623	494	1·17
Norfolk	1,551	1,838	287	18·50
Northamptonshire	1,431	1,589	158	11·04
Northumbria	3,418	3,632	214	6·26
North Yorkshire	1,009	1,203	194	19·23
Nottinghamshire	3,547	3,898	351	9·90
South Yorkshire	1,998	2,059	61	3·05
Staffordshire	1,802	2,106	304	16·87
Suffolk	1,943	1,997	54	2·78
Surrey	2,014	2,134	120	5·96
Sussex	3,934	4,406	472	12·00
Thames Valley	6,364	7,776	1,412	22·19
Warwickshire	1,058	1,256	198	18·71
West Mercia	1,410	1,405	−5	−0·35
West Midlands	6,878	7,903	1,025	14·90
West Yorkshire	6,530	6,768	238	3·64
Wiltshire	1,637	1,758	121	7·39
England	157,189	167,255	10,066	6·40
Dyfed-Powys	1,318	1,184	−134	−10·17
Gwent	1,130	1,093	−37	−3·27
North Wales	1,230	1,417	187	15·20
South Wales	3,344	3,640	296	8·85
Wales	7,022	7,334	312	4·44
England and Wales	164,211	174,589	10,378	6·32

Criminal damage

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change Number*	*Change Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	18,761	18,470	−291	−1·55
Bedfordshire	7,525	8,078	553	7·35
Cambridgeshire	5,912	6,851	939	15·88
Cheshire	8,874	10,051	1,177	13·26
Cleveland	11,586	12,900	1,314	11·34
Cumbria	6,606	7,912	1,306	19·77
Derbyshire	11,302	13,471	2,169	19·19
Devon and Cornwall	13,874	15,164	1,290	9·30
Dorset	5,366	5,644	278	5·18
Durham	12,095	13,134	1,039	8·59
Essex	14,812	16,709	1,897	12·81
Gloucestershire	5,382	5,439	57	1·06
Greater Manchester	61,798	63,931	2,133	3·45
Hampshire	17,605	20,693	3,088	17·54
Hertfordshire	8,199	8,989	790	9·64
Humberside	16,359	18,223	1,864	11·39
Kent	19,397	23,650	4,253	21·93
Lancashire	24,020	23,932	−88	−0·37

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change*	
			Number	*Percentage*
Leicestershire	11,614	12,408	794	6·84
Lincolnshire	5,952	6,925	973	16·35
City of London	441	414	−27	−6·12
Merseyside	22,689	23,903	1,214	5·35
Metropolitan Police District	152,823	166,476	13,653	8·93
Norfolk	7,617	8,531	914	12·00
Northamptonshire	10,005	11,691	1,686	16·85
Northumbria	44,974	48,994	4,020	8·94
North Yorkshire	5,177	5,726	549	10·60
Nottinghamshire	21,564	23,654	2,090	9·69
South Yorkshire	17,552	19,935	2,383	13·58
Staffordshire	11,647	12,982	1,335	11·46
Suffolk	6,228	6,029	−199	−3·20
Surrey	6,108	6,724	616	10·09
Sussex	12,019	13,471	1,452	12·08
Thames Valley	23,634	27,432	3,798	16·07
Warwickshire	4,873	5,300	427	8·76
West Mercia	11,491	11,395	−96	−0·84
West Midlands	39,922	47,426	7,504	18·80
West Yorkshire	39,561	44,571	5,010	12·66
Wiltshire	5,329	5,849	520	9·76
England	730,693	803,077	72,384	9·91
Dyfed-Powys	4,315	5,257	942	21·83
Gwent	5,897	6,057	160	2·71
North Wales	7,294	7,742	448	6·14
South Wales	30,785	33,843	3,058	9·93
Wales	48,291	52,899	4,608	9·54
England and Wales	778,984	855,976	76,992	9·88

Other offences

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change*	
			Number	*Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	752	692	-60	-7·98
Bedfordshire	289	214	-75	-25·95
Cambridgeshire	288	301	13	4·51
Cheshire	1,001	1,175	174	17·38
Cleveland	329	283	-46	-13·98
Cumbria	208	326	118	56·73
Derbyshire	459	571	112	24·40
Devon and Cornwall	434	629	195	44·93
Dorset	656	717	61	9·30
Durham	318	445	127	39·94
Essex	670	653	-17	-2·54
Gloucestershire	270	395	125	46·30
Greater Manchester	2,210	2,594	384	17·38
Hampshire	890	1,106	216	24·27
Hertfordshire	404	415	11	2·72
Humberside	378	539	161	42·59
Kent	874	1,329	455	52·06
Lancashire	1,003	1,180	177	17·65
Leicestershire	325	471	146	44·92
Lincolnshire	425	485	60	14·12
City of London	79	70	-9	-11·39
Merseyside	1,637	1,853	216	13·19
Metropolitan Police District	6,819	6,842	23	0·34
Norfolk	361	467	106	29·36
Northamptonshire	290	348	58	20·00
Northumbria	736	810	74	10·05
North Yorkshire	320	413	93	29·06
Nottinghamshire	665	566	-99	-14·89
South Yorkshire	786	1,157	371	47·20
Staffordshire	353	375	22	6·23
Suffolk	523	562	39	7·46
Surrey	292	278	-14	-4·79
Sussex	1,145	1,235	90	7·86
Thames Valley	959	1,082	123	12·83
Warwickshire	193	253	60	31·09
West Mercia	489	498	9	1·84
West Midlands	1,551	1,690	139	8·96

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change* Number	*Change* Percentage
West Yorkshire	1,627	2,380	753	46·28
Wiltshire	295	424	129	43·73
England	31,303	35,823	4,520	14·44
Dyfed-Powys	228	258	30	13·16
Gwent	278	299	21	7·55
North Wales	279	353	74	26·52
South Wales	727	737	10	1·38
Wales	1,512	1,647	135	8·93
England and Wales	32,815	37,470	4,655	14·19

All offences

Police force area	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*	*Change* Number	*Change* Percentage
Avon and Somerset	145,945	151,267	5,322	3·65
Bedfordshire	57,910	56,818	−1,092	−1·89
Cambridgeshire	50,870	61,832	10,962	21·55
Cheshire	58,838	72,843	14,005	23·80
Cleveland	75,303	82,919	7,616	10·11
Cumbria	39,503	44,930	5,427	13·74
Derbyshire	67,656	83,661	16,005	23·66
Devon and Cornwall	101,366	109,567	8,201	8·09
Dorset	51,018	51,075	57	0·11
Durham	60,489	66,257	5,768	9·54
Essex	103,154	114,627	11,473	11·12
Gloucestershire	46,569	61,347	14,778	31·73
Greater Manchester	366,170	386,375	20,205	5·52
Hampshire	132,569	150,979	18,410	13·89
Hertfordshire	51,141	58,295	7,154	13·99
Humberside	110,024	122,511	12,487	11·35
Kent	121,108	151,140	30,032	24·80
Lancashire	114,634	127,620	12,986	11·33
Leicestershire	82,387	92,688	10,301	12·50
Lincolnshire	42,840	46,322	3,482	8·13
City of London	7,621	7,296	−325	−4·26
Merseyside	144,182	152,651	8,469	5·87
Metropolitan Police District	881,260	943,058	61,798	7·01
Norfolk	58,528	66,625	8,097	13·83
Northamptonshire	53,918	59,133	5,215	9·67
Northumbria	215,117	225,649	10,532	4·90
North Yorkshire	49,037	54,073	5,036	10·27
Nottinghamshire	143,873	158,321	14,448	10·04
South Yorkshire	115,148	132,471	17,323	15·04
Staffordshire	79,470	90,860	11,390	14·33
Suffolk	39,148	43,161	4,013	10·25
Surrey	47,639	52,664	5,025	10·55
Sussex	104,625	116,564	11,939	11·41
Thames Valley	169,117	197,569	28,452	16·82
Warwickshire	36,697	42,931	6,234	16·99
West Mercia	67,225	78,051	10,826	16·10
West Midlands	280,061	317,507	37,446	13·37
West Yorkshire	267,051	304,354	37,303	13·97
Wiltshire	36,989	41,053	4,064	10·99
England	4,676,200	5,177,064	500,864	10·71
Dyfed-Powys	24,239	28,969	4,730	19·51
Gwent	35,420	40,601	5,181	14·63
North Wales	41,026	47,770	6,744	16·44
South Wales	151,791	164,975	13,184	8·69
Wales	252,476	282,315	29,839	11·82
England and Wales	4,928,676	5,459,379	530,703	10·77

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing for each police force area in England and Wales and for the whole of England and Wales *(a)* the number of notifiable offences in 1979, *(b)* the number of notifiable offences in 1991 and *(c)* the percentage increase.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: The information requested is contained in the following table:

Notifiable offences recorded by the police force area
England and Wales 1979 and 1991
Numbers and percentages

Police force area	*1979*	*1991*	*Percentage change*
Avon and Somerset	51,333	153,770	199·55
Bedfordshire	28,097	57,121	103·30
Cambridgeshire	24,645	58,167	136·02
Cheshire	30,396	66,298	118·11
Cleveland	34,846	78,053	123·99
Cumbria	19,531	45,088	130·85
Derbyshire	38,640	75,636	95·75
Devon and Cornwall	43,480	108,208	148·87
Dorset	23,260	51,552	121·63
Durham	27,351	65,218	138·45
Essex	54,060	108,427	100·57
Gloucestershire	16,589	55,980	237·45
Greater Manchester	169,749	380,809	124·34
Hampshire	66,910	143,904	115·07
Hertfordshire	38,8001	55,573	43·23
Humberside	48,195	118,830	146·56
Kent	55,370	138,435	150·02
Lancashire	57,105	122,474	114·47
Leicestershire	30,351	89,754	195·72
Lincolnshire	17,539	44,860	155·77
City of London	6,809	7,575	11·25
Merseyside	108,433	148,835	37·26
Metropolitan Police District	557,378	926,203	66·17
Norfolk	22,655	64,115	183·01
Northamptonshire	22,966	58,470	154·59
Northumbria	99,512	226,193	127·30
North Yorkshire	21,887	51,471	135·17
Nottinghamshire	72,659	150,551	107·20
South Yorkshire	56,340	125,559	122·86
Staffordshire	37,952	86,285	127·35
Suffolk	20,152	39,924	98·11
Surrey	26,965	50,083	85·73
Sussex	48,609	112,203	130·83
Thames Valley	75,740	187,185	147·14
Warwickshire	13,986	40,474	189·39
West Mercia	35,088	74,188	111·43
West Midlands	156,671	302,864	93·31
West Yorkshire	128,675	295,479	129·63
Wiltshire	20,545	39,321	91·39
Dyfed-Powys	11,752	25,970	120·98
Gwent	20,498	38,673	88·67
North Wales	23,589	44,418	88·30
South Wales	71,628	161,977	126·14
England and Wales	2,536,737	5,276,173	107·99

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing for each police force area in England and Wales and for the whole of England and Wales the number of notifiable offences in the 12 months ended *(a)* March 1990, *(b)* March 1991 and *(c)* March 1992, and the percentage increase in each case in the previous year.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: Information for the 12 months ended March 1990 compared with the previous 12 months is contained in the table. The remaining information is published in table 2 of Bulletin 13/91 and table 2 of Bulletin 2/92; copies of which are available in the Library.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area
All offences

Police force area	*April 1988 to March 1989*	*April 1989 to March 1990*	*Change*	
			Number	*Percentage*
Avon and Somerset	95,830	104,924	9,094	9·49
Bedfordshire	38,665	40,841	2,176	5·63
Cambridgeshire	33,736	38,677	4,941	14·65
Cheshire	47,090	49,782	2,692	5·72
Cleveland	58,829	63,142	4,313	7·33
Cumbria	26,981	28,251	1,270	4·71
Derbyshire	43,724	51,501	7,777	17·79
Devon and Cornwall	73,474	79,074	5,600	7·62

Police force area	*April 1988 to March 1989*	*April 1989 to March 1990*	*Change* Number	Percentage
Dorset	35,413	42,098	6,685	18·88
Durham	43,621	48,283	4,662	10·69
Essex	71,712	81,193	9,481	13·22
Gloucestershire	32,450	37,477	5,027	15·49
Greater Manchester	290,036	301,078	11,042	3·81
Hampshire	93,376	103,094	9,718	10·41
Hertfordshire	41,694	41,869	175	0·42
Humberside	84,865	95,860	10,995	12·96
Kent	77,721	88,662	10,941	14·08
Lancashire	91,856	96,738	4,882	5·31
Leicestershire	50,655	59,029	8,374	16·53
Lincolnshire	32,293	35,740	3,447	10·67
City of London	6,208	7,203	995	16·03
Merseyside	138,352	136,483	−1,869	−1·35
Metropolitan Police District	716,609	770,363	53,754	7·50
Norfolk	42,075	46,710	4,635	11·02
Northamptonshire	37,598	40,884	3,286	8·74
Northumbria	165,181	188,185	23,004	13·93
North Yorkshire	34,233	37,623	3,390	9·90
Nottinghamshire	96,916	112,345	15,429	15·92
South Yorkshire	88,497	97,799	9,302	10·51
Staffordshire	57,155	62,293	5,138	8·99
Suffolk	29,749	33,084	3,335	11·21
Surrey	31,523	35,098	3,575	11·34
Sussex	67,945	79,430	11,485	16·90
Thames Valley	109,311	127,455	18,144	16·60
Warwickshire	23,263	26,950	3,687	15·85
West Mercia	48,507	55,816	7,309	15·07
West Midlands	231,141	237,684	6,543	2·83
West Yorkshire	177,338	197,877	20,539	11·59
Wiltshire	26,483	28,481	1,998	7·54
England	3,492,105	3,809,096	316,991	9·08
Dyfed-Powys	18,547	18,113	−434	−2·34
Gwent	24,511	26,179	1,668	6·81
North Wales	34,830	34,251	−579	−1·66
South Wales	116,804	121,865	5,061	4·33
Wales	194,692	200,408	5,716	2·94
England and Wales	3,686,797	4,009,504	322,707	8·75

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 10 November 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will review the legal aid scheme to ensure that applicants can be fully represented in preparing submissions to the investors compensation scheme.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Those who meet the financial eligibility criteria may already seek legal advice and assistance in preparing their applications to the investors compensation scheme.

Sentencing

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what studies he has carried out into sentencing for similar offences in different parts of the country; and what plans he has to deal with disparities in sentencing for similar offences by different courts.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

Information about the sentencing practice of Crown court centres and magistrates courts petty sessional divisions is being published by the Secretary of State, in pursuance of his statutory duty under section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to enable persons engaged in the administration of justice to become aware of the financial implications of their decisions. Volume I of an eight-volume publication on costs of the criminal justice system was published on 29 October. It provides information about sentencing including information about sentencing for similar offences, in the Crown court. The remaining volumes will provide information about sentencing in the magistrates courts and will be published shortly. The sentencing profiles revealed in these publications must be read with caution. They cannot reflect what may be underlying differences in the workload and case mix at different courts. Sentencing in individual cases is entirely a matter for the courts in the light of all the circumstances of the offence and subject to the decisions of, and any guidance from, the Court of Appeal. A substantial programme of training on good sentencing practice is provided for both judges and magistrates under the auspices of the Judicial Studies Board.

SCOTLAND

College Merger

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what decision he has reached on the formal date for the merger of *(a)* university of Strathclyde and Jordanhill college and *(b)* Queen's college and Glasgow polytechnic.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Secretary of State and I indicated in our letters approving the two mergers that the necessary steps would be taken to give effect to the mergers in the first half of 1993. My officials are in close touch with each of the institutions concerned about the precise timetable and legislative arrangements for implementing the mergers.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many papers his Department and the Lord Advocate's Department have currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Lang: Neither the Scottish Record Office nor the Lord Advocate's Department has withdrawn papers from the Public Record Office.

Legal Aid

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average time between legal aid work being carried out by lawyers and legal aid fees being paid to them for *(a)* criminal and *(b)* civil legal aid for each of the past 15 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average times, in weeks, taken by the Scottish Legal Aid Board to process accounts for *(a)* criminal and *(b)* civil legal aid work in the years 1987-88 to 1991-92 and the situation at September 1992 are set out in the table. Prior to 1987, the payment of accounts for legal aid work in Scotland was the responsibility of the Law Society of Scotland and the figures for previous years are therefore not readily available. The board does not have figures available for 1987-88. The figures shown include periods of time when the board was awaiting responses from lawyers to its inquiries about accounts.

	(a) Criminal	*(b) Civil*
1988-89	7·55	13·26
1989-90	6·09	13·39
1990-91	5·06	11·65
1991-92	5·59	15·81
April-October 1992	4·44	9·08

School Transport

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement in relation to the provision of home-to-school transport following comments received on the consultation paper, "Competing for Quality: Competition in the Provision of Local Services", published in November 1991.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Scotland, the majority of home-to-school transport is already provided by the private sector, either under competitive tendering arrangements or through other arrangements such as the issuing of bus passes to children. Taking account of the responses to the consultation paper, I have concluded that compulsory competitive tendering need not at this stage be extended to apply to all home-to-school transport. I will, however, keep this position under review.

Charities

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many charities, whose gross income does not exceed £25,000 per annum, will have to conform to the regulations specified in the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1992; if he will list them; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* As a general rule, all Scottish charities must now prepare annual accounts conforming to the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1992.

Where a charity's annual income is £25,000 or more, the statement of accounts must comprise a balance sheet, and an income and expenditure account, and must include a report of its activities. In cases where the annual income is less than £25,000 charities may elect to prepare simpler accounts.

No information is held centrally about the annual income of individual Scottish charities.

Health Service Expenditure

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish for each health board for the current financial year *(a)* the planned capital and revenue expenditure on mental handicap (learning disabilities) services and (b) the value of assets relevant to mental handicap (learning disabilities) services listed in capital asset registers.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 6 November 1992]:* This information is not held centrally.

Hospital Food

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the minimum amount that may be spent per patient per day in purchasing food for in-patients in hospitals.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* There is no minimum amount. It is for each health board to decide on the amount which it considers appropriate to spend on catering services, including food provisions, to meet patient care needs. The board's decision will be informed by advice from dietitians on the dietary requirements of patients in the different care groups.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are taken by his Department to ensure quality control for meals served to in-patients in hospitals.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* Quality control arrangements for meals served to patients is the responsibility of management teams in hospitals. The standards considered appropriate are specified in catering contracts and management teams are responsible for monitoring performance to ensure the contract specifications are met and maintained.

Water Services

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the expenditure by each regional council on *(a)* water and *(b)* sewerage service provision in each of the last five years.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* Revenue expenditure on water and sewerage services by each regional and islands council is given in the tables.

Gross Revenue Expenditure on Scottish Water Services

£ thousands

Authority	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	[1] *1991-92*
Borders	3,479	3,606	5,638	5,383	4,682
Central	11,448	11,549	12,303	13,624	12,498
Dumfries and Galloway	4,718	5,365	5,904	7,271	8,509
Fife	9,207	9,862	10,721	16,426	13,748
Grampian	17,301	18,484	20,017	23,130	27,695
Highland	6,635	7,199	7,890	9,338	9,924
Lothian	21,640	22,374	24,259	27,562	29,442
Strathclyde	63,509	68,050	75,053	76,597	87,874
Tayside	12,663	13,353	15,125	17,477	19,263
Orkney	1,540	1,412	1,177	1,342	1,607
Shetland	1,984	2,040	1,561	1,425	2,945
Western Isles	1,193	1,336	1,502	1,566	1,877
Scotland	155,317	164,630	181,150	201,141	220,034

[1] Estimated.

Gross revenue expenditure on Scottish sewerage services

£ thousand

Authority	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	[1] *1991-92*
Borders	3,191	3,279	3,804	5,873	4,648
Central	9,150	9,159	10,186	11,452	11,365
Dumfries and Galloway	3,805	4,129	4,744	5,481	6,353
Fife	6,462	7,246	8,180	12,144	12,072
Grampian	16,551	18,097	18,463	19,807	23,276
Highland	5,667	6,040	6,601	8,126	8,552
Lothian	21,281	21,438	24,524	27,626	32,528
Strathclyde	61,382	65,867	71,776	78,325	94,496
Tayside	9,295	10,240	11,505	13,551	17,818
Orkney	454	307	439	525	601
Shetland	782	2,776	[illegible]	[illegible]	975

Authority	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	[1]*1991-92*
Western Isles	697	829	889	1,391	995
Scotland	138,717	149,407	161,656	184,701	213,679

[1] Estimated.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in the *(a)* water and *(b)* sewerage services in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: The numbers employed in water and sewerage services in Scotland since 1979 are set out in the table.

Numbers of employees in Scottish Water and Sewerage Services

	Water	*Sewerage*
1979-80[1]	3,592	2,674
1980-81[1]	3,689	2,741
1981-82[1]	3,631	2,634
1982-83[1]	3,484	2,577
1983-84	3,604	2,524
1984-85	3,564	2,516
1985-86	3,546	2,506
1986-87	3,515	2,649
1987-88	3,577	2,660
1988-89	3,491	2,659
1989-90	3,486	2,632
1990-91	3,579	2,643

[1] Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles not included.

Source: The Water Industry—Services and Costs published annually by CIPFA and latterly by CRI.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Forest Clearance

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to investigate the schemes on clearing natural forest to develop timber plantations funded by the Commonwealth Development Corporation in Cote d'Ivoire and Thailand; and if he will ensure that future moneys granted by the Overseas Development Administration in overseas aid do not fund the destruction of natural forests.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Before proposed investments are submitted to the Commonwealth Development Corporation's board for approval they are subject to appraisal, which includes explicit assessments of their environmental and social impact. We have no plans to investigate CDC forestry projects in Thailand. As part of our regular evaluation programme we expect to release shortly an evaluation report on the SODEFOR forestry project in Cote d'Ivoire in which CDC is a co-financier with the World bank and the Government of Cote d'Ivoire. We also expect to release shortly an evaluation synthesis report on six forestry projects including SODEFOR. Our policy is to help and encourage developing countries to manage their forests sustainably.

PRIME MINISTER

Economic Policy

Q9. Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the Government's new economic policy including his forecasts for growth in the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

The Prime Minister: The Government's central objective remains to achieve sustainable and non-inflationary growth. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out details of the Government's economic policy in his Mansion House speech of 30 October. He will be announcing the Government's spending plans and publishing a new forecast for the economy in 1993 in the autumn statement.

Official Statistics

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what provisions are made to ensure that Ministers and others in Government service are not permitted to take personal advantage of access to official statistics before they are published.

The Prime Minister: "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" makes and the civil service code make it clear that both Ministers and civil servants should avoid any conflict of interest between their official duties and private interests. Ministers and civil servants are bound by the provisions of the Companies Securities (Insider Dealing) Act 1985. Copies of "Questions of Procedure" and the code are in the Library.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Pit Closures

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister (1) when he arranged for the telephone line in his office for views on pit closures to be closed and callers told to write instead; and what arrangements he is making for more telephone lines to his office to enable the public to make calls, the substance of which can be logged for record purposes;

(2) if he will publish the telephone numbers to his office which members of the public may telephone if they wish to record protests about pit closures and other matters; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I do not propose to change the existing practice.

TRANSPORT

Radioactivity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish details of radioactive sources or materials that are known to have escaped the official control regime while in transit within the United Kingdom and its territorial waters.

Mr. Norris: A database on accidents and incidents occurring in the transport of radioactive materials is maintained by the National Radiological Protection Board. I am placing copies of the relevant reports in the Library of the House.

Pedestrians

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the advice on grade separation for pedestrians promised in departmental advice note 57/87, published in 1987.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Advice on footbridges is given in departmental standard BD 29/87, and advice on subways TD 2/78 and TD 3/79. The advice on subways is currently being updated and my Department expects to publish a revised standard in 1993.

I am putting copies of the relevant departmental standards in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, for each class of all-purpose road set out in table 2 of departmental standard TD 20/85, the maximum traffic flow at which he considers it safe for all pedestrians to cross in safety.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Advice on at-grade pedestrian crossings is given in departmental advice note TA 52/87 on the parameters and other factors to be considered when assessing the provision of pelican and zebra crossings.

A copy of the advice note is being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total revenue expenditure in each of the English regions by his Department in the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Estimates of general Government expenditure on transport by English region for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are not yet available. However, estimates for the two preceeding years—1988-89 and 1989-90—are given in appendix E of "Public Expenditue Analyses to 1994-95; Statistical Supplement to the 1991 Autumn Statement", Cm. 1920. It is not possible to break down the figures between revenue and capital expenditure.

Road Schemes (Environmental Appraisal)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which organisation he has consulted or will be consulting on the draft revision of the manual of environmental appraisal for new road schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department has consulted, or will be consulting other Government Departments, and all the statutory organisations with responsibility for the environment—English Nature, English Heritage, National Rivers Authority, and the Countryside Commission—where they have an interest. The standing advisory committee on trunk road assessment will also be consulted.

Lifeboat Service

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make any contribution towards the extra costs incurred by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution to meet additional responsibilities in areas like the Firth of Forth as described in the Defence Open Government document of October following the closure of RAF search and rescue helicopter bases at Leuchars and elsewhere.

Mr. Norris: The Royal National Lifeboat Institution provides an excellent service under its royal charter which is entirely supported by voluntary public subscription. It is a matter for the institution whether it would apply to the Government for any funding.

Train Drivers

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the statutory authority for the test and authority to drive a locomotive.

Mr. Freeman: There are at present no statutory requirements which cover the testing and authorisation of train drivers.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, for each local authority area in South Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department owns two residential properties in South Yorkshire—one each in the Doncaster borough council and Rotherham borough council areas.

One property is at 50 School road, Wales, Sheffield. It is a three-bedroom semi-detached house and has been empty since 11 November 1991. The property is in need of substantial structural repairs. Its future use will be decided when proposals to widen the M1 between junctions 28 and 32 are finalised.

The other property is The Bungalow, Grove avenue, Doncaster. It is a three-bedroom detached property, which the tenant vacated on 28 October 1992. Another tenant is to be sought.

Tunnels (Lighting)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve the lighting in tunnels on trunk roads in Greater London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The only tunnel on a trunk road in Greater London is the Blackwall tunnel. The lighting in the northbound bore of this tunnel was improved earlier this year and is now up to the British Standard.

A principal inspection of the southbound bore will take place in the spring of 1993. Consideration will be given at that time to the need for improvements to the lighting.

Local Authority Parking System

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering to the management and provision of services for the new local authority on-street parking enforcement system under the Road Traffic Act 1991.

Mr. Norris: In November 1991 the Department of the Environment consulted local authorities nationally about the extension of CCT to further services—"Competing for Quality—A Consultation Paper"—which included the provision and management of services for the new local authority on-street parking enforcement system under part II of the Road Traffic Act 1991. This information was supplemented by further details in the draft traffic management and parking guidance for London issued in March this year for consultation.

There was general agreement that the services should cover the provision of parking attendants, the clamping and removal, and the release, of vehicles found breaching the new decriminalised controls and the management of such services. Some concern was expressed about the timing of the introduction of CCT to these services. The London local authorities in particular felt that they needed time to assess the levels of enforcement that will be necessary to help them determine specifications for CCT.

To meet these concerns I have concluded that the services should not be subject to compulsory competitive tendering until 1 April 1995. Outside London, authorities will generally not be given the powers to apply the new parking enforcement system until experience of their operation in London has been gained. It is intended that CCT will also apply in those areas from 1 April 1995.

The requirement to introduce CCT for these services will be made by order under existing legislation. The order will be subject to formal consultation before coming to Parliament for approval.

Surveyor General's Organisation

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has reached following his consideration of the Surveyor General's Organisation as a possible candidate for executive agency status.

Mr. MacGregor: I have decided that the Surveyor General's Organisation—SGO—should be a candidate for executive agency status. The necessary preparatory work is in hand with a view to the organisation becoming an agency on 1 April 1994. The agency will be called the Marine Safety Agency. I intend shortly to issue a consultation document on the scope for increased private sector participation in the survey and certification work currently done by the SGO.

Airbags

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to encourage the fitting of airbags to cars sold in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The single most effective measure for reducing accident injury is the wearing of a seat belt. This, in conjunction with a well-designed steering wheel, is much more cost effective than the fitting of airbags. While we are not therefore actively encouraging the fitting of airbags, we are participating in discussions on a European standard and are monitoring experience of the fitment of airbags worldwide.

Nudge Bars

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to ensure the fitting of nudge bars to motor vehicles does not create added danger to pedestrians.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Government are working with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders on developing a code of practice on the design of nudge bars. The United Kingdom is also actively pressing within Europe for an EC directive to make the front of cars less harmful to pedestrians. When adopted, this will exercise some control over the fitment of nudge bars.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's estimate of the likely number of jobs that would be created in the United Kingdom by the building of the proposed Jubilee line extension; and when he expects to make an announcement about the future of the project.

Mr. Norris: The building of the proposed Jubilee line extension is estimated to create direct employment on-site on civil works for up to 5,000 people and off-site in manufacturing and supply for approximately five times as many more people. Talks are continuing on the promised £400 million contribution from the private sector. I cannot speculate on the timing of any announcement about the future of the project in advance of the conclusion of those talks.

Emergency Vessels

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many inspectors and related officials are presently engaged in the inspection of those emergency or standby vessels which are being assessed in terms of the revised code; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Fifteen marine surveyors are engaged in such duties as part of their overall responsibilities, with some support from other officials.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of building the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency offices in Swansea; and what that cost would be at today's prices.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Parliament

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make, before the Edinburgh summit, an estimate of the cost to the European Parliament of having more than one place of work.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We do not possess the information to make such an estimate.

Debt Write-offs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy during the United Kingdom presidency of the EC to press for European fiscal and other measures to encourage European banks to write off commercial debt.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom, in common with its EC partners, is already encouraging commercial debt reduction through the Brady plan. This international agreement allows the IMF and World bank to devote some of their leading resources to facilitate voluntary debt reduction agreements between banks and debtors. As noted by the most recent International Monetary Fund—International Bank for Reconstruction and Development development committee communiqué, debt and debt service reduction arrangements that account for around 90 per cent. of the bank debt of the major debtor nations have now been reached.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the ODA have 513 records on loan. To list them all would involve disproportionate cost. Government Departments have a statutory right under the Public Records Acts to recall records temporarily from the Public Record Office for administrative use. Records are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each local authority area in South Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

NATIONAL FINANCE

BCCI

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the earliest date at which his Department was alerted to possible connections between Bank of Credit and Commerce International and terrorist organisations.

Mr. Dorrell: The Treasury was first made aware of such possible connections in July 1991.

Pit Closures

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *315*, if he will now make it his policy to establish a study of the cost to be incurred by the loss of income tax, VAT and national insurance contributions and the payment of unemployment and other social security benefits in respect of the closure of the 31 pits originally indicated in the announcement of 13 October, so far as the figure can be assessed.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no means of accurately assessing these costs. To estimate the net cost of closing a pit it would be necessary to establish the costs of alternative courses of action. For example, the cost of subsidising a pit would have to be borne by electricity consumers, taxpayers or by diverting funds from other public expenditure programmes, all of which would have implications for employment elsewhere which are impossible to assess accurately.

Trinidad Agreement

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to extend the terms of the Trinidad agreement to cover Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Dorrell: Debt relief on Trinidad terms has been extended by the Paris club to a total of 10 of the world's poorest and most heavily indebted countries, including Zambia, but Trinidad terms are not intended for less-indebted, lower-middle income countries such as Zimbabwe.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each local authority area in South Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Sir John Cope: Departments of the Chancellor of the Exchequer do not own any residential property in South Yorkshire.

Debt

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to increase the proportion of developing country debt eligible for write-off from 50 per cent. to 66 per cent.

Sir John Cope: The Government were responsible for the Trinidad initiative to tackle the debt burden of the poorest and most indebted countries, and hopes that Trinidad terms can be developed further in the direction of our original proposals which were for a benchmark figure of two thirds reduction applied immediately to the whole stock of debt.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Sir John Cope: Government Departments have a statutory right under the Public Records Acts to retrieve records temporarily from the Public Record Office for their own administrative use. Her Majesty's Treasury currently has 173 records out on loan. To list them all would involve disproportionate cost. Records are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed.

Trinidad Terms

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what efforts have been undertaken by his Department to persuade other creditor countries to join the Trinidad terms agreement.

Sir John Cope: The Government have given a strong lead in tackling the debt burden of the poorest and most indebted countries and was responsible for both the Toronto and the Trinidad initiatives. The Government are committed to the task of persuading its Paris club partners to agree further improvements to the Trinidad terms, including encouraging all creditors, without exception, to implement debt reduction under these agreed terms.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made into the effect of value added tax changes that require payment on account rather than in arrears in Stoke-on-Trent, South; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: It is not possible to analysise by constituency area the effects of the requirement that the largest VAT payers should make payments monthly in arrears rather than quarterly in arrears. Overall, the change brings United Kingdom practice into line with that in most other EC member states, and offsets the cash flow loss to the Exchequer which would otherwise arise as a result of the reintroduction in this financial year of postponed accounting for VAT on acquisitions from other EC countries.

Savings

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount of *(a)* personal and *(b)* corporate savings in each of the years 1981 to 1991 inclusive; and what was the total amount of savings represented as a proportion of gross domestic product in each of these years.

Mr. Dorrell: The figures for savings, before deducting depreciation and stock appreciation, are as follows:

	Personal sector savings £ billion	*Corporate sector savings £ billion*	*Total savings as percentage of GDP (A) at market prices*
1981	22·3	28·0	19
1982	21·6	30·8	18
1983	19·9	35·4	19
1984	24·7	40·7	19
1985	25·9	42·7	19
1986	22·8	46·0	17
1987	19·6	54·7	18
1988	17·8	56·4	18
1989	23·5	54·5	18
1990	31·7	50·7	17
1991	39·8	46·5	15

North Sea Gas

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect on tax revenue *(a)* in total and *(b)* in percentage terms, of offsets against petroleum revenue taxation resulting from the project for the offshore transportation of gas from the central North sea via the central area transmission system to Teesside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I have made no such estimate.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage change in *(a)* the retail prices index and *(b)* the health service prices index between September 1991 and September 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 6 November 1992]*: The retail prices index rose by 3·6 per cent. and the health service prices index rose by 4·8 per cent.

Unlike the retail prices index, the health service prices index measures changes in input costs, whereas it is output costs which bear on the amount of health care delivered. Output costs in the NHS have over long periods moved in line with those in the economy, taking account of efficiency gains.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals for legislation under which auditors of insurance companies would be prohibited from recruiting company directors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

I see no reason to do so. Ethical guidance issued by the professional accountancy bodies states that no one should take part in the audit of a company if he has, during the period on which the report is to be made or at any time in the two years prior to the first day of that period, been an officer, other than auditor, or employee of that company. Under part II of the Companies Act 1989, recognised supervisory bodies are required to have adequate rules and practices as to professional integrity and independence.

EDUCATION

Higher Education

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of 18-year-olds are in higher education in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the United States of America and *(c)* Japan.

Mr. Forman: The readily available figures are given in the table and represent participation at all ages—generally 18 and over.

New entrants[1] to higher education, 1988

Country	*(main ages on entry)*	*Participation rate[2] (percentage)*
Japan[3]	18	37—52
United Kingdom[4]	18—21	37
United States of America[5]	18	33—65

[1] Includes full-time and part-time students entering higher education for the first time i.e. excluding postgraduate students and others already having a qualification in higher education.

[2] To aid comparison and overcome the problem of the varying lengths of courses in different countries, the participation rate is the percentage of all new entrants (defined above) to a derived relevant single year group. The latter is calculated by taking the total populations for the ages providing at least 70 per cent. of the new entrants and dividing by the number of ages involved. For the United Kingdom this is the population of ages 18 to 21 divided by 4. OECD recommend this procedure.

[3] The higher figure shown includes data for advanced special training schools (SENSHU') which may be equivalent to sub-degree higher education.

[4] Excludes the private sector and students from abroad. Includes nursing and paramedical students at Health Department establishments.

[5] The lower figure excludes students on two-year courses, some of which may not be equivalent to sub-degree higher education.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Forman; Government Departments have a statutory right under the Public Records Acts temporarily to retrieve records from the Public Record Office for their own administrative use.

The Department for Education regularly withdraws records relating to closed voluntary schools to deal with legal issues surrounding the disposal of premises. At present, the Department holds 50 records; of which nine are for those purposes described above. The others are being scrutinised for early release to the public. To list them all would involve disproportionate cost.

It is unusual for this Department to withdraw records for more than two weeks and all are returned as soon as departmental action is complete.

Universal Education

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what contribution the United Kingdom is making to the UNESCO-co-ordinated initiative, "Education for All"; and what work his Department is doing towards achieving the objective of basic education for every child and adult around the world.

Mr. Forman: The Government support the objective of ensuring universal access to basic education. In the United Kingdom education is compulsory for all children of school age. The Government also recognise the importance of basic education for adults. Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the further education funding councils will be under a duty to secure the provision of adequate facilities for literacy and numeracy teaching for adults.

The Goverment will also continue to promote education in developing countries in collaboration with other aid donors, including UNESCO, UNICEF and the World bank. The Overseas Development Administration aims to identify new projects which will improve the quality, availability and relevance of education in developing countries, with particular reference to promoting literacy for women.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for each local authority area in South Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. Forman: The Department owns no properties in South Yorkshire.

School Phobia

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what research has been undertaken into school phobia; and what advice local education authorities receive in order to deal with this condition.

Mr. Forth: The most recent research on school phobia known to the Department is that undertaken by Mr. Nigel Blagg and summarised in his publication "School Phobia and its Treatment", published in 1987. The Department has not issued any guidance on the subject to date.

Nursery Education

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money has been made available for nursery education under the capital grants system for grant-maintained schools for the financial years 1991-92, 1992-93 and how much has been allocated for 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: No money has been specifically set aside for nursery education under the capital grants system. All bids for capital grants are considered on their merits in the light of the funds available and the competing needs of all the schools in the grant-maintained sector.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance he has given to chairmen and governors of grant-mainted schools concerning the eligibility of nursery education projects for support funding under the allocation of capital grants to grant-maintained schools for 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: No specific guidance has been issued to cover nursery provision. The guidance offered to schools on capital bids applies throughout the grant-maintained sector, and as such includes nursery projects.

Workers Educational Association

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current level of funding for the Workers Educational Association; and what is the projected funding for this organisation for the next financial year.

Mr. Forman: The Workers Educational Association in England is currently funded by a mixture of direct grant from the Department for Education and education support grant via local education authorities. In 1992-93 DFE grant is £2,266,000, while ESG funding, 70 per cent. of which is also provided by central Government, amounts to £1·3 million.

From 1993-94, the Further Education Funding Council for England will take over responsibility for the grant currently paid by the Department for Education. It will be for the council to determine the level of that funding in the light of the overall resources available to it. The ESG funding will continue in 1993-94 at the same level as in 1992-93.

Discretionary Awards

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what was the total expenditure, in each local education authority, for major discretionary awards in the last available financial year;

(2) how many local education authorities did not give major discretionary awards to students in the last financial year.

Mr. Forman: The available information is shown in the table. Three LEAs—Avon, Berkshire and Sunderland—were unable to provide information; one—Camden—made 149 discretionary awards at 50 to 100 per cent. of the mandatory rate; and two—Trafford and Isles of Scilly—made no such awards.

Academic year 1990-91

Discretionary awards paid at 50 to 100 per cent. of mandatory rate total expenditure on fees and maintenance

Local authority	*Total expenditure £*
City of London	18,798
Camden	n/a
Greenwich	353,670
Hackney	645,103
Hammersmith	307,388
Islington	57,013
Kensington	363,340
Lambeth	984,677
Lewisham	807,683
Southwark	709,091
Tower Hamlets	430,447
Wandsworth	2,011,917
Westminster	243,983
ILEA	6,252,653
Barking	248,514
Barnet	137,877
Bexley	365,139
Brent	810,816
Bromley	767,568
Croydon	515,467
Ealing	869,155
Enfield	456,151
Haringey	105,806
Harrow	371,725
Havering	439,685
Hillingdon	317,122
Hounslow	199,896
Kingston	434,735
Merton	202,881
Newham	445,821
Redbridge	907,650
Richmond	359,539
Sutton	259,318
Waltham Forest	580,722
Birmingham	1,776,135
Coventry	248,311
Dudley	275,699
Sandwell	543,469
Solihull	289,691
Walsall	1,343,472
Wolverhampton	223,502
Knowsley	1,179,233
Liverpool	2,806,557
St. Helens	209,906
Sefton	931,970
Wirral	1,709,108
Bolton	849,613
Bury	470,671
Manchester	417,897
Oldham	281,725
Rochdale	364,178
Salford	154,132
Stockport	352,327
Tameside	240,561
Trafford	0
Wigan	262,426
Barnsley	908,022
Doncaster	455,264
Rotherham	259,742
Sheffield	427,225
Bradford	1,535,646
Calderdale	500,408
Kirklees	1,550,050
Leeds	1,511,568
Wakefield	806,997
Gateshead	710,585
Newcastle	402,324
North Tyneside	571,188
South Tyneside	471,657
Sunderland	n/a
Isles of Scilly	0
Clwyd	1,354,949
Dyfed	434,253
Gwent	827,120
Gwnedd	40,344
Mid Glamorgan	810,978
Powys	726,730
South Glamorgan	1,401,299
West Glamorgan	1,039,103
Bedfordshire	755,605
Buckinghamshire	1,188,107
Cambridgeshire	1,769,427
Cheshire	5,361,145
Cleveland	1,732,699
Cornwall	1,083,959
Cumbria	2,577,192
Derbyshire	1,169,704
Devon	4,739,157
Dorset	2,856,554
Durham	1,876,144
Essex	2,737,523
Gloucestershire	2,297,285
Hampshire	6,466,014
Hereford and Worcester	1,455,101
Hertfordshire	1,341,536
Humberside	3,772,527
Isle of Wight	367,022
Kent	4,698,803
Lancashire	5,251,306
Leicestershire	4,925,489
Lincolnshire	1,463,177
Norfolk	2,153,400
North Yorkshire	8,114,410

Local authority	*Total expenditure £*
Northamptonshire	1,186,418
Northumberland	655,407
Nottinghamshire	2,739,570
Oxfordshire	1,230,249
Shropshire	1,550,763
Somerset	1,573,456
Staffordshire	1,510,034
Suffolk	2,969,060
Surrey	1,305,778
Warwickshire	553,503
West Sussex	591,123
Wiltshire	1,308,156
Avon	n/a
Berkshire	n/a
Total	141,997,949

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what action can be taken by students, in local education authorities where major discretionary awards have been cut or withdrawn, in order to finance non-degree or degree equivalent courses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he will take to ensure an equitable availability of major discretionary awards between local education authorities.

Mr. Forman: It is for each local education authority to determine its own policies and expenditure on discretionary awards in the light of local needs and priorities. The local authority grant settlement for 1992-93 allowed for a substantial increase in overall education spending. Students who are unsuccessful in obtaining discretionary awards may seek help from, for example, their institutions' access funds, sponsors such as employers, educational trusts or other sources.

Schools

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authority schools were open and functioning in each year since 1979.

Mr. Forth: The table shows, for each year since 1979, the number of LEA-maintained schools in England which were open in January of each year.

	Schools
1979	28,085
1980	28,006
1981	27,747
1982	27,323
1983	26,974
1984	26,479
1985	26,110
1986	25,800
1987	25,593
1988	25,389
1989	25,158
1990	24,999
1991	24,759
[1]1992	24,449

[1] Provisional

Disabled Students

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what level of funding local education authorities receive in order to ensure access to education establishments for disabled persons.

Mr. Forth: Local authorities do not receive any grant specifically for this purpose. Central Government support for local authorities is virtually entirely through general grant, which is not hypothecated to particular purposes. Local authorities are thus free to determine their own spending priorities. Information on local education authorities' spending to ensure access to education establishments for disabled persons is not collected centrally.

University Admissions

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for the last five years, the figures for admission to British universities by type of school of those admitted; and if he will give both the aggregate figure and the figure for each university.

Mr. Forman: The number of United Kingdom domiciled candidates in Great Britain accepted through the UCCA scheme for entry to full-time and sandwich first degree courses at United Kingdom universities are shown in the table.

Academic Year Beginning

	1986 000s	*1987 000s*	*1988 000s*	*1989 000s*	*1990 000s*
Maintained Schools					
Grammar/Technical	4·7	4·6	4·6	5·1	5·8
Sixth Form College	6·2	6·7	6·4	7·2	8·7
Comprehensive	20·9	20·7	20·8	22·7	25·6
Other Secondary	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·2
Total[1]	37·5	37·8	37·6	40·8	46·0
Independent Schools[1]	14·9	14·7	15·5	16·8	18·6
FHE Sector[1]	8·2	8·3	10·1	11·3	13·8
Total[1]	60·6	60·8	63·3	69·1	78·4
Not Classified[1,2]	10·9	11·9	11·2	11·6	14·1
Total Acceptances[1,2]	71·3	72·7	74·4	80·6	92·5

Source: UCCA Statistical Supplements.

[1] Includes acceptances from Scotland.

[2] Includes acceptances of those who applied direct to UCCA, whether or not they were attending an FHE institution at the time.

Information for each institution individually is not published by UCCA.

School Transport

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he proposes to take with regard to the proposal in the consultation paper "Competing for Quality: Competition in the Provision of Local Services" to introduce compulsory competitive tendering for transport centrally organised by local education authorities for journeys between home and school or college.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, remain committed to imposing a rigorous competitive regime on local authorities' provision of vehicles for home to school and home to college transport. In the light of responses to "Competing for Quality", they have concluded that this can best be achieved by imposing on all authorities, not just those running their own transport fleets, a competitive tendering regime compatible with that already required by the Transport Act 1985 in respect of public transport subsidised by local authorities. This will enable authorities to continue to make co-ordinated, cost-effective arrangements for all transport provided from or assisted by public funds, as required by the 1985 Act. It will also mean that local transport operators will work under a single tendering regime.

The 1985 Act regime needs to be amended to provide for competition between private contractors and authorities' own work forces in accordance with the principles of the compulsory competitive tendering regime laid down in the Local Government Act 1988. This will require primary legislation, which will be brought forward at the earliest opportunity.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Battlefield Sites

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list, by county for the United Kingdom, the initiatives he proposes to introduce to secure the preservation of battlefield sites.

Mr. Brooke: The Government have invited English Heritage to prepare a register of battlefield sites in England to inform planning decisions which may affect them. The National Army museum is currently undertaking the research for the register on behalf of English Heritage. The register should be available for consultation early next year. Responsibility for the preservation of battlefield sites in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland rests with the relevant Secretaries of State.

Local Authority Services

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how the Government intend to proceed on the proposed extension of compulsory competitive tendering to local authority managed arts facilities and public library support services.

Mr. Brooke: The Government believe that the wider application of competition to the provision of local authority services will bring significant benefits in terms of the quality and value for money for the public.

Proposals to extend compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) to a range of local authority services, including arts facilities and library support services, were set out in the consultation paper "Competing for Quality", published in November 1991. I have discussed with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales the responses to that document which referred to arts and library services, and we are agreed on the way forward in those areas.

On arts facilities, my Department received some 180 responses, mostly from local authorities and arts organisations. We are grateful for the helpful comments contained in those responses. In reaching conclusions, I have also taken into account the Audit Commission's report "Local Authorities, Entertainment and the Arts" (January 1991), which identified three principal weaknesses in local authority arts management: lack of policy objectives, absence of monitoring of performance and inadequate financial control.

On the evidence before me, I am satisfied that there is scope to improve local authority arts provision through the introduction of increased competition. However, I have also concluded from that evidence that there are appreciable differences between the management of arts facilities and that of most of the other services to which the extension of CCT has been set out in a written reply by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Particularly important considerations are the wide diversity between local authorities in the extent and type of arts facilities provided and the very long planning times required in drawing up arts programmes.

In view of these differences, I propose to commission consultants to undertake further studies in order to determine how competition might best be applied to this area of local authority management. In addition, to assist local authorities in clarifying and monitoring their service objectives, the Audit Commission will be invited to identify and disseminate models of good practice.

With regard to public library support services, we received 130 responses to the consultation paper from commercial library suppliers, individual librarians and members of the public as well as from local authorities. Many local authority responses drew on experience with existing contracts for library support services or on studies which they had already carried out into the potential for contracting out support work. I am grateful for the helpful way in which respondents dealt with our proposal.

From this evidence, it is clear to me that competition has already resulted in value for money from library support services and that there is little scope for further cost reductions in the areas covered in the consultation exercise. I have concluded, therefore, that CCT for support services would not necessarily be the best way forward for encouraging greater competition in the public library field.

However, I do see scope for extending the contracting out of services in the library field, if necessary on a compulsory basis. The consultation exercise showed a need to consider library operations on a wider basis, rather than arbitrarily designating certain aspects in advance as ancillary. I therefore propose a thorough investigation, based upon a series of pilot projects designed to examine the feasibility of contracting out the direct delivery of all or various parts of the library service. These will take place over the next 18 months and, throughout the investigation, I look forward to a close partnership with local authorities and other interested organisations including the library suppliers. My Department will establish a steering committee to advise and monitor the investigation.

Once the investigation is complete, I shall make the results widely available. I intend in so doing to set out a range of competitive options for library authorities to choose between, having regard to their particular circumstances.

Performances

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the performances of *(a)* theatre, *(b)* dance, *(c)* opera and *(d)* music which he has attended in an official capacity since taking up his appointment.

Mr. Brooke: Since my appointment as Secretary of State for National Heritage I have attended performances of "Three Birds Alighting on a Field" at the Royal Court theatre, the Duenna at Opera North, a memorial concert for Sir Andrzej Panufnik at the Queen Elizabeth hall, a concert given by the Guildhall chamber orchestra and a private concert in honour of the eightieth birthday of Sir Georg Solti. I shall be attending the opening concert of the Scandinavian arts festival at the Barbican and the Royal Ballet's performance of "Mayerling" this week. I have also visited the Yorkshire Sculpture park, and the MENCAP art exhibition.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many regional arts boards he has visited since taking up his appointment.

Mr. Brooke: I met the chairman and director of the Yorkshire and Humberside arts board when I visited Yorkshire on 1 October. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has to date also met representatives of the Northern, North West and London arts boards on visits to those regions. In addition, I held a meeting with the chairmen—or their representatives—of all the regional arts boards on 28 October.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Greyhound Racing

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he will take to promote the well-being of greyhound racing.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The promotion of greyhound racing is the responsibility of the industry itself. However, when general betting duty was reduced in the Budget, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressed the hope that voluntary arrangements could be made for some of the money to go to greyhound racing. We understand that negotiations between greyhound racing and bookmakers are continuing in an effort to devise suitable arrangements for that purpose.

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress with the voluntary agreement between the off-course bookmakers and the greyhound racing industry over the transfer of the 0·25 per cent. reduction in betting duty introduced in April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We understand that negotiations between the off-course bookmakers and the greyhound racing industry to devise suitable voluntary arrangements are continuing. We have been kept informed of developments, and hope that the negotiations can be brought to a successful conclusion in the near future.

Police (Housing)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the numbers and locations of empty service police housing quarters in South Yorkshire.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office does not hold information about the location of police housing, which is owned and managed by individual police authorities. According to information received from South Yorkshire police authority, eight houses were empty as at 31 March 1992. One of these is due to be re-allocated to a serving policy officer, and five have been identified for sale during the current financial year.

Emergency Services

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total revenue expenditure in each of the English regions on police, fire and civil defence services in the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information on net revenue expenditure by English local authorities on these services in 1990-91 and 1991-92 is given in the table. Expenditure on these services is not aggregated on any regional basis.

Police

Net current expenditure supported by Home Office specific grant (excluding loan charges)

£000s

Police Authority	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Avon and Somerset	102,351	111,509
Bedfordshire	35,599	39,148
Cambridgeshire	42,364	47,116
Cheshire	62,370	66,960
Cleveland	50,246	54,802
Cumbria	39,612	45,001
Derbyshire	61,261	66,048
Devon and Cornwall	105,660	117,649
Dorset	49,024	52,006
Durham	44,964	48,589
Essex	104,703	115,540
Gloucestershire	40,236	44,611
Hampshire	111,152	124,869
Hertfordshire	58,743	62,868
Humberside	69,697	77,396
Kent	109,813	128,734
Lancashire	108,135	121,946
Leicestershire	61,274	67,196
Lincolnshire	41,597	47,235
Norfolk	48,115	53,100
Northamptonshire	40,884	45,498
North Yorkshire	47,396	51,679
Nottinghamshire	75,709	82,629
Staffordshire	74,272	82,163
Suffolk	43,008	48,042
Surrey	57,125	63,421
Sussex	92,991	105,647
Thames Valley	134,225	149,414
Warwickshire	36,082	39,842
West Mercia	68,707	77,230
Wiltshire	40,885	46,215
Greater Manchester	228,550	248,807

Police Authority	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Merseyside	160,697	178,881
Northumbria	121,364	131,161
South Yorkshire	94,778	103,165
West Midlands	229,256	250,816
West Yorkshire	181,186	197,226
City of London	37,074	40,820
Metropolitan Police Department	1,197,618	1,341,318
Total	4,307,123	4,777,296

Fire Service net expenditure

(£000s)

	Net expenditure	
County councils	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Avon	17,562	[1]19,411
Bedfordshire	9,307	[1]9,734
Berkshire	13,546	[1]13,586
Buckinghamshire	10,206	[1]10,700
Cambridgeshire	10,485	[1]11,160
Cheshire	18,155	18,642
Cleveland	16,761	[1]17,270
Cornwall	8,648	8,801
Cumbria	10,176	[1]10,079
Derbyshire	15,954	16,320
Devon	19,326	18,971
Dorset	10,229	[1]11,455
Durham	12,260	[1]12,287
East Sussex	13,319	14,476
Essex	28,965	29,994
Gloucestershire	7,866	[1]8,988
Hampshire	23,462	[1]24,763
Hereford and Worcester	10,933	[1]11,286
Hertfordshire	16,342	[1]17,039
Humberside	20,896	20,985
Isle of Wight	2,699	2,885
Kent	27,778	[1]31,839
Lancashire	28,197	[1]29,863
Leicestershire	12,240	[1]13,610
Lincolnshire	9,387	9,491
Norfolk	12,047	12,538
Northamptonshire	9,064	9,827
Northumberland	7,589	8,294
North Yorkshire	13,165	[1]13,129
Nottinghamshire	17,769	[1]18,642
Oxfordshire	8,737	[1]9,628
Shropshire	6,896	[1]7,193
Somerset	7,329	[1]7,684
Staffordshire	17,901	[1]18,087
Suffolk	10,831	[1]11,163
Surrey	21,974	21,948
Warwickshire	10,552	[1]10,138
West Sussex	12,035	13,095
Wiltshire	9,105	[1]9,007
Fire and civil defence authorities		
London	215,031	[1]221,533
Greater Manchester	56,303	58,993
Merseyside	39,869	[1]42,348
South Yorkshire	28,070	[1]27,900
Tyne and Wear	28,577	28,724
West Midlands	53,580	55,783
West Yorkshire	47,087	[1]48,588
Isles of Scilly	86	[1]93
England Total	1,008,296	1,047,970

[1] Outturn expenditure not available. Figures shown are local authority budget estimates.

Civil Defence
Net current expenditure supported by Home Office specific grant

£000s

	1990-91	*1991-92*
(i) County councils		
Avon	289	321
Bedfordshire	208	238
Berkshire	403	479
Buckinghamshire	362	412
Cambridgeshire	384	416
Cheshire	501	573
Cleveland	212	240
Cornwall	320	350
Cumbria	379	435
Derbyshire	226	259
Devon	624	663
Dorset	321	355
Durham	241	241
East Sussex	319	367
Essex	482	514
Gloucestershire	290	295
Hampshire	356	426
Hereford and Worcester	240	285
Hertfordshire	443	497
Humberside	351	345
Isle of Wight	273	297
Kent	488	550
Lancashire	314	311
Leicestershire	225	248
Lincolnshire	391	374
Norfolk	421	468
Northamptonshire	268	293
Northumberland	308	287
North Yorkshire	334	364
Nottinghamshire	310	349
Oxfordshire	403	424
Shropshire	223	276
Somerset	322	353
Staffordshire	289	309
Suffolk	298	323
Surrey	392	384
Warwickshire	297	321
West Sussex	322	340
Wiltshire	339	340
(ii) Fire and civil defence authorities		
London	1,638	1,812
Greater Manchester	524	574
Merseyside	532	628
South Yorkshire	436	507
Tyne and Wear	431	479
West Midlands	455	495
West Yorkshire	454	453
(iii) Police authorities		
Avon-Somerset	3	5
Greater Manchester	4	3
Merseyside	7	6
Northumbria	11	14
Thames Valley	12	3
West Mercia	0	3
West Midlands	6	3
(iv) London boroughs and City of London	129	94
Total	17,810	19,398

Mr. A. Alexandrowicz

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the case of Anthony Alexandrowicz is to be considered by the Parole Board.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Mr. Alexandrowicz is one of some 300 discretionary life prisoners who are now eligible for review under new procedures introduced as a result of section 34 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. It is for the Parole Board to decide the order in which these cases are heard. To assist in this task, the board is provided with a list of those eligible in each prison establishment. These lists are compiled in accordance with the criteria announced in the Secretary of State's written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 9 March 1992, at column *396*. Mr. Alexandrowicz will be notified as soon as his case is listed for hearing.

Primary Purpose Rule

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes in trends have occurred since his announcement to adjust primary purpose guidance to allow entry to those spouses who can prove five years of marriage and supply evidence of devotion in this period.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 4 November 1992, at columns *221-22*.

Leave to Remain Status

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what categories of status equivalent to exceptional leave to remain are operative in other EC countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 3 November, at column *125*.

Disclosure to Defendants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the consequences for police operational efficiency of the ruling in the Guinness case requiring greater disclosure to defendants.

Mr. Jack: We have received no representations from members of the public, but the implications of this judgment have been discussed with the Crown prosecution service, the Association of Chief Police Officers and Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many candidates have been interviewed for the post of chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Five.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of experimental procedures involving animals in 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on the number of scientific procedures involving living animals started in 1991 is contained in table 1 of the Command Paper "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain, 1991", Cm 2023, a copy of which is in the Library.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* against the Asylum and Immigration Bill.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the period between the publication of the Bill on 22 October and 6 November three representations were received in the asylum division expressing support for the legislation and 10 expressing concern about, or opposition to, one or more elements of the legislation.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made by the Malins Committee into the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand that the planning group chaired by Mr. Humfrey Malins has sent a consultation letter to those individuals and organisations identified as having a particular interest in the future arrangements for immigration advice and representation. Mr. Malins has agreed that a copy of that letter may be placed in the Library of the House. The group has asked for comments by the end of November and hopes to publish its report by the end of the year.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors have applied to enter and settle in the United Kingdom; how many applications have been granted; how many have had their applications refused; and how many have appealed against their refusal, giving the figures in each case since 1982, by year.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* The immigration rules make no provision for a person simultaneously to seek entry as a visitor and as a person coming for settlement; by definition a visitor is a person who intends to return to his or her own country after a stay of at most six months in the United Kingdom. The available information in respect of visitors is given in the table. It is likely that most of the persons refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom, or refused an entry clearance other than for settlement, were visitors. Visitors are also thought to comprise well over half of those appealing against a refusal of leave to enter or of entry clearance for temporary purposes.

Thousands

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Non-EC nationals admitted to the United Kingdom as visitors	4,480	5,060	5,900	6,570	5,350	5,730	5,670	6,220	6,720	5,690
Non-EC nationals refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom	12,234	13,981	17,355	17,925	23,110	17,876	19,217	22,536	19,035	18,182
Persons refused an entry clearance other than for settlement[1], at posts abroad	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	68,210	77,380

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Appeals received by the appellate authorities in respect of persons refused leave to enter or refused entry clearance for temporary purposes	[2]—	[2]—	2,404	1,994	2,535	3,848	7,909	8,764	12,454	14,036

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[1] That is, all persons excluding spouses, fiance(e)s, children and other dependent relations seeking settlement.

[2] Not available.

Drugs

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing for each police area in England and Wales for each of the last three years the number of seizures of controlled drugs and the specific number in each of the following categories *(a)* heroin, *(b)* cocaine, *(c)* crack, *(d)* MDMA, *(e)* amphetamines and *(f)* cannabis.

Mr. Jack: The information requested with regard to those drugs, with the exception of "crack", is contained in table A1.3 of the Home Office statistical bulletins "Statistics of the misuse of drugs—seizures and offenders dealt with, United Kingdom, 1989, 1990, and 1991—area tables"—copies of which are in the Library. Information regarding MDMA is available only from 1990 onwards.

The table shows the number of seizures of "crack" by police force area in England and Wales in 1990 and 1991.

Seizures of "crack" by police force area, 1990 and 1991

England and Wales

Police force area	*1990*	*1991*
England		
Avon and Somerset	1	11
Bedfordshire	—	1
Cambridgeshire	1	—
Cheshire	—	—
Cleveland	—	—
Cumbria	—	—
Derbyshire	11	1
Devon and Cornwall	—	—
Dorset	—	—
Durham	—	—
Essex	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—
Greater Manchester	5	6
Hampshire	1	—
Hertfordshire	—	—
Humberside	—	—
Kent	—	—
Lancashire	—	—
Leicestershire	—	5
Lincolnshire	—	—
Merseyside	2	7
City of London	—	2
Metropolitan Police	275	516
Norfolk	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	1
Northumbria	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—
Nottinghamshire	4	1
South Yorkshire	1	5
Staffordshire	—	—
Suffolk	—	—
Surrey	1	—
Sussex	1	1
Thames Valley	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—
West Mercia	—	1
West Midlands	2	10
West Yorkshire	9	10
Wiltshire	—	—
England—other	1	—
All English police forces	315	578
Wales		
Dyfed and Powys	—	—
Gwent	—	—
North Wales	—	—
South Wales	—	3
All Welsh police forces	—	3
Total—England and Wales	315	581

Wolds Remand Centre

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are being held at Wolds remand centre at the latest available date; when he expects that it will reach full capacity; and what plans he has to widen its catchment area or take in other categories of prisoner.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On Monday 9 November 1992, a total of 233 prisoners were unlocked at Wolds remand prison. It had been expected that its present catchment area would fill it to capacity. This has proved not to be the case and the prison service is now considering how best to make up the shortfall.

Prison Service Uniforms

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of items and the value of the prison service uniforms for which contracts to purchase were placed in the last year for which figures are available; if he will give a breakdown of those figures according to whether the product was *(a)* made and finished in the United Kingdom from fabric produced in the United Kingdom, *(b)* finished in the United Kingdom from imported fabric and *(c)* finished in the United Kingdom but made abroad; if he will give similar information for other major clothing contracts for which he is responsible; and if he will make a statement of his purchasing policy in such matters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: For the period 1 October 1991 to 30 September 1992, the latest year for which figures are available, the total number of items and the value of contracts to purchase Prison Service uniforms and of other major clothing contracts, where the information required is known, are shown in the table, in the form requested.

Her Majesty's Treasury is responsible for setting public purchasing policy. All Government procurement is based on value for money—that is, quality, fitness for purpose, and delivery against price. The European Community supplies directive requires member states to advertise major public contracts throughout the community. It also requires supplier and product selection to be based on objective criteria intended to prevent a bias towards national interests.

Uniform:

(a) Products made and finished in the United Kingdom from fabric produced in the United Kingdom—16 items purchased to the value of approximately £1·4 million.

(b) Products finished in the United Kingdom from imported fabric—13 items purchased to the value of approximately £860K.

(c) Products finished in the United Kingdom but made abroad—Two items purchased to the value of approximately £172K.

Other major clothing contracts:

(a) Products made and finished in the United Kingdom from fabric produced in the United Kingdom—Three items purchased to the value of approximately £47K.

(b) Products finished in the United Kingdom from imported fabric—Two items purchased to the value of approximately £130K.

(c) Products finished in the United Kingdom but made abroad—Three items purchased to the value of approximately £308K.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the working of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 with particular reference to the exceptions from the Act.

Mr. Jack: There are no plans to review the working of the Act itself. However, it is intended that the number and range of exceptions to the Act should be re-examined as part of the review of the arrangements for the disclosure of information from criminal records which will be undertaken in advance of the computerisation of the national collection of criminal records.

Police Funding

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish the report by Richard Kornicki on the future of police funding; and if he will place a copy of the report in the Library.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Richard Kornicki is one of several Home Office officials who have been working on the future of police funding and are continuing to do so. His review was a working document, which was prepared as advice by officials to Ministers. It would be inappropriate to publish such internal advice.

Prison Escapes

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners escaped *(a)* from prison and *(b)* whilst being escorted to and from court, in each of the last five years; and how many of them were recaptured in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information available relates to prisoners who escaped from prison, or while being escorted outside prison, or were recaptured, between 20 June 1988 and 8 November 1992. Information was not collected centrally prior to June 1988.

	Escapers from prison	*Escapers from escort*	*Recaptured*[1]
20 June 1988 to 31 December 1988	104	61	156
1989	163	118	260
1990	195	119	303
1991	304	144	424
1 January 1992 to 8 November 1992	220	117	271

[1] Includes four prisoners who died while unlawfully at large.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who has responsibility for keeping and updating the central list of all escaped prisoners; and how often the list is updated.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The incident management support unit in prison headquarters is responsible, among other matters, for keeping a list of all prisoners who have escaped from Prison Service custody in England and Wales. The list is updated monthly to take account of those who have been recaptured.

Polling Stations

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if grant-maintained schools will supply facilities for polling stations in the same manner as local education authority schools, free of charge to the local authority.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A returning officer at both parliamentary and at local government elections is entitled to use, free of charge, as a polling station a room in a local education authority maintained or assisted school or in a grant-maintained school.

Local Authority Services

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his conclusions on the responses to proposals to extend competition to a wider range of local authority services set out in the consultation paper "Competing for Quality", published in November 1991, as it will affect the police and fire service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment has today announced, the Government have come to the conclusion that, while some amendments to the original proposals are necessary, compulsory competition is the best way of securing greater efficiency and cost savings in the provision of local authority services, while guaranteeing a high standard of services to the local taxpayers. The police and fire services will be playing a part in the process.

The fire service has unique front-line vehicles which carry specialist pumping, hydraulic and mechanical equipment. The maintenance and repair of vehicles and equipment is synchronised in order to ensure operational efficiency. I take the view that they should remain exempt from compulsory competitive tendering for the present, but, in order to encourage wider competition, I intend that all brigades, with the exception of those whose maintenance staff also have firefighting duties should be required to market test vehicle and equipment maintenance over the next three years. The whole of each brigade's vehicle fleet will be included in order to provide a realistic assessment and to identify those contractors best placed to offer the comprehensive range of services required. I intend to discuss with the fire authorities how this can best be taken forward to ensure that operational efficiency is maintained and in 12 months I intend to announce targets in this area.

The support services for the fire service which are provided by the fire authority will, of course, fall to be considered within the framework of the arrangements for construction-related and corporate services set out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

We have consulted widely within the police service and local authority associations about the extension of compulsory competitive tendering to police vehicle maintenance and the cleaning of police buildings. We have received a number of constructive replies outlining concerns over security and quality of service.

I have taken these concerns seriously. I wish to ensure the widest possible application of compulsory competitive tendering that is consistent with operational efficiency and security requirements. An order will be made under the Local Government Act 1988 extending the application of compulsory competitive tendering to 40 per cent. of the annual value of police vehicle maintenance and repair. A period of three years will be allowed to evaluate the effects of this provision, after which I shall decide on further progress. An order will also be made extending compulsory competitive tendering to 90 per cent. of the annual value of cleaning police buildings. I anticipate that the first tenders will be sought in 1994-95.

I also intend to extend compulsory competive tendering to corporate and construction-related police support services. I intend to engage in further consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association and the local authority associations on the detailed implementation of these proposals and the introduction of a new accounting framework.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be introducing similar provisions for maintenance and repair of fire service vehicles, for maintenance of police vehicles and for cleaning of police buildings in Scotland. He will also consult on extension of compulsory competitive tendering to corporate and construction-related support services and on a new accounting framework.

Prison Catering

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *453*, if he will list the budgets under which the prison catering contracts were let and administered together with the value of each contract.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 6 November 1992]*: The budgets under which the prison catering contracts were let and administered are as follows:—

E(1)—Directorate of Inmate Administration running costs.
F(1)—Directorate of Inmate Programmes running costs.
G(1)—Direcorate of Custody running costs.

The value of individual contracts is regarded as commercial in confidence. Prison catering contracts were awarded in the range from £268,856·00 to £404,988·00.

Crime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number of recorded crimes and *(b)* the number of crimes committed by category for England and Wales and for each police force area in each 12-month period from June 1988.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: The information is available for recorded crimes only and is contained in the following tables.

Figures are not available for crimes committed in these periods, but estimates for England and Wales covering the calendar year 1991 are provided in the British crime survey. First results of the British crime survey are published in "Home Office Research Findings No. 2", which is available in the Library.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area

Violence against the person *Number of offences*

Police force area	*July 1988 to June 1989*	*July 1989 to June 1990*	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*
Avon and Somerset	4,330	5,170	5,537	5,321
Bedfordshire	2,009	2,062	2,102	1,804
Cambridgeshire	1,773	2,326	2,431	2,628
Cheshire	2,546	2,513	2,496	2,641
Cleveland	2,493	2,535	2,747	2,664
Cumbria	1,617	1,794	1,963	1,873
Derbyshire	3,136	3,379	3,708	3,958
Devon and Cornwall	3,719	3,729	3,621	3,809
Dorset	1,297	1,460	1,566	1,480
Durham	2,317	2,416	2,065	2,345
Essex	4,017	3,940	3,929	4,201
Gloucestershire	1,225	1,362	1,566	1,570
Greater Manchester	9,549	9,160	8,879	9,914
Hampshire	3,858	4,293	4,193	5,186
Hertfordshire	1,856	1,773	1,727	1,892
Humberside	5,590	5,541	5,031	5,141
Kent	3,548	3,754	3,839	5,129
Lancashire	3,041	3,131	2,966	3,198
Leicestershire	2,664	3,015	3,163	3,572
Lincolnshire	1,639	2,007	2,135	2,099
City of London	211	223	173	226
Merseyside	5,185	5,114	5,542	6,811
Metropolitan Police District	29,017	33,710	36,947	38,503
Norfolk	1,805	1,862	1,956	1,854
Northamptonshire	2,180	2,111	2,001	2,212
Northumbria	5,241	5,413	5,712	6,023
North Yorkshire	1,702	1,892	2,095	2,115
Nottinghamshire	6,600	7,558	7,542	7,994
South Yorkshire	4,674	4,933	4,720	4,776
Staffordshire	4,983	5,263	5,367	5,683
Suffolk	1,663	1,724	1,785	1,974
Surrey	1,762	1,640	1,845	1,882
Sussex	2,982	3,346	3,240	3,237
Thames Valley	4,429	4,471	4,451	4,754
Warwickshire	1,141	1,116	1,091	1,278
West Mercia	2,919	3,439	3,144	3,259
West Midlands	9,050	9,767	10,435	11,415
West Yorkshire	8,708	8,949	9,692	10,038
Wiltshire	1,795	2,138	2,118	2,488
England	158,271	170,029	175,520	186,947
Dyfed-Powys	1,375	1,574	1,955	2,107
Gwent	1,963	2,131	2,022	2,323
North Wales	2,263	2,278	2,401	2,608
South Wales	4,218	4,496	4,537	5,519
Wales	9,819	10,479	10,915	12,557
England and Wales	168,090	180,508	186,435	199,504

Sexual offences — *Number of offences*

Police force area	*July 1988 to June 1989*	*July 1989 to June 1990*	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*
Avon and Somerset	633	702	743	614
Bedfordshire	330	308	331	278
Cambridgeshire	386	358	400	432
Cheshire	379	346	415	492
Cleveland	323	360	264	316
Cumbria	206	231	256	215
Derbyshire	516	562	492	429
Devon and Cornwall	643	796	791	719
Dorset	284	228	300	391
Durham	381	425	417	443
Essex	597	594	603	573
Gloucestershire	228	249	295	309
Greater Manchester	1,482	1,394	1,422	1,465
Hampshire	1,007	948	996	1,158
Hertfordshire	431	336	371	351
Humberside	891	874	882	836
Kent	823	909	699	1,097
Lancashire	656	632	634	524
Leicestershire	364	359	400	392
Lincolnshire	329	380	434	291
City of London	29	31	18	41
Merseyside	601	726	701	759
Metropolitan Police District	4,287	5,186	5,437	5,538
Norfolk	345	367	419	387
Northamptonshire	303	313	264	256
Northumbria	698	683	669	720
North Yorkshire	257	258	260	224
Nottinghamshire	1,210	1,216	1,135	1,102
South Yorkshire	655	716	618	627
Staffordshire	516	473	477	487
Suffolk	322	400	401	433
Surrey	329	349	383	429
Sussex	772	961	733	800
Thames Valley	1,162	952	855	946
Warwickshire	201	194	192	178
West Mercia	464	477	470	498
West Midlands	1,499	1,557	1,533	1,586
West Yorkshire	1,412	1,595	1,657	1,506
Wiltshire	367	365	433	389
England	26,318	27,810	27,800	28,231
Dyfed-Powys	282	283	338	363
Gwent	338	323	306	271
North Wales	542	284	378	361
South Wales	535	526	500	518
Wales	1,697	1,416	1,522	1,513
England and Wales	28,015	29,226	29,322	29,744

Robbery — *Number of offences*

Police force area	*July 1988 to June 1989*	*July 1989 to June 1990*	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*
Avon and Somerset	625	869	1,204	1,157
Bedfordshire	262	303	585	558
Cambridgeshire	100	152	201	271
Cheshire	115	137	163	299
Cleveland	139	129	149	238
Cumbria	52	52	55	100
Derbyshire	120	183	205	298
Devon and Cornwall	191	191	204	294
Dorset	62	109	139	140
Durham	78	114	113	156
Essex	334	319	389	454
Gloucestershire	104	112	192	302
Greater Manchester	2,041	2,083	2,707	3,882
Hampshire	250	357	407	509
Hertfordshire	159	143	238	278
Humberside	252	238	245	330
Kent	230	312	424	548

Police force area	July 1988 to June 1989	July 1989 to June 1990	July 1990 to June 1991	July 1991 to June 1992
Lancashire	249	288	342	470
Leicestershire	522	527	505	756
Lincolnshire	46	70	64	82
City of London	60	68	57	65
Merseyside	1,575	1,517	1,705	1,983
Metropolitan Police District	17,409	17,231	19,804	22,970
Norfolk	146	140	153	226
Northamptonshire	163	177	210	317
Northumbria	503	639	621	941
North Yorkshire	76	76	84	135
Nottinghamshire	506	651	775	939
South Yorkshire	415	455	476	616
Staffordshire	189	213	237	354
Suffolk	79	133	106	138
Surrey	112	139	138	216
Sussex	316	433	458	490
Thames Valley	470	650	719	941
Warwickshire	61	57	97	133
West Mercia	113	154	172	209
West Midlands	2,675	2,921	3,387	4,531
West Yorkshire	872	996	1,439	2,386
Wiltshire	70	91	116	114
England	31,741	33,429	39,285	48,806
Dyfed-Powys	17	22	38	121
Gwent	60	95	97	48
North Wales	71	66	99	102
South Wales	231	239	266	375
Wales	379	422	500	646
England and Wales	32,120	33,851	39,785	49,452

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area

Burglary *Number of offences*

Police force area	July 1988 to June 1989	July 1989 to June 1990	July 1990 to June 1991	July 1991 to June 1992
Avon and Somerset	17,096	20,764	31,351	33,679
Bedfordshire	7,366	8,602	12,605	14,110
Cambridgeshire	6,151	7,675	9,668	13,125
Cheshire	10,424	11,709	14,743	19,001
Cleveland	14,586	15,037	16,496	19,757
Cumbria	6,341	6,804	9,011	11,563
Derbyshire	8,737	10,641	15,892	20,252
Devon and Cornwall	14,927	17,778	24,709	26,922
Dorset	5,318	6,967	8,500	9,631
Durham	9,265	10,092	12,696	13,462
Essex	13,965	16,620	22,461	26,410
Gloucestershire	7,668	8,650	10,906	14,432
Greater Manchester	73,686	78,605	93,405	100,720
Hampshire	17,991	22,494	29,208	32,963
Hertfordshire	6,086	7,135	10,254	11,548
Humberside	20,333	26,328	29,238	34,538
Kent	13,446	16,847	23,507	29,126
Lancashire	16,762	19,796	23,036	26,263
Leicestershire	10,261	13,830	18,943	22,262
Lincolnshire	6,094	7,361	8,547	10,150
City of London	758	968	1,077	1,000
Merseyside	38,650	34,833	33,799	33,742
Metropolitan Police District	142,140	160,062	182,485	194,338
Norfolk	9,836	11,496	13,510	16,225
Northamptonshire	6,198	7,438	11,007	12,401
Northumbria	47,001	52,319	58,995	68,385
North Yorkshire	8,141	8,326	10,836	13,804
Nottinghamshire	16,686	20,951	27,735	33,121
South Yorkshire	21,030	24,778	31,035	38,076
Staffordshire	13,539	15,281	21,612	25,318
Suffolk	5,870	6,396	7,417	8,403
Surrey	6,938	7,816	11,253	11,521
Sussex	14,964	19,027	24,637	27,340
Thames Valley	18,460	23,704	31,101	36,174

Police force area	*July 1988 to June 1989*	*July 1989 to June 1990*	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*
Warwickshire	5,362	6,097	8,386	11,956
West Mercia	8,672	9,933	12,095	16,102
West Midlands	58,277	63,499	74,163	92,394
West Yorkshire	42,680	50,381	68,126	85,108
Wiltshire	5,044	5,816	7,257	8,595
England	756,749	862,856	1,061,702	1,223,917
Dyfed-Powys	2,779	2,866	4,428	4,999
Gwent	3,989	4,233	6,328	8,146
North Wales	8,022	7,647	8,872	12,093
South Wales	24,601	26,268	32,475	37,554
Wales	39,391	41,014	52,103	62,792
England and Wales	796,140	903,870	1,113,805	1,286,709

Theft and handling stolen goods *Numbers of offences*

Police force area	*July 1988 to June 1989*	*July 1989 to June 1990*	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*
Avon and Somerset	53,541	59,197	80,350	85,086
Bedfordshire	19,801	25,390	32,116	29,524
Cambridgeshire	19,957	23,761	30,316	36,512
Cheshire	23,633	26,046	29,392	36,854
Cleveland	30,307	35,894	41,740	45,018
Cumbria	13,280	14,865	20,503	21,992
Derbyshire	23,113	27,700	34,448	43,352
Devon and Cornwall	39,956	43,978	53,648	58,403
Dorset	21,162	26,062	31,138	29,187
Durham	21,048	23,984	30,714	33,843
Essex	39,571	46,310	57,202	61,954
Gloucestershire	18,176	22,132	26,280	36,670
Greater Manchester	143,981	153,516	184,125	191,642
Hampshire	50,412	60,441	73,752	83,961
Hertfordshire	21,843	23,754	28,417	33,262
Humberside	41,140	48,087	54,725	59,696
Kent	43,719	52,224	69,297	86,190
Lancashire	43,875	50,469	59,323	68,388
Leicestershire	27,387	34,333	44,860	49,843
Lincolnshire	18,201	20,348	24,146	24,927
City of London	4,364	5,009	5,133	4,954
Merseyside	66,749	68,042	73,480	78,131
Metropolitan Police District	371,314	400,059	434,816	465,768
Norfolk	22,839	27,577	32,961	37,097
Northamptonshire	20,715	23,374	28,710	30,319
Northumbria	85,305	94,949	99,992	96,144
North Yorkshire	18,036	22,783	29,256	30,453
Nottinghamshire	53,775	66,273	80,910	87,047
South Yorkshire	47,033	52,103	57,963	65,225
Staffordshire	27,352	31,716	37,975	43,555
Suffolk	15,358	17,422	20,745	23,625
Surrey	16,117	19,755	25,606	29,480
Sussex	38,685	46,069	58,459	65,585
Thames Valley	66,136	78,971	101,034	118,464
Warwickshire	12,521	16,286	20,807	22,577
West Mercia	25,727	31,616	37,954	44,685
West Midlands	115,942	124,872	142,192	150,562
West Yorkshire	89,345	108,003	138,419	151,597
Wiltshire	13,722	15,450	19,804	21,436
England	1,825,138	2,068,820	2,452,708	2,683,008
Dyfed-Powys	8,429	8,618	11,619	14,753
Gwent	13,389	14,304	19,362	22,291
North Wales	15,631	16,782	20,473	23,094
South Wales	63,315	67,030	79,157	82,789
Wales	100,764	106,734	130,611	142,927
England and Wales	1,925,902	2,175,554	2,583,319	2,825,935

Fraud and forgery — *Number of offences*

Police force area	*July 1988 to June 1989*	*July 1989 to June 1990*	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*
Avon and Somerset	5,888	6,796	7,247	6,248
Bedfordshire	2,218	2,600	2,357	2,252
Cambridgeshire	1,082	1,343	1,654	1,712
Cheshire	1,813	1,739	1,754	2,330
Cleveland	2,246	2,055	1,992	1,743
Cumbria	930	829	901	949
Derbyshire	1,005	1,201	1,150	1,330
Devon and Cornwall	3,536	3,430	4,085	3,627
Dorset	3,128	3,311	3,353	3,885
Durham	1,635	2,048	2,071	2,429
Essex	1,955	2,192	3,088	3,673
Gloucestershire	1,342	1,282	1,678	2,230
Greater Manchester	9,977	10,397	11,624	12,227
Hampshire	3,770	3,931	5,518	5,403
Hertfordshire	2,566	2,054	1,531	1,560
Humberside	2,625	2,915	3,166	3,208
Kent	1,913	2,256	3,071	4,071
Lancashire	5,235	3,759	3,310	3,665
Leicestershire	1,890	1,941	2,577	2,984
Lincolnshire	960	973	1,137	1,363
City of London	420	491	643	526
Merseyside	3,791	3,860	4,629	5,489
Metropolitan Police District	29,991	32,812	42,129	42,623
Norfolk	1,245	1,383	1,551	1,838
Northamptonshire	1,103	1,114	1,431	1,589
Northumbria	2,349	3,475	3,418	3,632
North Yorkshire	956	987	1,009	1,203
Nottinghamshire	2,439	2,884	3,547	3,898
South Yorkshire	1,584	1,875	1,998	2,059
Staffordshire	1,416	1,566	1,802	2,106
Suffolk	1,274	1,614	1,943	1,997
Surrey	1,289	1,369	2,014	2,134
Sussex	2,443	2,835	3,934	4,406
Thames Valley	3,938	5,087	6,364	7,776
Warwickshire	669	685	1,058	1,256
West Mercia	1,015	1,131	1,410	1,405
West Midlands	5,318	6,075	6,878	7,903
West Yorkshire	4,767	4,868	6,530	6,768
Wiltshire	873	1,086	1,637	1,758
England	122,594	132,249	157,189	167,255
Dyfed-Powys	1,211	1,164	1,318	1,184
Gwent	1,045	1,092	1,130	1,093
North Wales	1,879	1,360	1,230	1,417
South Wales	2,546	2,833	3,344	3,640
Wales	6,681	6,449	7,022	7,334
England and Wales	129,275	138,698	164,211	174,589

Criminal damage — *Number of offences*

Police force area	*July 1988 to June 1989*	*July 1989 to June 1990*	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*
Avon and Somerset	13,542	15,492	18,761	18,470
Bedfordshire	6,329	7,062	7,525	8,078
Cambridgeshire	4,429	4,979	5,912	6,851
Cheshire	7,602	8,040	8,874	10,051
Cleveland	9,318	10,242	11,586	12,900
Cumbria	4,431	5,194	6,606	7,912
Derbyshire	8,178	9,887	11,302	13,471
Devon and Cornwall	10,586	12,071	13,874	15,164
Dorset	4,438	5,162	5,366	5,646
Durham	9,387	10,605	12,095	13,154
Essex	12,440	13,274	14,812	16,709
Gloucestershire	4,267	4,500	5,382	5,439
Greater Manchester	49,522	53,063	61,798	63,931
Hampshire	15,389	16,022	17,605	20,693
Hertfordshire	7,313	7,661	8,199	8,989
Humberside	13,968	16,295	16,359	18,223
Kent	13,519	15,617	19,397	23,650

Police force area	*July 1988 to June 1989*	*July 1989 to June 1990*	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*
Lancashire	20,237	22,517	24,020	23,932
Leicestershire	7,301	9,335	11,614	12,408
Lincolnshire	4,970	5,731	5,952	6,925
City of London	400	427	441	414
Merseyside	19,861	20,294	22,689	23,903
Metropolitan Police District	122,490	135,196	152,823	166,476
Norfolk	5,657	6,722	7,617	8,531
Northamptonshire	6,797	8,375	10,005	11,691
Northumbria	27,477	36,471	44,974	48,994
North Yorkshire	4,789	5,272	5,177	5,726
Nottinghamshire	17,579	18,499	21,564	23,654
South Yorkshire	14,156	15,471	17,552	19,935
Staffordshire	9,187	10,379	11,647	12,982
Suffolk	5,127	6,046	6,228	6,029
Surrey	4,622	5,095	6,108	6,724
Sussex	9,187	10,451	12,019	13,471
Thames Valley	16,327	18,024	23,634	27,432
Warwickshire	3,411	4,374	4,873	5,300
West Mercia	9,245	10,726	11,491	11,395
West Midlands	33,249	37,405	39,922	47,426
West Yorkshire	29,925	33,783	39,561	44,571
Wiltshire	4,500	5,096	5,329	5,849
England	571,152	640,855	730,693	803,077
Dyfed-Powys	3,532	3,406	4,315	5,257
Gwent	4,127	4,927	5,897	6,057
North Wales	5,738	6,671	7,294	7,742
South Wales	20,706	25,435	30,785	33,843
Wales	34,103	40,439	48,291	52,899
England and Wales	605,255	681,294	778,984	855,976

Other offences — *Number of offences*

Police force area	*July 1988 to June 1989*	*July 1989 to June 1990*	*July 1990 to June 1991*	*July 1991 to June 1992*
Avon and Somerset	603	756	752	692
Bedfordshire	226	235	289	214
Cambridgeshire	155	306	288	301
Cheshire	526	632	1,001	1,175
Cleveland	168	227	329	283
Cumbria	153	132	208	326
Derbyshire	423	450	459	571
Devon and Cornwall	430	457	434	629
Dorset	465	667	656	717
Durham	218	331	318	445
Essex	481	582	670	653
Gloucestershire	170	197	270	395
Greater Manchester	1,554	1,868	2,210	2,594
Hampshire	559	643	890	1,106
Hertfordshire	329	417	404	415
Humberside	268	303	378	539
Kent	811	866	874	1,329
Lancashire	759	846	1,003	1,180
Leicestershire	288	279	325	471
Lincolnshire	209	288	425	485
City of London	58	73	79	70
Merseyside	1,089	1,414	1,637	1,853
Metropolitan Police District	5,845	7,232	6,819	6,842
Norfolk	228	314	361	467
Northamptonshire	182	239	290	348
Northumbria	574	738	736	810
North Yorkshire	215	263	320	413
Nottinghamshire	471	701	665	566
South Yorkshire	508	670	786	1,157
Staffordshire	290	332	353	375
Suffolk	355	489	523	562
Surrey	204	301	292	278
Sussex	839	1,026	1,145	1,235
Thames Valley	727	1,006	959	1,082
Warwickshire	120	147	193	253

Police force area	July 1988 to June 1989	July 1989 to June 1990	July 1990 to June 1991	July 1991 to June 1992
West Mercia	345	476	489	498
West Midlands	1,043	1,433	1,551	1,600
West Yorkshire	958	1,279	1,627	2,380
Wiltshire	159	217	295	424
England	23,025	28,832	31,303	35,823
Dyfed-Powys	216	184	228	258
Gwent	150	171	278	299
North Wales	215	264	279	353
South Wales	501	613	727	737
Wales	1,082	1,232	1,512	1,647
England and Wales	24,107	30,064	32,815	37,470

Notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area

All Offences *Number of offences*

Police force area	July 1988 to June 1989	July 1989 to June 1990	July 1990 to June 1991	July 1991 to June 1992
Avon and Somerset	96,258	109,746	145,945	151,267
Bedfordshire	38,541	46,562	57,910	56,818
Cambridgeshire	34,033	40,900	50,870	61,832
Cheshire	47,038	51,162	58,838	72,843
Cleveland	59,580	66,479	75,303	82,919
Cumbria	27,010	29,901	39,503	44,930
Derbyshire	45,228	54,003	67,656	83,661
Devon and Cornwall	73,988	82,430	101,366	109,567
Dorset	36,154	43,966	51018	51,075
Durham	44,329	50,015	60,489	66,257
Essex	73,360	83,831	103,154	114,627
Gloucestershire	33,180	38,484	46,569	61,347
Greater Manchester	291,792	310,086	366,170	386,375
Hampshire	93,236	109,129	132,569	150,979
Hertfordshire	40,583	43,273	51,141	58,295
Humberside	85,067	100,581	110,024	122,511
Kent	78,009	92,785	121,108	151,140
Lancashire	90,814	101,438	114,634	127,620
Leicestershire	50,677	63,619	82,387	92,688
Lincolnshire	32,448	37,158	42,840	46,322
City of London	6,300	7,290	7,621	7,296
Merseyside	137,501	135,800	144,182	152,651
Metropolitan Police District	722,493	791,488	881,260	943,058
Norfolk	42,101	49,861	58,528	66,625
Northamptonshire	37,641	43,141	53,918	59,133
Northumbria	169,148	194,687	215,117	225,649
North Yorkshire	34,172	39,857	49,037	54,073
Nottinghamshire	99,266	118,733	143,873	158,321
South Yorkshire	90,055	101,001	115,148	132,471
Staffordshire	57,472	65,223	79,470	90,860
Suffolk	30,048	34,224	39,148	43,161
Surrey	31,373	36,464	47,639	52,664
Sussex	70,208	84,148	104,625	116,564
Thames Valley	111,649	132,865	169,117	197,569
Warwickshire	23,486	28,956	36,697	42,931
West Mercia	48,500	57,952	67,225	78,051
West Midlands	227,053	247,529	280,061	317,507
West Yorkshire	178,667	209,854	267,051	304,354
Wiltshire	26,530	30,259	36,989	41,053
England	3,514,988	3,964,880	4,676,200	5,177,064
Dyfed-Powys	17,841	18,117	24,239	28,969
Gwent	25,061	27,276	35,420	40,601
North Wales	34,361	35,352	41,026	47,770
South Wales	116,653	127,440	151,791	164,975
Wales	193,916	208,185	252,476	282,315
England and Wales	3,708,904	4,173,065	4,928,676	5,459,379

Muslim Priests

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Muslim priests normally resident in Pakistan but visiting the United Kingdom on a visitor's visa, have applied during the past year, while in the United Kingdom, for rights of residence in order to be employed as a priest in the United Kingdom; how many such applications were granted *(a)* immediately, *(b)* after appeal and *(c)* on being reviewed outside the immigration rules; and how many such applicants were told to return to Pakistan.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 2 November 1992]*: People wishing to work in the United Kingdom as ministers of religion are normally required to obtain entry clearance before coming here. Our records show that in 1991, five citizens of Pakistan who were here as visitors were granted extensions of stay as ministers of religion outside the immigration rules. The other information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Unused land

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to end all schemes whereby farm owners may receive grants in respect of unused land.

Mr. Curry: Ministry grants are paid only on land which is appropriately managed to meet agricultural or environmental objectives. We have no plans to end such schemes.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how his departmental Green Minister has promoted protection of the ozone layer with specific policy measures; which possible measures have been considered and rejected; and on what grounds.

Mr. Curry: The policy of the Department is not to purchase new materials that are known to be harmful to the ozone layer as set out in the Montreal protocol and its revisions. Where existing equipment containing substances harmful to the ozone layer is to be renewed or subject to major maintenance it will be replaced by equipment which is understood to be ozone friendly. The Department considered but rejected replacing all sound equipment containing materials harmful to the ozone layer because on balance there was seen to be no significant environmental advantage in doing this before the end of its natural life span.

Live Horses (Exports)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement setting out the progress that has been made in developing policy to prevent the export of live horses for consumption as food.

Mr. Soames: European Community directive 91/628 establishes welfare standards for the transport of animals in the Community from 1 January 1993. The directive provides that national rules may remain applicable for horses and our national arrangements will continue to apply. The Council has agreed to return to this issue at a later stage with a view to setting additional welfare safeguards for all transport of horses in the Community.

Quarantine

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those United Kingdom airports where the administration of animal quarantine regulations are not the responsibility of a principal local authority in whose area part or all of the airport is located.

Mr. Soames: Heathrow airport is the only airport in Great Britain where the responsibility for enforcement of animal import regulations at the airport is not vested in the local authority in which the airport is situated. This is provided for under section 50 of the Animal Health Act 1981, which lays down that the common council of the City of London shall be the local authority for the City of London and for the whole of Greater London for the purposes of the provisions of the Act relating to imported animals, and the Designation of Local Authority (Heathrow Airport—London) Order 1976—SI 1976 No. 2101—which makes the City of London the responsible local authority in respect of that part of Heathrow airport which lies within the county of Surrey.

Enforcement of animal import controls at Northern Ireland airports is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland.

Mink

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to publish the responses received by his Department on the Review of the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987.

Mr. Gummer: Responses to the consultation exercise will be made available from the Ministry's main library when a decision has been taken on the arrangements which are to apply in future. This decision will be taken shortly.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of *(a)* British and *(b)* other EC national hauliers and handlers prosecuted in each year since 1985 for breaking welfare standards whilst transporting livestock.

Mr. Gummer: Information is not collected in the format requested. Since 1988 the number of prosecutions undertaken by local authorities has been laid before the House, in the return of expenditure and proceedings taken under the Animal Health Act 1981. Information on prosecutions in other member states is not available.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of inspections carried out by Ministry verterinary staff specifically to assess welfare standards in each year since 1985.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 11 June 1992, *Official Report*, column 273.

WALES

Household Statistics

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of households in Wales at present; and if he will publish an estimated figure for the number of households in the year 2011.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The total number of households in Wales in 1991 according to the 1989 based household projections is 1,095,000; the figure for 2011 from the same source is 1,237,000.

Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set an annual target figure for the development of new-build affordable homes in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We have no plans to do so.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the role of inter-authority co-operation within the context of his Department's local government reform package for Wales;

(2) if he will outline how the current strategic planning functions carried out by county councils will be fulfilled by the new unitary authorities.

Mr. David Hunt: These matters will be dealt with in the White Paper that I will be publishing in due course.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration has been given by his Department to the effect of local government reform in Wales upon applications from local authorities for planning consent for their own projects.

Mr. David Hunt: Under the present law a local planning authority may grant itself planning permission to develop its own land within its area. Under the new structure I expect the new councils, as local planning authorities, to have the same powers.

Minerals

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received stating objections to some or all of the guidelines included in planning policy guidance note 3 on mineral extraction.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No comprehensive record exists, but in response to a monitoring exercise which the Government undertook last March, four organisations in Wales wrote calling for revision of minerals planning policy guidance note 3. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 15 July the Government's intention to bring forward for public consultation draft revised planning guidelines on coal extraction generally.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action is currently undertaken by his Department to apply the polluter pays principle to the mineral sector in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In determining those minerals planning applications and appeals that come before my right hon. Friend and his inspectors, consideration is given to the need to achieve acceptable environmental standards through the imposition of appropriate conditions designed to control the working of the site and its restoration to an acceptable after-use. Certain mineral sector processes in Wales are also subject to pollution control by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The cost of meeting acceptable environmental standards falls on the industry in line with the polluter pays principle.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what level of resources has been granted by his Department to mineral planning authorities in Wales in each year of the last 10 years; and what plans he has to increase the level of resources.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Mineral planning is one of the services for which county councils in Wales are responsible. Resource requirements for mineral planning are taken into account in setting standard spending assessments for county councils as part of the annual local government settlement. Proposals for the 1993-94 local government revenue settlement will be announced in due course.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what account has been taken by his Department of the implications of local government reform in Wales upon *(a)* strategic mineral planning policies *(b)* the review and upgrading of old minerals permissions and *(c)* the resourcing of such a review and upgrading.

Mr. David Hunt: Matters relating to minerals planning have been considered by the planning and economic development sub-group established under the auspices of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government. I am now considering the reports submitted by that and other sub-groups.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish his Department's definition of sustainable development; and if he will make a statement on the application of this concept to the work of his Department;

(2) if he will amend the planning policy guidance notes produced by his Department so as to include references on the importance of an environmentally sustainable approach to the development of the Welsh coastline;

(3) if he will issue guidelines to planning authorities in Wales on the application of environmental sustainability within the planning process.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Brundtland commission, in its report "Our Common Future" published 1987 stated:

> "Humanity has the opportunity to make development sustainable—to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

In their environment White Papers, starting with "This Common Inheritance", the Government have made clear their intention to work towards ensuring that development and growth are sustainable. The concept of sustainable development is a global one, and it is for the Government to develop policies consistent with that concept, which can be reflected in local decisions. The planning system, and the preparation of development plans in particular, can play an important part in ensuring that development as a whole is sustainable. The sum total of decisions in the planning field, as elsewhere, should not deny future generations the best of today's environment. The need to reflect the principle of sustainable development lies behind the revision of the range of planning policy guidance notes, currently well under way.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made to the chairmen of the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales to encourage them to integrate their statutory objectives in the interest of formulating a sustainable development plan for the coastal areas of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: There is regular liaison between the two agencies on rural development matters as on all matters of common interest and each agency is represented on the board of the other.

Air Quality

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what efforts are currently undertaken by his Department to monitor air quality on a continuous basis around opencast coal mining sites; which sites have been selected for such air monitoring; and if he will make it his policy to make such monitoring data available to the general public.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The position on air monitoring around opencast coal-mining sites is described in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the Government's response to the second report of the Welsh Affairs Committee, Session 1990-91 "The Future of Opencast Coalmining in Wales", Cm 1652, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Environment Guide

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many copies of "The Welsh Environment; a Guide to your Rights and Responsibilities" have been *(a)* produced and *(b)* distributed by his Department; and if he will list the main outlets for distribution.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A total of 60,000 copies of "The Welsh Environment: A Guide to your Rights and Responsibilities" were produced for the Welsh Office. To date 59,700 have been distributed, largely through county and district councils, main libraries and citizens advice bureaux in Wales.

Supermarket Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the occasions during each of the last five years where coastal sites have been utilised for supermarket development in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not held centrally.

EC Environment Directive

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the organisations consulted by his Department on the implementation of the EC directive on the freedom of access to information on the environment;

(2) if he will issue guidelines to local authorities in Wales defining in detail the new procedures to be undertaken in connection with the implementation of the EC directive on freedom of access of information on the environment.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: On 29 October the Department of the Environment published for consultation with local authorities and other organisations in Great Britain, draft regulations and guidance on the implementation of the EC directive on freedom of access of information on the environment. The organisations in Wales that are being consulted are as follows:

Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales
The All Wales Chief Environmental Health Officers' Panel
Assembly of Welsh Counties
Brecon Beacons National Park
Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
Council of Welsh Districts
Country Landowners Association (Wales Regional Office)
Countryside Council for Wales
County and District Councils in Wales
The Development Board for Rural Wales
Farmers Union of Wales
Friends of the Earth Cymru
Land Authority for Wales
National Farmers Union, Wales
North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
Prince of Wales Committee
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Wales
Snowdonia National Park
South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee
The Associated Law Society in Wales
Wales Tourist Board
Wales Wildlife and Countryside Link
Welsh Association of Community and Town Councils
Welsh Development Agency

Opencast Mining

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will undertake a comprehensive community health study in areas affected by opencast mining developments in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We have no plans for such a study.

Transport Supplementary Grant

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the amount specifically allocated through the transport supplementary grant for local safety schemes proposed by local authorities in Wales in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As agreed with local authority associations only projects costing over £5 million can attract transport grant. Authorities finance local safety schemes from unhypothecated resources.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many meetings of the Council of Ministers he has attended during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council of Ministers.

Mr. David Hunt: Although it is not the practice for territorial Ministers to attend the majority of Council Ministers meetings, the United Kingdom's position at Councils represents the collective view reached following ministerial discussions in which I fully participate. I have also this year had the pleasure of hosting a gathering of Ministers as part of the EC informal Council on Social Affairs which met in Wales in October.

Railways

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the rail network in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: British Rail constantly reviews the performance of its services in Wales and in particular the quality of the service it provides in accordance with the objectives of the passengers charter.

I am pleased to see the latest expansion of services on the Maesteg to Cardiff line supported by Mid Glamorgan county council with the benefit of supplementary credit approvals from the Department.

Car Sharing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what study he has made of the benefits to the environment in Wales that could arise from the introduction of incentives to establish car sharing schemes in *(a)* urban areas *(b)* rural areas.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have made no such study, but the Government introduced substantial changes to insurance regulations several years ago to encourage car sharing.

Hotel and Catering Industry

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the total numbers of *(a)* hotels, *(b)* guest houses and *(c)* catering establishments which have closed down in Wales during each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each training and enterprise council the number of training weeks contracted for under employment training *(a)* in 1991-92 and *(b)* in 1992-93; and what was the percentage difference between those years in each TEC.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is set out in the table.

Employment training—training weeks

TEC	*1991-92 actual*	*1992-93 budget*	*1991-92 to 1992-93 percentage change*
Gwent	88,284	82,250	−6·83
Mid Glamorgan	99,629	89,000	−10·67
North East Wales	37,758	39,000	3·29
North West Wales	48,084	50,965	5·99
Powys	17,174	15,000	−12·66
South Glamorgan	63,140	65,550	3·82
West Wales	139,283	135,000	−3·08
Total Wales	493,352	476,765	−3·36

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each training and enterprise council the budget made available from his Department for the provision of youth training places for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is shown in the tables.

Youth training budgets

(a) At current prices *£ million*

TEC	*1991-92 actual expenditure*	*1992-93 budget*	*1991-92 to 1992-93 percentage change*
Gwent	8·310	7·924	−4·65
Mid Glamorgan	10·154	9·764	−3·84
North East Wales	5·526	5·115	−7·44
North West Wales	6·493	6·007	−7·48
Powys	1·778	1·785	0·39
South Glamorgan	4·400	4·786	8·77
West Wales	12·082	11·257	−6·83
Total Wales	48·743	46·638	−4·32

(b) At 1992-93 prices *£ million*

TEC	*1991-92 actual expenditure*	*1992-93 budget*	*1991-92 to 1992-93 percentage change*
Gwent	8·684	7·924	−8·75
Mid Glamorgan	10·611	9·764	−7·98
North East Wales	5·775	5·115	−11·42
North West Wales	6·785	6·007	−11·47
Powys	1·858	1·785	−3·93
South Glamorgan	4·598	4·786	4·09
West Wales	12·020	11·257	−10·84
Total Wales	50·936	46·638	−8·44

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each training and enterprise council the budget made available from his Department for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is shown in the tables.

TEC Budgets

(a) at current prices

£ million

TEC	*1991-92 actual expenditure*	*1992-93 Budget*	*1991-92 to 1992-93 percentage change*
Gwent	17·390	17·909	2·98
Mid Glamorgan	20·039	20·561	2·60
North East Wales	11·363	11·149	−1·88
North West Wales	12·883	14·163	9·94
Powys	4·352	4·415	1·45
South Glamorgan	11·670	13·066	11·96
West Wales	29·294	27·911	−4·72
Total Wales	106·991	109·174	2·04

(b) at 1992-93 prices

£ million

TEC	*1991-92 actual expenditure*	*1992-93 Budget*	*1991-92 to 1992-93 percentage change*
Gwent	18·173	17·909	−1·45
Mid Glamorgan	20·941	20·561	−1·81
North East Wales	11·874	11·149	−6·11
North West Wales	13·463	14·163	5·20
Powys	4·548	4·415	−2·92
South Glamorgan	12·195	13·066	7·14
West Wales	30·612	27·911	−8·82
Total Wales	111·806	109·174	−2·35

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each training and enterprise council the number of training weeks contracted for under youth training in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* in 1992-93; and what was the percentage difference between those years in each TEC.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Youth training training weeks

TEC	*1991-92 Actual*	*1992-93 Budget*	*1991-92 to 1992-93 percentage change*
Gwent	164,755	170,000	3·18
Mid Glamorgan	190,292	198,000	4·05
North East Wales	93,591	87,000	−7·04
North West Wales	114,682	125,000	9·00
Powys	35,810	37,000	3·32
South Glamorgan	94,810	105,000	10·75
West Wales	228,553	227,240	−0·57
Total Wales	922,493	949,240	2·90

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each training and enterprise council the budget made available from his Department for the provision of employment training places for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is shown in the tables.

Employment training budget

(a) at current prices *£ million*

TEC	*1991-92 actual expenditure*	*1992-93 budget*	*1991-92 to 1992-93 percentage change*
Gwent	4·399	4·227	−3·91
Mid Glamorgan	4·680	4·767	1·86
North East Wales	2·520	2·081	−17·42
North West Wales	2·565	2·857	11·38
Powys	0·837	0·885	5·73
South Glamorgan	3·274	3·426	4·64
West Wales	8·239	6·661	−19·15
Total Wales	26·514	24·904	−6·07

(b) at 1992-93 prices *£ million*

TEC	*1991-92 actual expenditure*	*1992-93 budget*	*1991-92 to 1992-93 percentage change*
Gwent	4·597	4·227	−8·05
Mid Glamorgan	4·891	4·767	−2·53
North East Wales	2·633	2·081	−20·98
North West Wales	2·680	2·857	6·59
Powys	0·875	0·885	1·18
South Glamorgan	3·421	3·426	0·14
West Wales	8·610	6·661	−22·63
Total Wales	27·707	24·904	−10·12

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy towards the voluntary sector in the social services.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government believe that local authorities should secure a mixture of social care provision by statutory, voluntary and private organisations, in order to increase the available range of options and to provide wider consumer choice.

Social services departments in Wales, as the lead agencies in social care planning, are expected to involve fully the voluntary sector as partners in the process. Specific grant schemes, unique to Wales, have been introduced to foster and develop the voluntary sector contribution.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he gives to county and district authorities to assist voluntary organisations.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for local authorities to decide which voluntary organisations they wish to assist and to what extent. It is not for central Government to tell authorities how they should manage their relationships with the voluntary sector, although my right hon. Friend and I do encourage close working relations between the two.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the amount of financial support he gives in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales to voluntary organisations.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest figures available indicate that grants paid directly by the Welsh Office to voluntary organisations in Wales totalled £8·8 million in 1990-91. The figure excludes indirect grants paid to housing associations—£131·4 million—and those paid through intermediaries, for example, local or health authorities, under such schemes as the urban programme—£3·1 million.

Figures for Clwyd are not readily available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he will take to encourage partnerships between voluntary organisations and local authorities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend and I will continue, through the various grant scheme mechanisms operated by the Department, to encourage local authorities to examine the scope for involving voluntary organisations widely in the planning and delivery of their services.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those voluntary organisations he has met in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount of financial support given to voluntary organisations in each of *(a)* the counties and *(b)* the districts in Wales; and giving a per capita figure.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not held by the Department. The hon. Gentleman would need to write to all voluntary organisations in Wales if he wishes to know the amount of financial support they receive and the geographical distribution of their expenditure.

Health Authority Targets

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each health authority in Wales the specific waiting list and performance targets and how each health authority has performed against those targets at *(a)* 31 March, *(b)* 30 June and *(c)* 31 August.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: Information on waiting times is collected on a quarterly basis; the latest available figures are for 30 June 1992.

"Agenda for Action" targets are set for the year end. Health authorities are committed to achieving these targets.

Performance against both "Agenda for Action" and patients charter targets for March and June is given in the tables.

DHA waiting lists against agenda for action and patient's charter targets
(a) Performance at March 1992: Total specialties

DHA	Out-patients waiting over three months Per cent.	Urgent in-patients waiting over one month Per cent.	Urgent day-cases waiting over one month Per cent.	In-patients waiting over one year Per cent.
		Agenda for Action		
Clwyd	22·3	1·7	2·9	13·9
East Dyfed	28·0	0·0	0·0	17·7
Gwent	37·1	1·5	0·0	17·6
Gwynedd	22·8	0·0	0·0	20·2
Mid Glamorgan	35·4	2·3	0·1	15·2
Pembrokeshire	44·0	0·0	0·0	22·6
Powys	35·0	0·0	0·0	6·1
South Glamorgan	43·5	0·9	6·2	12·8
West Glamorgan	56·0	0·6	0·0	19·2
Wales	38·2	1·1	1·5	16·3
Target 1991-92	28·0	0·0	0·0	19·0

DHA waiting lists against Agenda for Action and Patients Charter targets
(b) *Performance at June 1992: Total specialties*

DHA	Out-patients waiting over three months Per cent.	Urgent in-patients waiting over one month Per cent.	Urgent day-cases waiting over one month Per cent.	In-patients waiting over one year Per cent.	Day-cases waiting over one year Per cent.	In-patients waiting over two years Per cent.	Day cases waiting over two years Percent.
		Agenda for Action				Patient's Charter	
Clwyd	27·7	16·9	2·1	13·5	5·1	1·8	0·4
East Dyfed	31·6	0·0	0·0	17·5	4·2	0·0	0·0
Gwent	44·1	0·9	0·1	22·9	3·9	4·1	1·7
Gwynedd	40·0	0·0	0·0	15·9	5·4	5·8	0·0
Mid Glamorgan	27·9	1·4	0·0	20·5	1·8	8·6	4·4
Pembrokeshire	36·2	0·0	0·0	12·0	7·6	8·0	2·3
Powys	34·1	0·0	0·0	8·0	3·3	0·0	0·0
South Glamorgan	50·0	2·3	12·4	16·8	18·1	3·9	5·5
West Glamorgan	55·5	0·7	0·0	17·4	2·9	3·8	0·0
Wales	40·9	1·0	2·2	15·7	6·6	4·5	1·8
Target 1992-93	23·0	nil	nil	15·0	15·0	nil	nil

All authorities are addressing as a matter of priority, the issue of out-patient waiting times, for it is widely recognised that performance here is currently furthest away from target.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he intends to take against health authorities who do not meet "Agenda for Action" targets on waiting lists and performance.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: All health authorities are committed to achieving patients charter guarantees by the end of the financial year and are collectively on course to achieve the "Agenda for Action" target that by the end of this financial year no more than 15 per cent. of in-patients and day cases will have to wait over one year for non-urgent treatment.

Performance against targets is monitored very closely and has been discussed in great detail at the recent round of annual review meetings.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Coal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the predicted profits available from the sale of coal reserves known to exist in the 31 pits he announced would close against the loss of income tax, national insurance and indirect tax payments from coal miners made redundant, on the assumption of the maximum calculated length of operation of each pit to technical exhaustion.

Mr. Eggar: We do not have the information requested on the predicted profits from the sale of coal reserves.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the meetings in September and October between his Department and *(a)* representatives of the Colombian Government and *(b)* Carbocol, the Colombian state coal company; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) on what dates he, his ministerial colleagues, or his officials, met Ministers or officials, representing the Government of Colombia, to discuss the sale and supply of Colombian coal to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the intergovernmental committee between Her Majesty's Government and Colombia was established; how many meetings, to date, of the committee have taken place; when the next meeting is scheduled; and what matters are due to be discussed.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Monday 2 November, *Official Report*, column *32*. The next meeting of the trade facilitation group is expected to be in Colombia in February. There have been no intergovernmental meetings to discuss the sale and supply of Colombian coal to the United Kingdom. The Minister for Trade met the Colombian Foreign Trade Minister on 30 September to discuss bilateral trade issues. No meetings took place with Carbocol.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out his current timetable for the privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* Decisions have yet to be taken on the timing of privatisation. Decisions on the timetable will need to take account of the coal review which my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has announced.

Dr. Hampson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many civil servants are involved in conducting his review into the coal industry; and if he will list for each of them their grade and previous responsibility within his Department or other Government Departments.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* The Department's coal review team is headed by Peter Loughead, a grade 3 civil servant, who previously worked on financial services in the DTI and then in Her Majesty's Treasury. It comprises in addition one grade 5, three grade 7s, one higher executive officer (Development), two higher executive officers and two executive officers. They have had a range of previous responsibilities within the Department of Trade and Industry. There are, in addition, seven clerical and secretarial staff. It is likely that further people will join the review team in due course.

Plutonium and Uranium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current cost for the storage of separated plutonium at *(a)* Sellafield and *(b)* Dounreay; and what is the expected future cost for storage of plutonium separated from irradiated nuclear fuel already contracted to each respective reprocessing plant.

Mr. Eggar: This is a commercial matter for the owners of the sites in question and their customers as owners of the separated plutonium.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the cost to date incurred by the requirement to store depleted uranium at *(a)* Sellafield and *(b)* Chapelcross nuclear facilities, arising from the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel.

Mr. Eggar: Uranium recovered from reprocessing by British Nuclear Fuels plc is stored on behalf of its customers as owners of the material until they decide to recycle it as new reactor fuel. The cost of storage is a commercial matter for the parties involved. I understand that to date some 15,000 tonnes of uranium arising from reprocessing have been recycled in the United Kingdom as reactor fuel to generate electricity.

EC Energy Programmes

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the budgetary allocations for 1993 to the European Community energy programmes *(a)* Save, *(b)* Altener, *(c)* Thermie and *(d)* Euratom.

Mr. Eggar: Details of the Commission's spending proposals for 1993 are given in its preliminary draft budget —COM(92)140-EN—published on 15 June 1992. Copies of this document have been deposited in the Library of the House. It should be noted that Euratom is a treaty and not a single programme, as the other three are. The Government's contribution to these programmes is not separately identifiable as it forms part of the United Kingdom's general contribution to the European Community budget.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Eggar: Government Departments have a statutory right under the Public Records Acts to retrieve records temporarily from the Public Record Office for their own administrative use. The Department of Trade and Industry currently has 55 records out on loan and these are listed. Records are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed.

Class No.	*Piece No.*	*Title*
BT11	38	International Order Commission: jurisdiction
BT11	38	Imperial preference: East African coffee shipped on optional bills of lading
BT11	38	International convention for abolition of import and export prohibitions: Ratification
BT11	38	Anglo-Turkish agreement: travellers samples 1912-1929
BT11	190	Convention on the abolition of export and import prohibitions. Question of withdrawal by the United Kingdom and other states
BT11	41 B	Anglo-Soviet commercial treaty
BT11	41 B	Merchandise Marks Act: Nicaraguan registration of initiation of British trade mark

Class No.	*Piece No.*	*Title*
BT11	41 B	Germany-Haiti commercial treaty and Anglo-Haitian treaty
BT11	41 B	Oil concessions in British Empire—Government control of companies
BT11	41 B	Ceylon income tax effect on life assurance companies
BT11	41 B	Merchandise Marks Act—hall marks—registration of in USA
BT11	41 B	Portugal: Colonial Act draft—articles detrimental to British interests
BT11	41 B	Convention for abolition of import and export restriction Government attitude
BT11	41 B	Roumania—trade difficulties under new tariff
BT11	41 B	USA—entry of British colonials into
BT11	685	Convention for the abolition of import and export prohibition
DSIR 26	3	Functions of local government board and government laboratory
DSIR 26	4	Stationery Office: inquiry into work carried out by department
DSIR 26	25	Committee on Scientific Staffs in Government Department: minutes
DSIR 26	26	Committee on Scientific Staffs in Government Department: miscellaneous papers
DSIR 26	27	Committee on Scientific Staffs in Government Department: report papers 1-23, 27-28 and 30-32
DSIR 26	76	Power alcohol denaturants
DSIR 26	83	Nose-opening rays—effect of infra-red radiation on breathing—report by DSIR and Medical Research Council
DSIR 26	113	Collection of papers including Adam Hilgar photogravure of spectrogram
DSIR 26	114	Procedures and methods: notes on preparation and correspondence, including Adam Hilgar ultra-violet spectroscope
DSIR 26	120	Food and Drugs Act 1876—reference court cases
DSIR 26	121	Food and Drugs Act 1876—reference court cases
DSIR 26	122	Food and Drugs Act 1876—reference court cases
DSIR 26	189	Analyses—general
DSIR 26	199	—Index of analysis methods
		Workbooks as below:
DSIR 26	202	H. J. Helm
DSIR 26	203	H. J. Helm
DSIR 26	204	H. J. Helm: Index to analytical work giving file reference
DSIR 26	210	J. H. Holmes
DSIR 26	212	C. H. Burge and E. Young
DSIR 26	213	C. H. Burge
DSIR 26	215	C. H. Burge subject index
DSIR 26	216	R. Bannister
DSIR 26	219	G. N. Stoker
DSIR 26	236	W. G. Scott
DSIR 26	237	W. G. Scott
DSIR 26	238	W. G. Scott
DSIR 26	240	W. G. Scott
DSIR 26	241	W. G. Scott
DSIR 26	252	Press cuttings—customer general order books
DSIR 26	256	Book of Signatures
DSIR 26	338	Registered Laboratory Files—Miscellaneous analyses and investigations
BT 31	1	National Savings Bank Association Ltd
BT 31	682	Consolidated Assurance Company
BT 31	1161	Industrial Newspaper Company Ltd
BT 58	419	Companies Department: correspondence and Papers COS 6585
BT 58	423	Ditto 256/1
BT 58	425	Ditto 623/4
BT 226	4978	A. E. Francis
POWE 33	1746	Petroleum: Libya development

Plutonium Shipments

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate in tonnes the amount of plutonium to be shipped annually between Japan and the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield between 1992 and the year 2000.

Mr. Eggar: This is a commercial matter between British Nuclear Fuels plc and its customers.

Auditing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many auditing firms are registered with each of the recognised supervisory bodies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The number of auditing firms—including sole practitioners—registered as eligible for appointment as company auditor under the rules of each of the recognised supervisory bodies on 27 October is shown in the table.

Supervisory body	*Number of registered firms*
Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales	9,225
Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland	730
Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ireland	344
Chartered Association of Certified Accountants	5,859
Association of Authorised Public Accountants	505

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the instances of audit failures which he has referred to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department routinely refers to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales complaints received, and reports from statutory investigations, on accounts that have been audited by auditors registered eligible for appointment as company auditors under the rules of the institute. Since the inception of the new regulatory regime for auditors under part II of the Companies Act 1989 on 1 October 1991, some 60 such cases have been referred. The most comon type of referral involved infringements of the accounting requirements of the Companies Act 1985 by small private companies. Most other complaints involved auditors' non-compliance with the auditing standard "The Audit Report" and auditors' provision of a special report that a company is entitled to the reporting exemptions available to small or medium-sized companies when the company was not in fact so entitled.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will establish a body similar to the Dearing committee to investigate the setting of auditing standards in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names of auditing firms who have been criticised in his Department's reports relating to banks and insurance companies published since 1979.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Since 1979 there have been four published reports of investigations under the Companies

Act into the affairs of companies connected with banking and insurance which have included criticism of auditors as follows:

Company	*Auditor*
Ashbourne Investments Ltd.	Wright Stevens and Lloyd
Ramor Investments Ltd.	Price Waterhouse
Minet Holdings plc WMD Underwriting Agencies Ltd.	Black Geoghegan and Till Josolyne Layton-Bennett and Co. Arthur Young McClelland Moores and Co.
Alexander Howden Holdings plc	de Paula Turner Laker and Co. Peat Marwick Mitchell and Co. Josolyne Layton-Bennett and Co. Arthur Young McClelland Moores and Co.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce proposals to prevent auditors of insurance companies from recruiting company directors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I see no reason to do so. Ethical guidance issued by the professional accountancy bodies states that no one should take part in the audit of a company if he has, during the period on which the report is to be made or at any time in the two years prior to the first day of that period, been an officer—other than an auditor—or employee of that company. Under part II of the Companies Act 1989, recognised supervisory bodies are required to have adequate rules and practices as to professional integrity and independence.

Directors' Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward proposals under which the directors of a public limited company would be required to state in the directors' report the number of shares bought and sold by them during a year.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. The Companies Act requires disclosure in either the directors' report of the notes to the accounts of directors' interests in shares at the beginning and end of the financial year. It also requires the company to keep a register of directors' interests in the company's shares which is open for inspection to shareholders and —for a fee—the public; copies may be obtained for a fee.

Astra plc

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on which date inspectors were appointed to inquire into the affairs of Astra plc; which matters were referred for the examination of the inspectors at the outset; which matters were subsequently referred to them; and when he expects to receive their report.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer to the answer which my predecessor gave to the hon. Member on 19 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *118*. The inspectors are now in the final stages of their investigation, but I cannot say when it will be completed.

Environmental Technology Innovation Scheme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many projects and total sums have been committed in the current year so far under his Department's environmental technology innovation scheme nationally and in each region; and if he will provide information on a similar basis for the Euroenviron programme of the EC.

Mr. Eggar: The following commitments have been made under the schemes during 1992:

Environmental technology innovation scheme—jointly managed by DTI and DOE.

Region	*Number*	*Sums Committed £*
(a) DTI Approved Projects		
West midlands	4	818,875
South-east	2	388,450
	6	1,207,325
(b) DOE Approved Projects		
North-west	5	469,270
Yorkshire and Humberside	1	202,789
East midlands	1	80,000
South-east	3	553,374
East	2	303,450
	12	1,608,883
Euroenviron		
Scotland	2	511,400
South-east	2	149,812
South-west	1	19,878
	5	681,090

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Clelland: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total revenue expenditure in each of the English regions by his Department in the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Sainsbury: Revenue expenditure by region on the enterprise initiative: consultancy assistance is given in the table.

Enterprise initiative: consultancy assistance

Region	*Expenditure 1990-91 £'000s*	*Expenditure 1991-92 £'000s*
Scotland	3,440	5,070
Wales	2,644	3,591
North East	2,505	3,536
Yorkshire and Humberside	5,150	6,888
East Midlands	2,940	4,246
East	2,750	3,639
South East	9,102	13,441
South West	3,420	4,476
West Midlands	5,500	7,886

Region	*Expenditure 1990-91 £000s*	*Expenditure 1991-92 £000s*
North West	7,524	8,247

Regional enterprise grants

Information on regional enterprise grants—innovation grants—by region is regularly published in the Industrial Development Act (1982) annual report, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

The figures for other revenue expenditure are either not broken down regionally, or could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Orimulsion

Mr. Oakes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many tonnes of orimulsion have been imported into the United Kingdom in 1990, 1991 and to date in 1992.

Mr. Eggar: Imports of orimulsion in 1990, 1991 and 1992 to date were:

	Thousand tonnes
1990	156
1991	465
[1]1992	1,039

[1] January to October.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will meet a delegation of creditors, depositors and ex-employees of BCCI.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to do so. Creditors and ex-employees met the previous Secretary of State and have since had several meetings with officials in my Department.

Liquidators

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidelines he proposes to introduce as a result of representations he has received concerning the costs of liquidators.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There are no such proposals. The remuneration of liquidators is a matter for the creditors whose money is at stake. Where there is a dispute as to the sums claimed recourse may be had to the courts.

Gas-fired Power Stations

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the licences which have been granted for the establishment of gas-fired power stations since 1987 and the number of applications for such licences which have not yet been determined.

Mr. Eggar: The following is the information requested.

Gas-fired generating stations granted permission prior to section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 coming into effect

Station	*Location*	*Proposer*	*Capacity*
Commissioned			
Killingholme (1st unit)	South Humberside	PowerGen plc	450MW
Roosecote	Cumbria	Lakeland Power Ltd.	230 MW
Under construction			
Brigg	South Humberside	Regional Power Generators	240 MW
Calder Hall	Cumbria	British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.	160 MW
Corby	Northants	Corby Power Ltd.	350 MW
Killingholme (2nd unit)	South Humberside	PowerGen plc	450 MW
Peterborough	Cambridgeshire	Peterborough Power	355 MW
Permission given but construction not yet started			
Shotton	Clwyd	Shotton Paper Co.	200 MW

Gas-fired generating stations granted consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989

Station	*Location*	*Proposer*	*Capacity*
Under construction			
Barking	London	Barking Power Ltd.	1,000 MW
Keadby 1	Near Scunthorpe	Keady Power Ltd.	680 MW
Killingholme "A" (phase 1)	South Humberside	National Power plc	650 MW
Rye House	Hertfordshire	PowerGen plc	680 MW
Wilton	Teesside	Teesside Power Ltd.	1,750 MW
Consent granted but construction not yet started			
Angle Bay	Dyfed	Texaco Ltd.	1,280 MW
Charterhouse Street	City of London	Citigen Ltd.	90 MW
Coryton	Essex	Coryton Cogeneration Ltd.	460 MW
Deeside	Clwyd	Deeside Power Development Co. Ltd.	450 MW
Killingholme "A" (phase 2)	South Humberside	National Power plc	370 MW
King's Lynn	Lincolnshire	Energy Supply Co.	110 MW
Little Barford	Bedfordshire	National Power plc	680 MW
Medway	Kent	Medway Power Ltd.	660 MW
Shoreham	West Sussex	South Coast Power Ltd.	500 MW
Spondon	Near Derby	Derwent Cogeneration	318 MW

Station	*Location*	*Proposer*	*Capacity*
Stallingborough	**South Humberside**	**Humber Power Ltd.**	**1,100 MW**
Sutton Bridge	**Lincolnshire**	**Independent Power Generators Ltd.**	**700 MW**

There are 12 applications made under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 for gas-fired generating stations with a capacity greater than 50 MW which have not yet been determined.

Power stations with a capacity of 50 MW or less are dealt with under the Town and Country Planning Acts and my Department does not have information on such stations.

Energy Costs

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account is taken of the offset against oil taxation of the cost to the consortium of offshore transportation of gas from off Aberdeen, through the central area transmission system, in Government comparisons of the relative costs of gas and coal-fired electricity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As I announced on 26 October, my Department's review of the prospects for the 21 pits proposed for closure by British Coal, but not subject to the current statutory consultation, will consider the consequences of the switch to gas in power generation and the relative costs of gas and coal-fired generation. All relevant elements contributing to these costs will be taken into account.

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Milligan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has responded to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the service provided by the AEA; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have today placed in the Library of the House the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's initial response to the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) which was published in May 1992.

I am grateful to the commission for the comprehensive review they carried out. The commission recognised that the AEA is an organisation undergoing fundamental change, that it could continue to make efficiency and quality improvements and could generate higher net revenue. The Commission made 58 recommendations for improving the AEA's performance. It was none the less impressed by the expertise, enthusiasm and dedication of the AEA's staff and recognised the substantial progress they have already made with a radical change in culture. I endorse the commission's recognition of the progress made so far.

I also welcome the AEA's positive response to the commission's report. The AEA has accepted all but one of the commission's recommendations. It has accepted much of the spirit of the remaining recommendation (51) on inter-business charging, and will review the position after a year. The AEA's response clearly demonstrates its determination to achieve further improvements in its management practices and I am pleased that many of the commission's recommendations have already been implemented.

The commission made a number of recommendations to the Government. In response to recommendation 2, we will consider with the AEA the setting of efficiency and quality of service performance targets for the AEA. We will take recommendations 3, board bonus scheme, 9, return on capital employed target, and 33, restructuring, into account at the appropriate time.

We will continue to monitor the AEA's progress in implementing the recommendations and I will report progress to the House in due course.

EC Partnerships Directive

Mr. Butler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made in implementing the EC partnerships directive, 90/605/EEC.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have today published a consultative document and draft regulations on the implementation of this EC directive requiring the preparation and publication of accounts for some partnerships between limited companies.

The directive will not affect the majority of partnerships in the United Kingdom which are formed between people rather than companies. It applies only where all the partners—or general partners for limited partnerships—are limited companies.

The consultative document explains that the majority of companies that form partnerships will already cover them in their own annual accounts. Where this is not done, the companies concerned must publish the partnership accounts with their own. If all the partner companies are abroad then, in certain circumstances, the partnership must make its accounts available on demand at its main office.

The draft regulations also provide that companies which are members of partnerships and unlimited companies covered by this directive must disclose information about them and that such unlimited companies must publish their accounts.

A copy of the consultative document and the draft regulations has been placed in the Library of the House. Comments should be made to my Department by 22 January 1993.

Pit Closures

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had about pit closures from the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; what reply he is sending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has received and replied to two letters from the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress on this matter. It is not his usual practice to make public the content of such replies.

EC Funding

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the United Kingdom's working population live in areas which currently qualify for *(a)* assisted areas funding and *(b)* EC regional development funding.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* The assisted areas currently cover approximately 32·6 per cent. of the United Kingdom's working population.

Working population figures eligible for EC regional development funding are not available. This is because reliable working population figures are only available at travel-to-work area (TTWA) level and many eligible areas are not complete TTWAs. The total population covered, however, is some 40 per cent. of the United Kingdom population.

EC Structural Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the European Commission's proposals for the review of Community structural fund regulations.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 November 1992]:* The Commission is expected to table its proposals after the Edinburgh European Council which is due to decide on the future size of the funds.

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for the last 12 months, the fact-finding visits made by *(a)* the chief executive of the Export Credits Guarantee Department, *(b)* the head of division of the business task force 1, *(c)* the Inspector of Companies, *(d)* the head of the competition policy division, *(g)* the head of the manufacturing technology division and *(h)* the head of the telecommunications and posts division; what were the findings in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Senior officials in my Department, including those listed, undertake a wide range of visits and other meetings in the United Kingdom and overseas in the course of their work. It would be inappropriate to provide details of all such visits, some of which are commercially confidential.

Following the reorganisation of my Department, the business task force 1 has been disbanded and its work reallocated and responsibility for the financial services division has been transferred to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

ENVIRONMENT

Rents

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received from the Housing Corporation a report entitled "Rents and Affordability"; and if he will make a copy available in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: We received a paper on this topic from the Housing Corporation in early October. It proposes to publish its work shortly. I will then arrange for a copy to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has made of the difference between rents charged by local authorities and housing associations.

Mr. Baldry: A table comparing local authority rents with private sector rents, including those of housing associations, can be found in the Department's annual report 1992, page 93.

The Department collects information on local authority rents and housing association rents regularly.

Information on assured housing association rents is contained in the National Federation of Housing Association's continuous recording (core) quarterly bulletins. Information on registered housing association rents is collected by rent officers and published by the Department of the Environment on a quarterly basis in a series of statistical bulletins.

Data on local authority rents are collected annually. Average weekly local authority rents at April each year appear in table 11.1 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1981-1991".

Copies of all these publications are available in the House of Commons Library.

Buildings (Fuel Efficiency)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue a consultation paper on part L of the Building Regulations (conservation of fuel and power); and what percentage improvement in the fuel efficiency of buildings, especially of dwellings, will be sought thereby.

Mr. Baldry: I hope that it will be possible to issue a consultation paper on part L of the Building Regulations 1991 by the end of next month. The aim with our proposals will be to achieve a 20 per cent. improvement in the energy efficiency of the space and water heating systems in dwellings compared with the current requirements of the regulations.

Rentals

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new homes for renting have been made available by housing associations in Greater London during the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Baldry: The Housing Corporation has funded 3,755 new units for rent by housing associations in Greater London, during the period 1 September 1991 to 31 August 1992.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *537*, how many representations on the thermal oxide reprocessing plant his Department has received; and how many came from abroad.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has received about 30,000 representations about THORP from members of the public some of which contain petitions; 98 per cent. have come from abroad.

Acid Rain

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest information he has about the extent of acid rain damage to Britain's trees.

Mr. Maclean: Recent studies suggest that tree health can be affected by a variety of stresses such as drought, frost, high winds and pest infection and that exposure to air pollution, including acid rain, can increase the sensitivity of trees to these, as well as exercising a probably modest direct effect. It is not yet possible to quantify the contribution of these various factors, individually or in combination, though the hot dry summers and autumn gales of some recent years will certainly have placed exceptional stresses on British trees.

EC Environment Programmes

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions on the allocation of the 1993 budget for environment programmes have been taken at the Environment Council during his presidency of the Ministerial Environment Council.

Mr. Maclean: None. Environmental allocations are considered at the Budget Council as part of the general budget setting process.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the financial implications faced by local authorities being called upon to produce environmental impact assessments in connection with the proposed fifth terminal at Heathrow airport; and what financial compensation he proposes to pay to local authorities for this.

Mr. Robin Squire: Under the procedures set out in the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, it is for an applicant for planning permission to prepare and submit an environmental statement for any project that requires environmental assessment under the regulations. The local planning authority must then send the statement as well as the planning application to the statutory consultees and publicise it, and take the information provided in the statement and in comments made on it into account when determining the planning application. The functions of the authority in relation to planning applications which are accompanied by environmental statements are thus not essentially different from those which they discharge in determining all other planning applications. The expenditure likely to be incurred by authorities in determining planning applications is taken into account in the annual settlement along with other burdens, the potential for savings and, more generally, what the country can afford.

Local Authority Employees

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed by local authorities in each year since 1974.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information for England is listed in the table. Staffing levels of local authorities in Wales and Scotland are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland.

Number of people employed by local authorities at June of each year

Year	*Full-Time (000's)*	*Part-Time (000's)*	*Total (000's)*
1975	1,608	862	2,470
1976	1,625	857	2,482
1977	1,606	853	2,459
1978	1,600	869	2,469
1979	1,626	886	2,512
1980	1,609	866	2,475
1981	1,578	843	2,421
1982	1,552	841	2,393
1983	1,554	852	2,406
1984	1,551	858	2,409
1985	1,545	874	2,419
1986	1,545	904	2,449
1987	1,550	941	2,491
1988	1,548	966	2,514
1989	1,506	948	2,454
1990	1,512	968	2,480
1991	1,493	961	2,454
1992	1,460	949	2,409

Source: Joint Staffing Watch for England

Note: Three major events caused significant losses from the local authority sector during the period covered by this table. The numbers involved are:

(1) Approximately 6,300 full-time equivalents (ftes) due to the abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils in 1986.

(2) Around 14,500 ftes due to the change in status of the local authority bus and municipal airport staff in 1986 and 1987.

(3) Around 39,000 ftes when polytechnics and higher education institutions transferred from the public to the personal sector in 1989.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the reduction in the level of sulphur dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom which will be required in order to stabilise soil acidity levels.

Mr. Maclean: The sensitivity of soils to acid deposition varies greatly in different parts of the United Kingdom as a result of geological and other factors. Under current policies, annual United Kingdom emissions of sulphur dioxide are expected to fall by around 60 per cent. between 1980 and 2005. On present estimates, only about 8 per cent. of the surface area of Great Britain should then be subject to rates of acid deposition which will result in further soil acidification.

The Government are taking part in discussions in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe which it is hoped will lead to a new international agreement on SO_2 emissions by the end of 1993. However to eliminate soil acidification altogether would necessitate sulphur dioxide reductions of over 95 per cent and parallel action on other pollutants. This is not considered a realistic objective either for the United Kingdom or for the remainder of the UNECE region for the foreseeable future.

Local Government Boundaries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the reports published by the Local Government Boundary Commission regarding the boundaries of local authorities within the area of the Wanstead and Woodford parliamentary constituency, including the date by which comments were to be received and the date of publication of final reports.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Boundary Commission deals with local authority boundaries, not parliamentary boundaries. But the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England takes account of county and London borough boundaries.

Reports of the Local Government Boundary Commission relating to county and London borough boundaries affecting Wanstead and Woodford are listed in the table.

Name of report	*Closing date for comments*	*Date of final report*
Redbridge/ Epping Forest/ Waltham Forest	26 July 1989 and 15 February 1991	12 May 1992
Newham/Redbridge/ Waltham Forest	26 March 1990 and 25 June 1991	29 June 1992

Orimulsion

Mr. Oakes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will require Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to make public its report into the incident at Ince B power station last autumn arising from the trial burning of orimulsion.

Mr. Maclean: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is not aware of any incident at Ince B power station last autumn arising from the trial burning of orimulsion.

Leicester

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends to visit Leicester.

Mr. Howard: I have no current plans to do so.

Banham Commission

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the budget of the Banham commission on local government.

Mr. Robin Squire: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the amount of grant to the Housing Corporation in each year since its establishment; and what plans he has to increase it.

Mr. Baldry: The main element of the Housing Corporation's expenditure is its approved development programme—ADP—which is funded by grant and loans from the Government, as well as the corporation's receipts. Gross capital expenditure on the ADP in England since 1978-79 has been as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	327
1979-80	400
1980-81	508
1981-82	521
1982-83	755
1983-84	734
1984-85	697
1985-86	711
1986-87	715
1987-88	752
1988-89	777
1989-90	935
1990-91	1,063
1991-92	1,586
1992-93	[1]1,770

[1] Estimated outturn

Information about earlier years and figures for the total of grants paid to the Corporation cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

The Government's future plans will be announced by the Chancellor in his autumn statement.

Departmental Relocation

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet reached a conclusion on the proposed move of his Department to docklands; on what grounds he proposes to take the decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I will make an announcement shortly. As I told the House on 2 June, *Official Report*, column 707, the decision will be taken on the basis of giving value for money to the taxpayer.

Green House Programme

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of the Green House programme.

Mr. Baldry: The two-year Green House programme was launched in 1990 by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning as an important element of the Government's policies to combat global warming through increased energy efficiency. Its aim was to establish a national network of replicable energy efficiency demonstration projects in council housing. All the available resources have been allocated to or earmarked for 155 individual projects in 121 authorities, following a competitive bidding exercise to identify the most cost-effective schemes. The preliminary results are very encouraging. Overall, schemes are expected to deliver carbon dioxide savings of some 50 per cent. over current levels, with a 40 per cent. reduction in energy consumption. In addition to environmental benefits, these improvements are expected to reduce future management and maintenance costs of the houses concerned and bring major benefits to tenants from reduced fuel bills. My Department continues to monitor the performance of key projects and will publish further information in due course. At present about one quarter of authorities' annual expenditure on mainstream repair and improvement of their stock is devoted to energy-related measures.

The Green House programme suggests that, if best practice were followed, authorities could achieve higher output from this investment. The Government have therefore decided to follow up the programme by actively promoting the application of its positive lessons by all housing authorities. From next year, we will expect authorities to take fuller account in their housing investment decisions of the need to improve the energy efficiency of their stock and to reflect this in their annual housing investment programme submissions. To assist them, my Department will be issuing guidance on the lessons of the Programme, and on the steps authorities can take to ensure that energy efficiency is an integral part of their housing strategies.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish a staff commission to advise on the staffing issues arising from the reorganisation of local government in the shire counties in England.

Mr. Howard: I have decided to use my powers under section 23 of the Local Government Act 1991 to set up a small staff commission to advise me on the steps necessary to safeguard the interests of staff affected by local government reorganisation in England. I intend to ask the staff commission to advise me in particular on arrangements for staff transfers; on any particular redundancy and compensation arrangements that may be necessary; and on whether there should be arrangements to give staff whose posts are lost in reorganisation prior consideration for jobs in new authorities. I intend that the staff commission should be set up next year, in time to deal with questions relating to the outcome of the first tranche of the local government commission's reviews.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will announce their conclusion on the responses to proposals for a clearer framework for compulsory competitive tendering and to extend competition to local authorities' construction-rated and corporate services set out in the consultation paper, "Competing for Quality: Competition in the Provision of Local Services", published in November 1991.

Mr. Howard: The citizens charter sets out the Government's commitment to improving the quality and accountability of local authority services through the wider application of competition, to the benefit of the local taxpayer and consumer.

The Government received more than 650 responses to the consultation paper. Respondents made many helpful comments and offered constructive criticism. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Local Government told the House on 20 May, *Official Report*, column *144*, of our intention to bring forward regulations to secure a clearer framework for compulsory competitive tendering. We have consulted local authorities on our detailed proposals and intend to bring forward regulations shortly.

I have considered responses to our proposals to extend competition with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. We have come to the conclusion that, while some amendment to the original proposals is necessary, a rigorous requirement to seek greater competition is the best way of securing greater efficiency and cost savings in the provision of construction-related services, while guaranteeing a high standard of service to local taxpayers.

We therefore intend to require local authorities to subject to competitive tendering a specific percentage, by cash value, of each of these activities. For construction-related services, we intend that 90 per cent. of work be subject to a competitive requirement, for corporate services the requirement will be broadly in line with proposals made in the consultation paper. It will be for individual local authorities to decide which elements of each service should be market tested in order to achieve this requirement. They will also be free to organise the delivery of these services in the manner most suited to their own needs, and authorities will not be prevented from adopting innovative approaches to service delivery.

We do not intend to introduce a procedure for the separate evaluation of quality for construction-related services, but will allow local authorities to make their own judgments about the trade-off between quality and cost. Nevertheless, we expect authorities to introduce their own procedures to ensure that the evaluation is fair and even-handed, and is seen to be so.

We also intend to make regulations requiring all local authorities to establish an internal accounting framework to identify the true costs of both corporate and construction-related services. This will bring transparency to the cost structure of these services, facilitate the challenging of these costs by internal customers and encourage the development of an internal market, all of which will add to the pressures imposed by competitive tendering.

We intend to require these accounts to be kept from as early a date as possible, but no earlier than April 1994, and to prepare a programme for the early introduction of competitive tendering for construction-related and corporate services. Consideration of the timetable for these changes will take account of preparation time as well as the programme of the local government commission in England and the timetable of changes to local government structure proposed in Scotland and Wales.

The consultation paper also put forward proposals for extending CCT to a number of local authority manual and direct services. My right hon. Friends will be making separate announcements on how these are to be taken forward.

Department of the Environment, Scottish and Welsh Office officials will shortly begin discussions with the local authority associations and representatives of other interested parties on the practical details of the regime I have outlined. I hope that we will be able to work with local government to ensure that efficient, effective competition can lead to a high quality of services for local taxpayers.

Birmingham City Council

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the difference between the spending of Birmingham city council on debt financing and his standard spending assessment for the same component of the council's spending for each of the past three years.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: The table shows the spending of Birmingham City Council on debt financing, the standard spending assessment for the same component of the council's spending and the difference between them for 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

	1990-91 £ million	*1991-92 £ million*	*1992-93 £ million*
Estimated expenditure on debt financing	92	106	108
Debt charges element of Birmingham's SSA	51	65	59
Difference	41	41	49

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Care Grants

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of applications for community care grants in the Sheffield area are successful.

Mr. Scott: Such information as is available is in the Library.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Miss Widdecombe: Government Departments have a statutory right under the Public Record Acts to retrieve material, temporarily, from the Public Record Office for their own administrative use. The number of items and frequency of such retrievals vary considerably. At 5 November 1992, the Department of Social Security had 17 files out on loan which are listed in the table.

Such material is returned to the Public Record Office as soon as departmental action has been completed.

DSS: Files on loan from Public Record Office, as at 5 November 1992

Pro piece ref no.	*Piece/subject title*
PIN 7/514	Duration of unemployment benefit (1955-67)
PIN 7/515	Earnings related short term benefit: transitional arrangements for provisions of standard flat rate (1965-1966) Requisitioning Branch: SS(B)1A
PIN 15/3740	Air raid victims of 1914-1918 War: payment of compensation by Ministry of Health (1946-1968) Requisitioning Branch: SS(A)1
PIN 59/10	War pensions policy: Third party compensation (1942-1970) Requisitioning Branch SS(A)1
PIN 15/2232	Personal Injuries (Emergency Provisions) Act 1939: Personal Injuries (Civilians) Scheme Amendment Order 1940: revised instructions to Assistance Board Officers (1939-1941) Requisitioning Branch SS(A)1
PIN 15/3834	Cadet Forces: award of pension: regulation amendment (1952-1980) Requisitioning Branch SS(A)1
PIN 15/2770	Compensation for army cadets: Regulations for the Army Cadet Force 1945 (1942-1964) Requisitioning Branch SS(A)1
PIN 34/163	New scheme pensions: persons residing or employed overseas (1968-1970) Requisitioning Branch SS/1R(D)AD1
PIN 15/2350	War Pensions and detention allowances (Naval Auxiliary Personnel) Scheme 1940 (1939-1941) Requisitioning Branch: W4C2 NX
PIN 15/2351	War Pensions and detention allowances (Naval Auxiliary Personnel) Scheme 1940 (1941-1944)
PIN 15/2822	War Pensions and detention allowances (Naval Auxiliary Personnel) Scheme 1940 (1945-1961)
PIN [illegible]33	South African Contingent: pension charges etc. taken over by the Union Government of South Africa (1917-1918)
PIN 15/1434	South African Contingent: pension charges etc. taken over by the Union Government of South Africa (1918-1920)
PIN 15/1435	South African Contingent: pension charges etc. taken over by the Union Government of South Africa (1919-1920)
PIN 15/1436	South African Contingent: pension chrges etc. taken over by the Union Government of South Africa (1919-1920)
PIN 15/1437	South African Contingent: pension charges etc. taken over by the Union Government of South Africa (1920-1921)
PIN 15/1438	South African Contingent: pension charges etc. taken over by the Union Government of South Africa (1921-1944) Requisitioning Branch W4C3 NX

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, for each local authority area in South Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Miss Widdecombe: There is only one property on the Department's estate in the South Yorkshire area which could be described as residential property. This is the Woodhouse resettlement unit in Sheffield and it is fully occupied at the present time.

Disabled People

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to publish a citizens charter for people with disabilities; and if he will specify the standards of service that recipients of disability living allowance should expect.

Mr. Scott: There are no such plans. The citizens charter is about setting standards and improving service for all customers taking account, where appropriate of those with special needs.

The standards of service that recipients of disability living allowance should expect are published in the Benefits Agency business plan and will be included in the disability allowance unit statement of service to be published by the end of January 1993.

Lost Files

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many temporary staff are currently employed by the Benefits Agency to track down lost or missing files of applicants for benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received on the report by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council on the recognition of bronchitis and emphysema as an industrial injury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have had a number of enquires about publication of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's report on chronic bronchitis and emphysema. The report will be published in the normal way by the end of November.

DEFENCE

Ceremonial Uniforms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of ceremonial uniforms in each of the past five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total cost of ceremonial uniforms, including swords and scabbards, in each of the past five years was:

	£
1987-88	936,797
1988-89	1,106,216
1989-90	1,411,311
1990-91	1,286,974
1991-92	[illegible]283,720

Police (Special Escort Group)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the role and function of the special escort group of the Ministry of Defence police; how many personnel are assigned to it; and what is its annual budget.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The special escort group is an element within the MOD police responsible for those escort duties necessary to meet safety and security requirements when moves of sensitive material are made. Its costs are contained within the overall MDP budget. For security reasons it is not our policy to comment on numbers of personnel nor their methods of operation.

Lupina C

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the incident which took place in September involving the fishing vessel Lupina C and the United States Navy submarine Sturgeon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of letters from hon. Members, fishermen's representatives and interested individuals have been received. The United States navy is conducting a full investigation into this incident. When its findings are available, I will consider whether there is any need for further measures to improve the safety of submarine operations in waters that are used by fishing vessels, in addition to those already discussed with the fishing industry.

Nuclear Tests

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to conduct further nuclear tests at Nevada; and for what purposes those tests would be conducted.

Mr. Aitken: United States legislation provides for the United Kingdom to conduct three nuclear tests at the Nevada test site between 1 July 1993 and 30 September 1996. It is not our practice to comment in detail on the purpose of individual tests, but all United Kingdom nuclear tests are designed to ensure the safety and credibility of our nuclear deterrent.

Service Uniforms

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of items and the value of the service uniforms for which contracts to purchase were placed in the last year for which figures are available; if he will give a breakdown of those figures according to whether the product was *(a)* made and finished in the United Kingdom from fabric produced in the United Kingdom, *(b)* made and finished in the United Kingdom from imported fabric and *(c)* finished in the United Kingdom but made abroad; and if he will make a statement of his purchasing policy in such matters.

Mr. Aitken: Contracts to the value of £89·9 million have been placed for service uniforms in the past year. These contracts covered some 700 individual items.

It is our policy to seek the best value for money when purchasing uniforms. We therefore pursue open competition and no restrictions are imposed on grounds of nationality or origin of supplies. Because of the large number of contractors and sub-contractors involved, it would not be practicable to maintain records of the origin of the materials used in uniforms.

Amphibious Warfare Vessels

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has for *(a)* development of auxiliary amphibious warfare vessels and *(b)* developing a tactical air-to-surface missile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We intend to refurbish the Navy's three older landing ships logistic to enable them to continue in service into the next century. On current plans we expect work on the programme to begin in the summer of 1993.

We are continuing to study a range of options for the eventual replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb. No decision has yet been taken.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide a breakdown of the costs to date incurred in the promotion and publication of the citizens charter, all subsequent charters and the chartermark award scheme.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The promotion, publication and distribution of the citizens charter White Paper, popular version, ethnic minority versions and audio version for the partially sighted cost £930,000.

The costs of the promotion, publication and distribution of subsequent charters is approximately:

	£
British Rail	250,000
HM Customs & Excise	12,000
Employment Department	630,000
Department For Education	2,000,000
Department of the Environment	300,000
Department of Health	2,000,000
Inland Revenue	12,000
London Underground	110,000
Northern Ireland	417,400
Scottish Office	342,000
Department of Social Security	43,500
Welsh Office	535,000

The Chartermark award scheme 1992 cost £810,000. This includes publication, distribution and advertising costs as well as the cost of the awards ceremony and the separate design competition for schools.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, how many different languages the citizens charter White Paper CM 1599 is currently available in; and if he will list them.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The citizens charter White Paper (Cm. 1599) was published in English.

The "Guide to the Citizen's Charter", which provides a summary of the policies and initiatives set out in the charter, is available in English, Welsh, Bengali, Gujariti, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Chinese, Vietnamese, Greek and Turkish.

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans the Government have to separate the funding of international projects from the rest of the Science and Engineering Research Council's budget.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Government have no such plans at present.

The question of the most appropriate way of funding international projects has however featured in a number of contributions to the consultation process on the forthcoming White Paper on Science and Technology which my right hon. Friend has initiated. We shall be considering carefully these and other proposals for change that have been made.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what effect the devaluation of sterling will have on the funding of projects other than CERN by the Science and Engineering Research Council.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The fall in the value of sterling relative to the franc will affect the cost to the SERC of its fixed percentage contributions to the European synchrotron radiation facility (ESRF), and the Institut Laue Langevin (ILL). There will also be minor adjustments to the cost in sterling of SERC's contribution to the European incoherent scatter facility (EISCAT), paid in Swedish krona, and to the Anglo-Australian telescope facility (paid in Australian dollars). SERC's contribution to the European Space Agency's space science programme, which is paid in ecus, will also be affected, although the funding formula here also takes account of relative GDP of member states, adjusted retroactively.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what effect the devaluation of sterling will have on contributions made by the Science and Engineering Research Council to CERN.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Member states' contributions to CERN are based on a formula which takes account of relative GDP. The increased cost to SERC due to the devaluation of sterling relative to the Swiss franc will, over a period of time, be offset to a large degree by this self-correcting formula.

There will be no significant effect in financial year 1992-93 as the bulk of payments due to CERN for this period were made prior to the mid-September devaluation.

There will be an additional cost in financial year 1993-94 but, after that, this will reduce as the relative GDP formula takes effect.

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Waldegrave: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the following agency chief executives: Mr. Mike Devereau, Central Office of Information; Miss Marianne Neville-Rolfe, Civil Service College; Mr. Paul Freeman, Her Majesty's Stationery Office; Dr. George Sorrie, Occupational Health Service and Mr. Michael Geddes, Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency. I have asked them to write to the hon. Member. Copies of their replies will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Miss Marianne Neville-Rolfe to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 9 November 1992

You asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he would list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

I am replying to you in respect of the Civil Service College. The information you have asked for is set out in the attached table.

Civil service college sunningdale statement of average numbers and staff costs

Grade	*1991-92 average numbers employed*	*1992-93 average numbers employed/planned*
3	1	1
5	3	2·50
6	12·25	15
7	60·75	61
Senior Executive Officer	18	13·75

Grade	*1991-92 average numbers employed*	*1992-93 average numbers employed/planned*
Senior Librarian	1	1
Higher Executive Officer	15·50	15·50
Executive Officer	28·25	29
Assistant Librarian	1·50	1·50
Senior Personal Secretary	1	1·50
Professional and Technology Officer	0·50	1
Administrative Officer	55·75	60·50
Administrative Assistant	7·25	6·50
Personal Secretary	5·25	6·50
Typing Manager	1	—
Typist	2·25	0·50
Support Grade Band 1	2·50	3
Support Grade Band 2	7·25	8·25
Total	224	228
Casuals employed in year	4·50	5·50
Grand Total	228·50	233·50
Total staff costs (including ERNIC)	£4,952,000	£5,382,000

Notes:

1. Staff Numbers include part-time employees who are counted as 0·50, hence the 0·25 on averaging.
2. Average is between 1st April and 31st March numbers.
3. Costs are total employee costs inclusive of Earnings Related National Insurance Contributions.

Letters from Mr. Michael D. Geddes to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 2 November 1992.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has asked me to reply for Recruitment and Assessment Services to your Question asking him to list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93 for each executive Agency for which he is responsible.

The information for RAS is set out in the table annexed to this letter.

RAS Staff 1991-92 and 1992-93

	Average for 1991-92	*Current 1992-93*
Grade 3	1	1
Grade 5	1·5	1
Grade 6	4·5	4
Grade 7	18·25	16
Senior Executive Officer	8	7
Senior Information Officer	0·5	1
Senior Psychologist	2·5	3
Higher Executive Officer	13	10
Information Officer	0·75	1
Higher Psychologist	1	2
Executive Officer	36·25	29
Psychologist	1·25	0
Assistant Information Officer	1·25	1
Administrative Officer	56·5	51
Administrative Assistant	34	25
Typing Manager	1	1
Senior Personal Secretary	1	2
Personal Secretary	5·5	1·5
Typist	12·25	9
Support Manager Grade 2	1	1
Support Manager Grade 3	1	1
Support Grade 1	12·5	10
Support Grade 2	22	15·5
	236·5	193

	Average for 1991-92	*Current 1992-93*
Cost:	£	£
Salaries	3,613,282	3,198,000
Superannuation	570,408	498,000
Casuals	35,879	37,000
TOTAL	4,219,569	3,733,000

Letter from Dr. George Sorrie to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 November 1992.

I have been asked by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to reply to your question about the numbers of staff and their costs in the Civil Service Occupational Health Service Executive Agency.

I attach a table which shows the number of staff by grade as at 30 September 1991 and 1992. We also employ staff from time to time on a fee paid basis.

In 1991-92 staff costs for permanent staff were £2·671 million. A further £0·113 million was spent on staff loaned from other Government departments and on staff overtime and £0·249 million on fee paid sessional staff and agency staff. Business Plan forecasts for the current financial year are £2,990 million, £0·140 million and £0·240 million respectively.

Civil Service Occupational Health Service

	Number of Staff[1] 1991-92	*Number of Staff[1] 1992-93*
Grade		
3	1	1
4	2	2
5	8	8
6	8	8
7	3	4
Senior Executive Officer (SEO)	2	2
Senior Professional and Technical Officer (SPTO)	2	2
Higher Executive Officer (HEO)	2	2
Executive Officer (EO)	3	4
Administrative Officer (AO)	15	15
Personal Secretary (PS)	6	6
Administrative Assistant (AO)	6	5
Typist	6	8
Senior Occupational Health Adviser (SOHA)	6	7
Occupational Health Adviser (OHA)	13	20
Occupational Health Practitioner (OHP)	14	13
Occupational Health Nurse (OHN)	17	21
	114	128

[1] Numbers of staff in post as at 30 September includes part-time staff and staff on short-term contracts.

Letter from Mr. Paul Freeman to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 November 1992.

I am responding in respect of HMSO to your Question to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about staff numbers and costs, which has been referred to Chief Executives.

I should explain first that HMSO does not follow the traditional financial year of April to March, but operates on a calendar year basis. Total staff costs in 1991 were £63·9 million and the 1992 outturn is expected to be around £67·7 million. Both figures cover permanent, casual and agency staff, and include basic pay, national insurance, superannuation, bonus and overtime, and some redundancy and early retirement costs.

HMSO is also an exception to the standard Civil Service grading arrangements. Apart from my own, all posts were reclassified in 1991 under an analytical job evaluation system based on pay bands. The attached list shows the average numbers employed in each pay band in 1991 and 1992.

		1991	1992
Grade 2		1	1
Pay Band	20	2	2
	19	—	—
	18	4	4
	17	4	3
	16	5	6
	15	7	6
	14	12	12
	13	36	36
	12	18	17
	11	55	56
	10	94	94
	9	162	166
	8	221	221
	7	410	419
	6	172	163
	5	272	270
	4	414	393
	3	184	175
	2	81	66
	1	45	37
Industrial Staff		1,169	1,103
Totals		3,368	3,250

Letter from Mr. Mike Devereau to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 4 November 1992.

I am replying to your question about staff numbers and costs.

For 1991-92 our total paybill, excluding accrued early retirement liabilities, was £16·3m. I expect the figure for 1992-93 to be in the region of £15·7m.

The average number of staff employed during 1991-92 was 709 of which 685 were permanent employees and 24 casual. In 1992-93 I expect the average to be in the region of 645 of which 625 would be permanent employees and 20 casual. A breakdown of average staff numbers by grade for 1991-92 and projected average staff numbers for 1992-93 is attached.

Average staff numbers

	1991-92 actual	1992-93 estimated
Permanent staff		
Chief Executive (G3)	1	1
Deputy Director General (G5)	1	1
Grade 5	5	5
Grade 6	12	10
Grade 7	35	35
Supervisory Engineer	1	1
Senior Executive Officer	13	12
Senior Information Officer	112	111
Senior Engineer	2	1
Engineer	4	5
Chief Typing Manager	1	1
Higher Executive Officer	26	25
Information Officer	164	146
Librarian	1	1
Senior Personal Secretary	1	1
Typing Manager	3	1
Assistant Information Officer	36	29
Executive Officer	43	42
Personal Secretary	14	14
Vault Keeper	2	2
Assistant Librarian	3	3
Support Manager 3	4	4
Typist	23	16
Administration Officer	106	94
Support Grade Band 1	19	17
Studio Assistant	2	1
Carpenter	1	1
Support Grade Band 2	27	25
Administrative Assistant	23	20
Sub-total	685	625
Casual staff		
Information Officer	2	1
Assistant Information Officer	2	0
Administration Officer	13	12
Administration Assistant	4	4
Support Grade Band 2	2	2
Typist	1	0
Sub-Total	24	19
Total	709	644

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers employed in the construction industry in the north-wast standard region in each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is shown in the table following.

Employees in employment in the construction industry in the north west standard region

June of each year	(000's)
1979	134
1980	134
1981	122
1982	116
1983	114
1984	114
1985	111
1986	106
1987	107
1988	110
1989	114
1990	113
1991	101
1992	89

Earnings Statistics

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of *(a)* manual and *(b)* non-manual workers currently earn less than (i) £147.85, (ii) £197.30 and (iii) £207.13 excluding overtime payments; and what are the proportions separately for men and women.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information closest to that requested is published in table 24 of part A of the 1992 "New Earnings Survey" report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average pay of those aged under 18 years as a percentage of earning of those (i) aged 18 to 21 years and (ii) aged 21 years and over, in each year since 1979, in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* Great Britain.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information closest to that requested is given in the following table.

Average gross weekly earnings of full time employees whose pay for the survey pay period was not affected by absence.

Earnings of those aged under 18 years as a percentage of those aged:

	Greater London		*Great Britain*	
	18-20	*21+*	*18-20*	*21+*
1979	75·0	43·5	69·5	42·2
1980	—	—	68·8	41·6
1981	72·3	41·9	70·2	41·4
1982	72·7	41·3	70·6	41·0
1983	66·5	37·2	67·7	38·7
1984	70·0	38·5	66·9	37·5
1985	71·1	38·4	69·1	38·4
1986	72·1	38·8	70·1	38·3
1987	72·8	38·6	71·7	38·7
1988	75·5	40·0	73·2	39·4
1989	77·2	40·9	72·0	38·7
1990	75·7	40·3	71·5	38·3
1991	72·8	38·7	70·1	37·4
1992	73·3	36·7	69·9	36·1

Source: New Earnings Survey.
Note: "—" denotes sample number too small or standard error too large for reliable estimate.

Women Workers

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women working *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time are covered by wages councils in London.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is estimated that some two-thirds of all workers covered by the wages councils are women and that about two-thirds of all wages council workers are part-timers. I regret there are no separate estimates for London.

Health and Safety (Local Authorities)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* prohibition notices and *(b)* improvement notices were issued on local authorities by the Health and Safety Executive in each year since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is available only for the period after 1 April 1988; enforcement statistics before that date do not separately identify local authorities. The following table shows the total number of prohibition and improvement notices issued to local authorities by relevant HSE inspectorates for each year since then.

Enforcement notices issued against local authorities[1] by HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates, 1988-89 to 1990-91

	Type of Notice			
Date of Issue[2]	*Improvement*	*Deferred Prohibition*	*Immediate Prohibition*	*Total*
1988-89	54	1	31	86
1989-90	52	2	20	74
1990-91	89	2	29	120

[1] Offences or breaches of legislation occurring in premises, or arising from activities, controlled by local authorities.
[2] Years commencing 1 April.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was *(a)* the total number of prosecutions and *(b)* the average fine against local authorities by the Health and Safety Executive under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act in each year since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is available only for the period after 1 April 1988; enforcement statistics before that date do not separately identify local authorities. The following table shows the number of informations laid against local authorities by relevant HSE inspectorates since then.

Prosecution action[1] taken against local authorities,[2] by HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates, 1988-89 to 1990-91

Date of Hearing[3]	*Number of Informations laid*	*of which Convictions*	*Average fine per conviction (£)*
1988-89	22	22	594
1989-90	39	31	1,435
1990-91	41	39	953

[1] All action taken under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974, subordinate regulations and other related legislation.
[2] Offences or breaches of legislation occurring in premises, or arising from activities, controlled by local authorities.
[3] Years commencing 1 April.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was *(a)* the total number of prosecutions against local authority directors and *(b)* the average fines under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 in each year.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is available only after 1 April 1988; enforcement statistics before that date do not separately identify local authorities. HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates enforce health and safety legislation as it applies to local authority premises and activities. Since then there have been no prosecutions of local authority directors.

Local Authority Employees

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were *(a)* killed and *(b)* seriously injured in local authority employment in each year since 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: Occupational injuries to workers[1] occurring in premises owned by, or arising from activities controlled by, local authorities, and reported to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates for years between 1988-89 and 1990-91 are provided in the following table. Prior to 1 April 1988 such injuries were not separately identified.

Year[2]	*Fatal*	*Major[3]*	*Over three day[4]*	*Total*
1988-89	11	2,553	33,689	36,253
1989-90	12	2,539	32,224	34,775
[5]1990-91	12	2,571	30,031	32,614

[1] Injuries to employees and self-employed persons reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR).
[2] Years commencing 1 April.
[3] As defined under RIDDOR.
[4] An injury causing incapacity for normal work for more than three days.
[5] Includes reports made to the HSE's Quarries Inspectorates.

Regional Expenditure

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total revenue expenditure in each of the English regions by her Department in the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Wages Policy

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what regard is paid to the existence or level of other household earnings in determining government policy on *(a)* wages council rates and *(b)* pay agreements negotiated for public employees.

Mr. McLoughlin: Wages councils are independent statutory bodies and Ministers have no power to intervene in their decisions about minimum rates of pay. Pay should reflect individual performance and what is necessary to recruit and retain the right staff, within what can be realistically afforded.

Wages Councils

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees from black and ethnic minority communities working within establishments in London are covered by wages councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that the information is not available.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* establishments and *(b)* employees were covered by the wages councils in London in (i) 1979, (ii) 1986, (iii) 1989 and (iv) 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no detailed figures on the number of establishments and employees covered by wages councils in London, but the following table gives broad estimates:

	Number of establishments	*Numbers of workers*
1979	46,000	326,000
1986	45,000	327,000
1989	56,000	367,000
1991	51,000	317,000

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many checks were carried out by wages councils in London on underpaying in the last year for which figures are available, and what number and proportion were found to be underpaying.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of checks by all methods carried out in 1991 by the wages inspectorate in its London division was 5,299.

The number of establishments found under paying was 294, 5·5 per cent. of those inspected.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees covered by wages councils are the principal source of their household's income.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her oral answer of 3 November to the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), *Official Report*, column 139, if she will give details of the survey resulting in the figure given in her answer for the percentage of wages council workers who are in households with two or more wage earners.

Mr. McLoughlin: The figure referred to by the hon. Member is based on information about the main wages council industries recorded in the April 1991 "Labour Force Survey". This is a sample survey of the members of around 60,000 households in Great Britain.

Crown Indemnity

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she expects the Health and Safety Commission to consider the review of current procedures and to put its proposals to Ministers concerning the removal of Crown indemnity in respect of infringements of the Health and Safety at Work, etc., Act 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Commission currently plans to consider the review in December and, if appropriate, will make recommendations early in the new year.

Training

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what percentage of the working population were on work-related Government training programmes in each region in each year since 1979;

(2) how many people were on work-related Government training programmes in each year since 1979, in each region.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not readily available in the form requested and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Wages

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list for each jobcentre in the Doncaster area, for the latest date she has available, the number of current accepted vacanies from employers where the wages offered fall below the relevant wages council minimum; and what percentage this is of the total number of vacancies on offer at each jobcentre.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the number of current vacancies accepted by Jobcentres in the Doncaster area where the wages offered fall below the relevant Wages Council minimum and what percentage this is of the total number of vacancies on offer at each Jobcentre. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

There are no vacancies at Doncaster or Thorne Jobcentres which fall below Wages Council minumum rates. Jobcentres have comprehensive instructions giving guidance to staff on the action to be taken when a vacancy covered by a Wages Council Order is notified. If the employer is unwilling to pay the Wages Council minimum then my people are instructed not to accept the vacancy and to refer the case to the Department of Employment Wages Inspectorate.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Accident Hazard Regulations

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidelines she intends to issue to local authorities as to the charges they may make to industrial site operators for work done under the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations 1984.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has no plans to issue guidelines on the charges local authorities may make. The Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 contain specific details of what local authorities may charge for in preparing off-site emergency plans and how these charges must be calculated. Guidance on these legal requirements is given in the Health and Safety Executive's revised booklet "A Guide to the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984", published by HMSO in 1990, a copy of which is in the Library.

Workfare

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration she has given to the introduction of workfare to help solve the problem of rising unemployment.

Mr. McLoughlin: As my hon. Friend is aware, we have no plans for a compulsory work programme for unemployed people. Our priority remains to help unemployed people back into work through our employment and training programmes.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many papers her Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if she will list their titles; and when she estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. McLoughlin: Government Departments have a statutory right under the Public Record Acts to retrieve records temporarily from the Public Record Office for their own administrative use. The Employment Department has 39 records out on loan. To list them all would involve disproportionate costs.

Records are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list, for each local authority area in south Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by her Department; and if she will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not own any residential properties in south Yorkshire.

Redundancies

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of redundancies in the west midlands area for the last available quarter broken down by sector.

Mr. McLoughlin: Figures are available for the numbers of proposed redundancies notified under the provisions of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 for the quarter to 31 October. The table gives information by standard industrial classification.

Proposed redundancies in the period 1 August 1992 to 31 October 1992

SIC Number	*SIC Number Description*	*Number of Establishments*	*Number of Employees*	*Per cent. of Total Redundancies Notified*
11	Coal extraction and solid fuels	11	3,358	20·49
32	Mechanical engineering	47	2,125	12·97
35	Manufacturer of motor vehicles and parts	24	1,465	8·94
50	Construction	27	1,141	6·96
34	Electrical and electronic engineering	23	949	5·79
24	Manufacturer of non-metal mineral products	20	673	4·11
83	Other business services and central offices	19	658	4·02
91	Local and national government services	7	652	3·98
31	Manufacture of other metal goods	13	505	3·08
41	Food/groceries/dairy products	13	505	3·08
96	Social work/charitable services	1	396	2·42
42	Drinks, animal foods and tobacco	4	354	2·16
66	Hotels and catering	8	352	2·15
22	Metal manufacturing	11	337	2·06
49	Other manufacturing industries	8	317	1·93
92	Other services	7	303	1·85
64	Retail distribution	7	284	1·73
48	Processing rubber and plastics	9	277	1·69
36	Manufacturing other transport equipment	2	209	1·28
81	Banking financial services	3	204	1·25
37	Instrument engineering	2	155	0·95
46	Wooden furniture industries	6	136	0·83

SIC Number	*SIC Number Description*	*Number of Establishments*	*Number of Employees*	*Per cent. of Total Redundancies Notified*
97	Recreational/cultural services	1	128	0·78
77	Other transport/storage services	4	93	0·57
1	Agriculture and horticulture	2	90	0·55
65	Retail distribution	4	85	0·52
47	Paper manufacturing, printing and publishing	5	75	0·46
94	Research and development services	3	72	0·44
95	Medical, dental and veterinary services	2	68	0·42
17	Water supply industry	3	67	0·41
79	Postal and telecommunication services	1	60	0·37
43	Textile industries	2	49	0·30
44	Manufacture of leather and leather goods	1	46	0·28
45	Footwear and clothing industries	2	45	0·27
67	Vehicle and consumer goods repair	1	39	0·24
21	Metal ores extraction/preparation	1	29	0·18
82	Insurance	1	26	0·16
84	Renting of movables	1	18	0·11
72	Other inland transport	1	18	0·11
85	Property owning and managing	1	12	0·07
76	Transport support service	1	10	0·06
75	Air transport	0	0	0·00
33	Manufacture of office machines	0	0	0·00
93	Education	0	0	0·00
61	Wholesale distribution	0	0	0·00
30	Shipbuilding and repair	0	0	0·00
26	Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0·00
25	Chemical industry	0	0	0·00
62	Dealing in other industrial materials	0	0	0·00
23	Extracting minerals not elsewhere specified	0	0	0·00
98	Personal services	0	0	0·00
74	Sea transport	0	0	0·00
71	Railways	0	0	0·00
16	Electricity, gas and other products distribution	0	0	0·00
15	Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0·00
14	Mineral oil processing	0	0	0.00
13	Oil extraction and natural gases	0	0	0·00
12	Coke ovens	0	0	0·00
99	Private domestic service	0	0	0·00
3	Fishing	0	0	0·00
2	Forestry	0	0	0·00
63	Commission agents	0	0	0·00
		309	16,385	

Occupational Ill Health

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate she has made of the annual cost of occupational ill health; and what action she proposes to take to lessen this.

Mr. McLoughlin: Reliable estimates of the annual cost of occupational ill health are not presently available. Health and Safety Executive economists are carrying out research into the cost of occupational ill health and expect to publish the results of this work early next year.

Improving the level of occupational health is a main priority for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive. Details of their current activities and plans for action are set out in the Commission's annual reports and plans of work. These include the preparation of a comprehensive framework of regulations under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 covering the main categories of workplace health risks, practical guidance and campaigns, and an extensive programme of research and surveys of the scale and pattern of occupational ill health.

Water Quality

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will introduce legislation to extend the health and safety legislation requiring drinking water and running water for washing to be provided at conveniently accessible places, to apply to all working locations, including domestic houses and flats.

Mr. McLoughlin: We are currently considering the Health and Safety Commission proposals for regulations which implement European Community directive No. 89/654/EEC (the workplace directive). The proposed regulations would extend the current requirements in health and safety legislation on drinking water and running water for washing to all workplaces. However, they apply only to

> "any premises or part of premises which are not domestic premises and are made available to any person as a place of work".

Domestic houses and flats are therefore outside the scope of the proposed regulations. They are, however, required to have such facilities under the Building Regulations (England and Wales) which are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when Mr. E. D. Coote of Linden, Mount Pleasant road, Brixham (NI No. ZL 46 46 75 C) will be notified of the result of his appeal to the Department of Employment, Newcastle, regarding loss of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

The administration of invalidity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. As the appeal is a personal and confidential matter, he will reply direct to the hon. Member.

HEALTH

Glaucoma

11. **Mr. Leyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reports she has received about the use of laser treatment for glaucoma; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The use of lasers has revolutionised the treatment of glaucoma and other diseases of the eye. I understand that many patients who would previously have been treated as in-patients are now being successfully treated in out-patient clinics.

Smoking

12. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received regarding danger to health from smoking and passive smoking.

Dr. Mawhinney: The consequences of smoking and passive smoking have been the subject of many representations received in the Department. Most recently the Health Education Authority's publication called "The Smoking Epidemic—A Manifesto for Action" looked at the life expectancy of smokers, passive smoking and the costs to the national health service.

Health Service Expenditure

13. **Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the plans for health service expenditure for the current public expenditure planning period.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be making his autumn statement to the House on Thursday 12 November.

Departmental Information

14. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy for increasing the amount of information made available to the general public from her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The Department aims to provide the general public with a wide range of information relating to legislation, policy, patients' rights and other health advice. The Department is also playing a full part in the cross-departmental initiative on open government.

Furthermore, the Department is engaged in a number of initiatives to promote greater access to information by national health service patients—including information on performance against patients charter standards, regional health information services and legislation to give patients access to health records held on them. The Department is currently consulting on draft guidance on freedom of speech for national health service employees.

GP Lists

15. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in the average number of patients on each general practitioner's list since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I am pleased to be able to report that the average number of patients on general medical practitioner lists in England has fallen by 18 per cent., from 2,286 at 1 October 1979 to 1,932 at 1 April 1992.

Standish Hospital, Gloucestershire

16. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning the effect of the proposed closure of Standish hospital, Gloucestershire on provision of specialist services.

Mr. Sackville: Gloucestershire health authority is currently consulting publicly on this proposal. If the closure is opposed by the local community health council the matter will be referred to Ministers, via the South Western regional health authority, for a full decision.

Tomlinson Report

17. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of possible job losses as a result of the implementation of the Tomlinson report.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Sir Bernard Tomlinson's recommendations point the way to a better health service for London and Londoners. We are currently consulting widely on them. As part of this, we will take in the views of staff and the implications of change for staff. We will set out a detailed response in the new year.

18. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect of the implementation of the Tomlinson recommendations on waiting lists in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: The report notes that significant progress has been made in reducing waiting times in London. We will ensure that the proposals arising from the report continue this trend.

20. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the people of London concerning the Tomlinson report.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Tomlinson report has only just been published, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health welcomes an open debate on the issues it raises. We will listen carefully to the views expressed before setting out our detailed proposals for change in the new year.

Occupational Health

19. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to increase the amount of time medical students spend on occupational health issues during their training.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) earlier today.

Cost Improvement Programme

21. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the workings of the cost improvement programme from hospital authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Sackville: No formal representations have been made. However each year the management executive agrees with an individual region an efficiency target as part of the management process.

London Ambulance Service

22. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will establish an urgent inquiry into the London ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Member will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health made a statement to the House on 28 October about the London ambulance service.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken to ensure that ambulance response times in London meet the guidelines set out in the citizens charter.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health announced to the House on 28 October an urgent external enquiry into the operation of the computer aided dispatch system and the circumstances surrounding its failure on 26 and 27 October. This inquiry will also identify the lessons to be learned for the operation and management of the London ambulance service.

The terms of reference were announced in my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) on 6 November at columns *445–46*.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the number of people in London who have died in the current year as a consequence of ambulance delays.

Mr. Sackville: There has been widespread public concern about the delays in the response and arrival times of emergency ambulances and allegations of people dying as a consequence. Every case of alleged delay is fully investigated by the London ambulance service board.

It is however, difficult to estimate the extent to which delays in the ambulance service may have contributed to the death of seriously ill patients.

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from ISL Consultancy following its visit to the London ambulance service control on standards of organisation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced to the House on 6 November the terms of reference for the independent inquiry into the operation and procurement of the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system for the London ambulance service. She has received a letter from ISL Consultancy which will be directed to the inquiry.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population is currently served by a general practitioner fundholder; and how she expects this percentage to change in the future.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioner fundholders currently serve 14 per cent. of the population. The figure is expected to rise to around 25 per cent. in April of next year, when the third wave of fundholders comes on stream.

NHS Trusts

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make NHS trusts more accountable to local people; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service trusts are more accountable now than national health service provider units were under health authority management. They are required to hold an annual public meeting, and their business plans and annual reports are available to the public, as are the service contracts they make with health authorities. Each trust's local community health council has rights of access to it.

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names of those people appointed to be chairmen and non-executive directors of the third wave of national health service trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have placed a list of the chairmen and non-executive directors of third wave trusts which I have announced today in the Library.

NHS trusts have shown their worth. In their first year of operation, first wave trusts treated 8 per cent. more patients than in their previous year as directly managed hospitals. Such a figure clearly demonstrates that we now have a NHS which is better managed and able to treat more patients for the same level of resources. Trusts have made a key contribution to this improvement.

The third wave of trusts cannot come a moment too soon. But if they are to bring the benefits to patients and improvements in services which have become the hallmark of self-governing hospitals, then they must be properly led. The appointment of the right person as chairman is a crucial factor. He or she must also be supported by an imaginative team of non-executive directors able to contribute fresh insights into the running of the trust. The names I have announced today fit the bill. These chairmen and non-executive trust directors will bring a wealth of expertise and experience from outside the NHS which will have a direct impact on improving patient services.

A significantly higher number of women have been appointed to these posts. Forty per cent. of these new appointments are women, compared with 31 per cent. in the first and second waves. This enables us to make progress towards meeting our commitment under Opportunity 2000 to increase the number of women as members of health authorities and trusts to 35 per cent. by 1994.

Care in the Community

25. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further representations she has had from organisations responsible for providing care in the community.

Mr. Yeo: We regularly receive correspondence from organisations making representations about or seeking clarification of the details of our new community care arrangements.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring is being carried out by her Department of local arrangements for care in the community; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Community care implementation has been monitored by the social services inspectorate/regional health authorities at six monthly intervals in September 1991, April 1992 and September 1992. We have recently received a report on the latest round of monitoring.

Dental Services

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the availability of dental services within the NHS.

Dr Mawhinney: In general, dental treatment under the national health service is readily available throughout England and Wales. If patients have difficulty in finding a national health service dentist, they will be helped by their family health services authority (FHSA) to obtain treatment. We have urged dentists to think long and hard before taking any steps that would effect their patients or practices.

Domiciliary Care Agencies (Registration)

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce legislation to make the registration of domiciliary care agencies compulsory.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 22 October at column *371*.

GP Cover

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will discuss with representatives of family doctors ways of maintaining 24-hour general practitioner cover.

Dr Mawhinney: We have already said that we should be prepared to look constructively with representatives of the medical profession at the scope for developing improved or more flexible arrangements for out-of-hours cover. But we would need to be clearly satisfied that any proposals for change would safeguard and, if possible, improve the services available to patients.

Geopathic Stress

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department is currently carrying out into geopathic stress; and if she will make a statement.

Dr Mawhinney: The term "geopathic stress" is I understand used to refer to the effects of depletion of the ozone layer on flora and fauna. The Department does not undertake any research into such matters which are not associated with human health.

Skin Cancer

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the known incidence of non-melanoma skin cancer for each of the past five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table (1987 is the latest year for which information is available).

Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasms of the skin (non-melanoma) ICD 173, England and Wales 1983-1987.*

Year	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*
1983	11,317	10,419	21,736
1984	11,678	10,576	22,254
1985	12,597	10,746	23,343
1986	14,152	12,615	26,767
1987	13,661	12,585	26,246

* International Classification of Diseases; ninth revision.

Medical Records

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make national health service records available throughout EC member countries for United Kingdom citizens living abroad; and what information she has on how many previously United Kingdom registered patients requested a precis of their medical records whilst living abroad during the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Medical records are the property of the national health service and are retained in this country for NHS purposes including the possible future care and treatment of the patient. Patients who plan to live abroad may approach their general practitioner to obtain a precis of their medical history or a copy of their medical records to give to any practitioner in the new country of residence.

Information is not collected on requests for medical records from United Kingdom registered patients living abroad.

Secure Places

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to review the need for, and extend the provision of, local authority secure places.

Mr. Yeo: The need to provide additional local authority secure places to implement the new juvenile remand arrangements in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 has been considered by a multi-agency national steering group. We are discussing with local authorities how the additional secure places identified by the group might most effectively be provided.

Benzodiazepines

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been provided by her Department in 1992-93 specifically to help people withdraw from benzodiazepines prescribed by general practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. Specific commitment to action in this area is made in the White Paper "The Health of the Nation". The resulting improvement in the education of primary care teams in the gradual withdrawal of benzodiazepines in chronic users and the promotion of good professional practice will help people overcome this problem.

Maternity Services

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will set up a full review of the maternity services in those areas affected by the Tomlinson proposals on London teaching hospitals;

(2) if she will meet representatives of midwives in London hospitals to reassure them on future numbers of midwife posts following the Tomlinson proposals;

(3) what steps she will take to ensure that those pregnant women who will be directly affected by the Tomlinson proposals for London teaching hospitals will receive locally based maternity care.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Tomlinson report does not recommend a review of maternity services, but as the Government's main aim is to continue to provide high quality services for Londoners we shall ensure that any proposals for change take into account the full range of services. Access to local services will also be one of the considerations we will take into account when assessing proposals.

I have already made it clear that I will be listening carefully to the views of patients and staff before making a response to Tomlinson's recommendations. Accordingly, I will meet the Royal College of Midwives, representing midwives in London, in the near future.

Suicides (Unemployed)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women aged (i) 18 years and over and (ii) 45 to 65 years were recorded in each standard region and the whole United Kingdom as suicides or attempted suicides in each year since 1979; and what number and proportion in each case were known to be unemployed.

Mr. Sackville: The exact information requested is not available. A table derived from death registrations shows the number of deaths with a verdict of suicide ICD E950-E959 over the period requested has been placed in the Library.

Hospital Closures

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals have closed since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Ambulance Service, Coventry

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the response time records for emergencies attended by the ambulance service in Coventry for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. I refer the hon. Member to the chairman of West Midlands regional health authority for details.

Expenditure

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of public spending on health was in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1989-90.

Mr. Sackville: The percentage of total public expenditure spent on health in the United Kingdom was 12·1 per cent. in 1979-80 and 13·8 per cent. in 1989-90. The latest available figure, for 1991-92, is 14·4 per cent.

Hospital Beds

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital beds were available to the national health service in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Sackville: In 1989 there were 283,000 beds in national health service hospitals in England, compared with 362,000 beds in 1979. Over the same period the number of hospital in-patient cases treated annually rose from 5·4 million to 6·6 million.

Community Grant

Mr. Peter Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what response she proposes to make to representations she has received on her proposals for a special transitional grant for community care.

Mr. Yeo: We have been consulting the local authority associations and others on the detail of the announcements which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made on 2 October. In the light of the comments made we think it right to adjust the requirement that in 1993-94 75 per cent. of the special transitional grant be spent in the independent sector. The proportion will now be set at 85 per cent. of the transfer element of the grant. This change recognises that the strength of the independent sector varies across the country whilst ensuring that the overwhelming majority of the funds transferred from the Department of Social Security continue to be spent on independent sector care.

This announcement demonstrates the Government's firm and fair approach in discussing the implemention and funding of community care with the local authority associations.

Diagnostic Assessment

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in each health region have been funded to receive diagnostic assessment outside their own health authority area.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Hepatitis B

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new cases of hepatitis B were reported to public health laboratories in England in each year since 1980.

Mr. Sackville: The total number of laboratory reports of acute hepatitis B infection to the public health laboratory service's communicable disease surveillance centre for England and Wales (by the year in which the specimen was taken) is as follows:

Date	*Number*
1980	1,007
1981	1,197
1982	1,237
1983	1,274

Date	Number
1984	1,937
1985	1,771
1986	1,312
1987	774
1988	636
1989	590
1990	564
[1]1991	520

[1](Provisional)

The availability of immunisation, together with behavioural changes in certain "at risk" groups, are believed to have contributed to this decrease.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been given to each local social services authority to help with the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Yeo: In 1992-93, the first full year of the Act, the England component of total standard spending for services for children was set at £1,654 million—over 27 per cent. (14 per cent. in real terms) higher than in 1990-91 (£1,301 million), reflecting the Government's commitment to the Act. For each authority, the overall standard spending assessment represents the Government's view of the appropriate level of spending required to achieve a standard level of service. It is for individual authorities to determine appropriate levels of services based on their judgment of the resources available to them and local needs and priorities, as well as legislative duties. Local authorities receive support from central Government through the revenue support grant, business rates and specific grants, and from their own sources from the community charge and charges set by them for the services they provide.

Doctors' Working Hours

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the number of junior doctors who work more than 83 hours per week; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional task force reports, current at 31 August 1992, indicate that 3,234 junior doctors, out of a total of over 25,000, are contracted for a maximum average of more than 83 hours a week. This represents a fall of 2,041 since the last returns in February and, since September 1990, a fall of more than 10,000.

Hospital Buildings

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of national health service hospitals were built *(a)* before 1890 and *(b)* before 1918.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The Government are committed to modernising the national health service estate and have invested over £6 billion on more than 650 major building schemes across the country over the last 10 years.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the earliest date on which financial and statistical information about community care arrangements by social services authorities will be available following community care implementation on 1 April 1993.

Mr. Yeo: Budgetary information for the financial year 1993-94 should be available from local authorities by the end of May 1993.

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what arrangements for monitoring and evaluating community care arrangements by health and social services authorities after 1 April 1993 she intends to put into place;

(2) how she will monitor the development by social services authorities of day and domiciliary services after 1 April 1993; and if she will make it her policy that adequate special transitional grant for community care will be available for this purpose;

(3) what steps she will take to monitor the involvement of users and carers in assessment of need for community care; and if she will make it her policy to make additional resources available for this purpose if necessary in the light of monitoring current arrangements.

Mr. Yeo: Monitoring of authorities' implementation of new community care arrangements will be carried out by a variety of means, including the work of regional health authorities and the social services inspectorate, routine financial and statistical returns and other sources of information. The need for additional resources for community care will be considered as part of the public expenditure process in the normal way.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she intends to give social services authorities on their duty to meet the assessed needs of individuals for community care services; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Authorities duties are set out in legislation. We have issued practice guidance on assessment procedures, and we are considering whether to issue further guidance on certain aspects of those procedures.

Healthtrac

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to report on the operation of the Healthtrac contract within the West Midlands regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I understand the statutory auditor appointed by the Audit Commission is currently reviewing the management of the Healthtrac contract and will be reporting his findings to West Midlands regional health authority in due course.

Private Sector Providers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she proposes to direct social services authorities to consult representatives of independent sector providers in their area; and how she will satisfy herself of the effectiveness of the arrangements she proposes.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 4 November 1992 at columns *293-94*.

West Midlands RHA

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will dismiss Sir James Ackers as chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) on 5 November at column *348*.

AIDS

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the results of the anonymised screening programme for HIV.

Mr. Sackville: Some preliminary results, relating to genitourinary and ante-natal clinic attenders in England and Wales, were published in May 1991. Further details, including results for injecting drug misusers, were published in the public health laboratory service communicable disease report in June 1991. The ante-natal clinic results were updated in November 1991. The studies have been expanded and it is intended to publish further results in the near future. I will consider carefully the implication of these for the development of our HIV and AIDS strategy.

Nursing and Midwifery Students

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing and midwifery students took up places in each region in England in each year since 1990; and if she will make a statement on the likely level for 1993, assuming both volume and percentage changes.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 6 November 1992]:* The tables show a reduction in student numbers which has resulted from improved planning and better strategies for the retention of staff. This helps ensure that the numbers of student nurses and midwives being trained matches more closely the numbers of posts available for qualifying students. The demand for places is assessed locally in consultation with clinical directors, professional heads and service managers.

Nurses and Midwives—Entrants to Training

	Year ending March 1990		*Year ending March 1991*		*Year ending March 1992*	
Region	*Nurses*	*Midwives*	*Nurses*	*Midwives*	*Nurses*	*Midwives*
Northern	1,284	144	1,315	136	1,310	120
Yorkshire	1,492	198	1,631	204	1,880	130
Trent	1,888	248	2,058	207	1,880	200
East Anglian	715	101	687	86	810	90
North West Thames	1,459	208	1,535	230	1,890	220
North East Thames	2,582	220	2,337	204	2,880	200
South East Thames	1,886	237	1,900	244	1,810	210
South West Thames	1,193	148	1,292	142	1,320	100
Wessex	1,250	190	1,238	181	1,400	160
Oxford	798	103	773	120	1,040	130
South Western	1,315	157	1,251	146	1,380	140
West Midlands	2,102	315	2,313	276	2,300	310
Mersey	1,116	121	1,100	133	1,220	100
North Western	1,805	205	1,775	187	2,300	190
ENGLAND	20,885	2,595	21,205	2,496	23,420	2,300

Data from: English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Notes: 1991-92 figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

1. The numbers of nursing and midwifery training places commissioned for 1992 and 1993 for staff to commence training programmes is taken from the Working Paper 10 Regional Balance Sheets dated 15 October 1992.
2. Figures do not include nurses and midwives who are being funded by the Department for Education.
3. Regional figures for commissioned places in 1993 are still being refined. However, we are able to provide an estimated aggregate figure for England from data available to date.

Nurses and midwives—training commissions
Working Paper 10 figures

	Year ending March 1993		*Year ending March 1994*	
Region	*Nurses*	*Midwives*	*Nurses*	*Midwives*
Northern	1,059	145		
Yorkshire	1,436	137		
Trent	1,505	219		
East Anglian	495	92		
North West Region	1,210	155		
North East Thames	2,116	237		
South East Thames	1,549	303		
South West Thames	964	62		
Wessex	1,028	167		
Oxford	727	96		
South Western	913	116		
West Midlands	1,332	485		
Mersey	724	70		
North Western	1,488	196		
ENGLAND	16,546	2,480	14,275	1,945

Nurses and midwives—entrants to training and training commissions *Percent*

Region	*Percentage change 1989-90 to 1990-91* *Nurses*	*Midwives*	*Percentage change 1990-91 to 1991-92* *Nurses*	*Midwives*	*Percentage change 1991-92 to 1992-93* *Nurses*	*Midwives*
Northern	2·4	−5·6	−0·4	−11·8	−19·2	20·8
Yorkshire	9·3	3·0	15·3	−36·3	−23·6	5·4
Trent	9·0	−16·5	−8·6	−3·4	−19·9	9·5
East Anglian	−3·9	−14·9	17·9	4·7	−38·9	2·2
North West Thames	5·2	10·6	23·1	−4·3	−36·0	−29·5
North East Thames	−9·5	−7·3	23·2	−2·0	−26·5	18·5
South East Thames	0·7	3·0	−4·7	−13·9	−14·4	44·3
South West Thames	8·3	−4·1	2·2	−29·6	−27·0	−38·0
Wessex	−1·0	−4·7	13·1	−11·6	−26·6	4·4
Oxford	−3·1	16·5	34·5	8·3	−30·1	−26·2
South Western	−4·9	−7·0	10·3	−4·1	−33·8	−17·1
West Midlands	10·0	−12·4	−0·6	12·3	−42·1	56·5
Mersey	−1·4	9·9	10·9	−24·8	−40·7	−30·0
North Western	−1·7	−8·8	29·6	1·6	−35·3	3·2
ENGLAND	1·5	−3·8	10·4	−7·9	−29·4	7·8

1992-93 to 1993-94

Per cent.

Region	*Nurses*	*Midwives*
Northern	—	—
Yorkshire	—	—
Trent	—	—
East Anglian	—	—
North West Thames	—	—
North East Thames	—	—
South East Thames	—	—
South West Thames	—	—
Wessex	—	—
Oxford	—	—
South Western	—	—
West Midlands	—	—
Mersey	—	—
North Western	—	—
ENGLAND	−13·7	−21·6

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 11 November 1992

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Citizens (Trials)

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for *(a)* Fiji, *(b)* Cyprus, *(c)* Papua New Guinea and *(d)* Turkey, the number of British citizens known to his Department to be (i) detained and awaiting trial, (ii) undergoing trial and (iii) tried and in prison.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As at 30 September the number of British citizens known to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to be:

(a) Detained and awaiting trial are:	*Number*
(i) Fiji	0
(ii) Cyprus	0
(iii) Papua New Guinea	0
(iv) Turkey	2
(b) Undergoing trial:	
None	
(c) Tried and in prison:	
(i) Fiji	0
(ii) Cyprus	5
(iii) Papua New Guinea	0
(iv) Turkey	0

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each sovereign country in *(a)* south America, *(b)* the middle east, *(c)* central America and Puerto Rico, *(d)* the Caribbean, other than Commonwealth countries and *(e)* Asia, other than former Soviet republics, the number of British citizens known to his Department to be (i) detained and awaiting trial, (ii) undergoing trial and (iii) tried and in prison.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As it would take a disproportionate amount of time to answer this question completely acccurately, I have arranged for the right hon. Member to receive a written reply from the consular department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible, with the information that it has to hand.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Bosnian government following attacks by forces loyal to them on United Nations agencies operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We deplore all attacks on United Nations agencies operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and are constantly pressing all parties to the conflict to respect the United Nation's impartiality.

Russian Nuclear Industry

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action his Department has taken to investigate attempts by Iraq to purchase Russian plutonium in Bulgaria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are currently following up with all relevant authorities reports in a Sunday newspaper of alleged attempts to sell plutonium from the Commonwealth of Independent States to the Iraqi embassy in Sofia. The Bulgarian authorities have seized some material which they assess to be of no significant proliferation concern. Our own test of a sample which we have received supports this conclusion. But our investigations are continuing.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to raise at the next meeting of the European Foreign Affairs Council the clandestine smuggling of nuclear materials from the former Soviet Union to countries in the middle east.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 23 October 1992, at column *404*.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the new export restrictions on military sensitive equipment and nuclear materials to be imposed under the provisions of the Council regulations on the control of exports of certain dual-use goods and technologies and of certain nuclear products and technologies (COM(92) 317 final).

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

The proposed Council regulation on the control of exports of certain dual-use goods and technologies is currently the subject of negotiations between member states. The Government's aim is to ensure that there will be no weakening of this country's export controls on such goods as a result of the implementation of this regulation, and that the interests of United Kingdom exporters will be protected. The House will be informed of the outcome of the negotiations.

Visas

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to ensure that all applicants for visas at the British high commission in Delhi are granted a formal interview.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: More than 15,000 non-settlement applications have been approved in New Dehli this year without the need for a formal interview. A further 7,000 have been approved after a short informal interview lasting less than six minutes.

All other persons applying for visas have been granted a formal interview. However, prior to an application being formally lodged, if the entry clearance officer has reason to believe that it might not succeed, for example, if forged documentation is presented or the person has previously come to adverse attention, the applicant is given an opportunity to decide whether or not to pursue the application before paying the non-refundable visa fee. If the applicant decides to continue with the application, a formal interview is arranged.

Kenya

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under what conditions local election monitors will observe the forthcoming elections in Kenya; and what assessment has been made of how likely they are to be honoured.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We welcome the announcement by the Kenyan Electoral Commission on 2 November that the National Election Monitoring Unit (NEMU), made up of three local Kenyan organisations, will take part in the monitoring exercise. We understand that NEMU is discussing with the Electoral Commission the practical arrangements and guidelines for monitoring the election alongside international observer groups.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Politically Motivated Crime

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to combat politically motivated vandalism, arson and sabotage in Wales; if he will create a Welsh serious crime squad for this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: These are operational matters for the chief constables of the areas concerned, who are ensuring that the police effort against such criminal acts is effectively co-ordinated.

Police Authorities (Local Representatives)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy to maintain the link between local communities and their police forces through the presence of elected representatives on police authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are considering a range of issues concerning the future of the police service, including the role and composition of police authorities. We have yet to reach firm conclusions.

Wolds Prison

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 4 November, *Official Report*, columns *223-24*, on Wolds prison, if he will list *(a)* the number of employees in each of the categories referred to and *(b)* the number of employees on each grade.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is subject to commercial confidentiality.

Data Protection

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to extend the Data Protection Act 1984 to apply to manual records.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government have no present plans to extend the Act to manual files.

Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population for each of the last 18 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 9 November, the latest date for which figures are available, the prison population was 43,787, including 465 in police cells. Figures for the last Friday in each of the last 18 months are in the table.

Date	*Total prison population including police cells*	*Police cells*
31 May 1991	45,566	593
28 June 1991	45,921	872
26 July 1991	46,393	1,190
30 August 1991	46,701	1,534
27 September 1991	47,069	1,665
25 October 1991	47,306	1,807
29 November 1991	47,443	1,667
30 December 1991	45,388	969
31 January 1992	46,598	1,247
28 February 1992	47,581	1,62[illegible]
27 March 1992	47,684	1,774
24 April 1992	47,605	1,632
29 May 1992	47,009	1,306
26 June 1992	47,070	1,301
31 July 1992	46,934	1,110
28 August 1992	46,692	932
25 September 1992	46,120	809
30 October 1992	44,287	502

Police Overtime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount budgeted for financial year 1992-93 for police overtime in *(a)* the Metropolitan police area, *(b)* the rest of England and Wales and *(c)* in each police authority in England and Wales; and what is the extent to which these figures have been revised since the commencement of the current financial year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Arrests

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing the total number of persons *(a)* arrested, *(b)* charged and *(c)* processed during each of the last six months in (i) the Metropolitan police area, (ii) England and Wales and (iii) each police authority area in England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on arrests is not collected centrally. Court proceedings data for the period requested will not be available until autumn 1993.

Parole

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were released on parole in England and Wales in each of the last 24 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Figures for those paroled in each of the months October 1990 to September 1992 are as follows:

	Number
1990	
October	1,100
November	1,200
December	800

	Number
1991	
January	1,100
February	800
March	1,000
April	800
May	900
June	1,000
July	1,000
August	1,000
September	900
October	1,200
November	1,100
December	800
1992	
January	900
February	1,000
March	1,100
April	1,000
May	800
June	1,200
July	1,300
August	1,100
September	1,100

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each local authority area in south Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant and its intended future use.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The prison service owns 48 residential properties in south Yorkshire used by prison officers and staff serving at the prison establishments of Lindholme, Moorland and Hatfield. All the properties are in the local authority area of Doncaster metropolitan borough council.

Of these properties, 11 are at present vacant. One is a detached, four-bedroom house, which has been vacant for two weeks, and the remaining 10 houses are three-bedroom semi-detached or terraced houses which have been empty for more than 12 months. Six of these houses are retained for reallocation to incoming agricultural staff or farm managers and the remaining five houses are on the market for sale.

Prisoners (Condoms)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by sex, and by Her Majesty's prison establishment, for the past 12 months, the number of free condoms issued to *(a)* inmates going on home leave and *(b)* inmates being released at the end of their sentence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Guidelines issued to governors of all establishments in November 1991 advised them to consider introducing local schemes under which prisoners about to be released or to go on home leave would have discreet access to a small supply of free condoms. It is for individual governors to decide whether and how condoms are available in such circumstances, and how they monitor the level of take-up. Comprehensive information is not held centrally.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 6 November the Home Office had 370 records, amounting to over 1,000 files and sub-files, on loan from the Public Record Office. The number of records on loan fluctuates daily and to list them all would involve disproportionate cost. The records are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed.

Electoral Administration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) of 30 October, *Official Report*, columns *931-32*, what input political parties will have to the membership and the proceedings of the joint committee and working groups on electoral administration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We held meetings with representatives of the political parties and the local authority associations in the summer as part of the process of reviewing electoral procedures. The remits for the working groups which we have set up as the next stage of that process reflect the concerns expressed by the political parties. Membership of the working groups is drawn from experienced electoral administrators and returning officers. The meetings with the representatives of the political parties and of the local authorities will be reconvened in due course to consider the findings of the working groups.

Frontier Controls

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what meetings he has held with the Kangaroo group on abolition of frontier controls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no formal meetings with the Kangaroo group, but we have had opportunities to acquaint ourselves with the views of members of the group on this matter.

Immigration (Entry Exclusions)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the individuals who have been excluded since 1979 from entry into the United Kingdom by Her Majesty's Government on grounds of likelihood to incite racial hatred by their presence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Under the provisions of the Immigration Act 1971 and the immigration rules, a person without the right of abode in the United Kingdom may be excluded on the ground that his exclusion is conducive to the public good.

In forming a view on whether a person's exclusion would be conducive to the public good, a variety of matters may be taken into account, including the likelihood of their presence giving rise to offences under the Public Order Act 1986 and/or the offence likely to be given to public sensitivities by racialist statements. These considerations informed the decision in respect of the following individuals excluded since 1979 on the Home Secretary's personal directions:

Mr. Stokely Carmichael
Mr. Louis Farrakhan
Mr. Manfred Roeder
Mr. Fred Leuchter

Police (Salaries)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the commencement salary in London for each of the following in *(a)* 1981 and *(b)* 1991, (i) main grade probation officer, (ii) prison officer, (iii) police constable and (iv) police sergeant.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 30 October 1992]*: The information is in the table.

Commencement Salaries including London Payments

	1981 £	*1991* £
Probation Officer		
30 and under	7,510	15,402
over 30	7,936	15,939
Prison Officer	6,139	16,895
Police Constable		
Under 22	7,209	14,070
22 or over	8,298	17,121
Police Sergeant	10,092	21,099

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average of remuneration in England and Wales for *(a)* a chief probation officer, *(b)* a police sergeant and *(c)* a police inspector in (i) 1981 and (ii) 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 30 October 1992]*: The average remuneration of a chief probation officer in 1981 was £16,218 and in 1991 it was £37,738. Information is not available in the form requested for police sergeants and police inspectors and the figures in the table relate to average salaries.

	1981 £	*1991* £
Police sergeant	9,504	21,039
Police inspector	10,755	23,820

Note:
Police officers not living in provided accommodation are entitled to receive an allowance, which is paid in addition to salary. The value of the allowance varies according to individual circumstances, for example, whether an officer is married or single, and between police force areas. The range of the value of the allowance in 1981 was £567—£2,271, and in 1991 it was £853-£4,836.

Car Crime

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies he has undertaken or commissioned in relation to the theft and racing of cars in the Oxford area; and if he will outline the aspects being examined.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 10 November 1992]*: Although no studies have so far been undertaken or commissioned specifically in relation to the theft and racing of cars in the Oxford area, a number of important lessons have been learned from the incidents which have occurred on the Blackbird Leys estate. In particular, they illustrated the need for the law to be strengthened in this area. The Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992, which came into force on 1 April, significantly increased the courts' power to deal with the menace of car taking.

Moreover, the Home Office has supported or carried out a number of more general research studies on issues relating to car crime, including the nature of offending. These include crime prevention unit paper 32 "Tackling Car Crime: The Nature and Extent of the Problem" and paper 34 "Preventing Car Crime in Car Parks", copies of which are in the Library.

The results of studies completed to date are being used to help develop the car crime prevention strategy and the need for further research in this area will be closely monitored.

Criminal Records

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps he has taken to implement each of the short-term recommendations in annex M of his Department's efficiency scrutiny into the national collection of criminal records published in October 1991;

(2) what progress has been made in implementing the five-day limit for police notification to the national identification bureau of all pending prosecutions after arrest and the 13-day limit for all court convictions being notified after the court decisions as recommended by his Department's efficiency scrutiny into the national collection of criminal records published in October 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 10 November 1992:]* The position on recommendations 63 to 68 of the "Efficiency Scrutiny of the National Collection of Criminal Records", which together constitute annex M, is as follows:

1. It was recommended in the scrutiny report that microfiche collection of court results be stopped for post-1980 offenders. Further work revealed that this could not be done immediately without loss of information, but the conversion of all criminal records for inclusion in the computerised National Criminal Record System will ensure the provision of a more comprehensive record than is currently available on the Police National Computer (Recommendation 63).
2. It has long been the practice for NIB to mark the manual records that any acquittal should not be cited as a conviction (Recommendation 66).
3. Copies of the scrutiny report were sent to all chief constables and, without imposing rigid time limits, NIB will continue to encourage forces to improve the time taken to notify them of arrests (Recommendation 64).
4. Since the scrutiny was completed, the Government has re-examined the arrangements under which court results are notified to the NIB and the police notify the courts and the Crown Prosecution Service of defendants' and prosecution witnesses' criminal records; revised proposals to improve those arrangements are being taken forward (Recommendations 65, 67, 68).

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to appoint the advisory committee to the national identification bureau at New Scotland Yard which was recommended by his Department's efficiency scrutiny into the national collection of criminal records published in October 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 10 November 1992]*: Oversight of the national identification bureau is being considered in the context of wider changes in the management of police information services. We hope to announce new arrangements shortly.

Foreign Workers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the Government are taking to ensure effective implementation of article 19(6) of the Council of Europe's European social charter, signed on 18 October 1961, requiring contracting parties to facilitate family reunion of foreign workers on their territory.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Article 19(6) of the social charter provides that contracting parties undertake to facilitate as far as possible the reunion of the family of a foreign worker permitted to establish himself in the territory. We believe that the provisions of the immigration rules and our ability to exercise discretion in exceptional cases keep us in compliance with article 19(6).

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the Government are taking to give effect to convention No. 143 of the International Labour Organisation, facilitating the reunification of families of migrant workers legally residing in its territory.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: The United Kingdom has not ratified International Labour Organisation convention No. 143.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many times legal aid has been granted to enable a person convicted of a criminal offence to receive a transcript of their trial for the purposes of an appeal.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is not necessary to make a separate application for legal aid to obtain a copy of a transcript of a trial. If the appellant to the Court of Appeal is covered by a legal aid order, the costs of the transcript may be claimed as a disbursement. These claims are not separately identified, and the information requested is therefore not available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the total numbers of *(a)* established and *(b)* unestablished civil servants, including those in next steps agencies on (i) 1 January 1970, (ii) 1 January 1989, (iii) 1 January 1990 and (iv) 1 January 1992, including those on short-term contracts.

Mr. Dorrell: The number of civil servants including, where appropriate, those in next steps agencies, at the respective dates, is as follows:

Staff in post—industrial and non-industrial civil servants[1]

	Number
1 January 1970	702,056
1 January 1989	571,649
1 January 1990	565,017
1 January 1992	561,770

[1] Full-time equivalents (part-time staff count as half units).

The concept of unestablished service was abolished with effect from 1 April 1991. No breakdown between numbers of established and unestablished staff is available for earlier years in any case.

Taxation

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total revenue to the Exchequer from *(a)* income tax, *(b)* national insurance, *(c)* VAT, *(d)* vehicle excise duty and *(e)* excise duty in each of the English regions for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that information is not available on a regional basis for the taxes and duties requested.

Double Taxation Agreement (Italy)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to negotiate a double taxation agreement with Italy which would give United Kingdom based businesses exemption from extraordinary levies on all bank balances by the Italian Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The matter is currently being discussed with the Italian authorities.

VAT

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the rates of value added tax on sanitary protection in each member state of the EC.

Sir John Cope: The rates of value added tax charged in each member state are as follows:

	Per cent.
Belgium	19·5
Denmark	25·0
France	18·6
Germany	14·0
Greece	18·0
Ireland	0·0
Italy	19·0
Luxembourg	15·0
Netherlands	6·0
Portugal	16·0
Spain	15·0
United Kingdom	17·5

Betting Duty

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue he expects the horse and greyhound racing industry to receive in the current financial year as a result of the 0·25 per cent. reduction in betting duty.

Sir John Cope: The reduction in general betting duty in the last Budget was from 8 to 7·75 per cent. This was expected to reduce the revenue yield by £15 million in the current financial year, and the Chancellor announced his intention that the benefit of the reduction should be channelled back to the horse racing and greyhound industries themselves. The Home Secretary took account of the duty cut in determining this year's horserace betting levy; and discussions are still in progress between the greyhound industry and the bookmakers over voluntary arrangements to be made to help greyhound racing.

Negative Equity

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the increase in the number of households who have negative equity.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received a number of representations on this subject. The Government have responded by announcing two measures which will help borrowers with negative equity who wish to move house, *Official Report*, 20 October, column *243*.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) which European Community countries treat capital and revenue on the same basis within the actual public expenditure planning totals;

(2) what plans he has to secure a common definition of public expenditure and Government borrowing between European Community countries.

Mr. Portillo: European Community countries use varying definitions for their own public expenditure planning and control purposes. However, these countries make returns to the statistical office of the European Communities covering general Government current expenditure, capital expenditure and the financial deficit, based on the European system of integrated economic accounts. This publication is available in the House of Commons Library.

Growth

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average annual rate of economic growth of the United Kingdom and each other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: Data of OECD countries' economic growth since 1979 can be found in the June 1992 edition of the OECD "Economic Outlook".

Books (VAT)

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to extend VAT to the purchase of second-hand books.

Sir John Cope: We have no proposals to extend VAT to the purchase of second-hand books.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the first official estimate which was published of the public sector borrowing requirement for 1992-93 and 1993-94, respectively; what subsequent estimates were published; and if he will give the date of publication in each case.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* Forecasts of the PSBR for the year ahead are published annually in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", and then updated in the subsequent "Autumn Statement". Estimates given in the FSBR for years beyond the year ahead are projections, rather than forecasts, based on illustrative assumptions about the medium-term path of the economy.

A forecast of £28·1 billion for 1992-93 was made in the 1992 FSBR published on 10 March. A revised estimate will be given in the 1992 "Autumn Statement". No forecasts have yet been published for 1993-94.

ENVIRONMENT

English House Condition Survey

15. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the English house condition survey.

Mr. Baldry: The results of the English house condition survey will be published next year.

Disabled Facilities Grants

16. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the provision of disabled facilities grants.

Mr. Baldry: Disabled facilities grants assist disabled people with the cost of adaptations to enable them to live more independently in their own homes. Since the new grant system was introduced in July 1990, more than 30,000 grants have been approved at a total cost of £103 million.

House Building

17. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to assist house builders to increase the supply of new, affordable houses.

Sir George Young: The Government are investing £1·7 billion this year through the Housing Corporation, nearly double the level of three years ago, and supplemented by £0·5 billion of private finance, for affordable housing provided by housing associations. A substantial proportion of the corporation's programme is devoted to new build. Recent falls in interest rates and in land prices will stimulate demand for new private housing, which is now more affordable than for many years.

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total expenditure committed to public house-building programmes by housing associations, local authorities and others in this current financial year; and what percentage he estimates has been placed with *(a)* large volume-build contractors and *(b)* small- and medium-sized companies, respectively.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* Gross capital expenditure by housing associations financed through the Housing Corporation in 1992-93 will be over £1·7 billion, supplemented by private loans of £0·5 billion; the large majority of this is spent on new house-building. It is estimated that local authorities will spend around £125 million on new council housing in

1992-93. In addition, authorities are estimated to spend £250 million on support for housing associations, much of which will be on new house building. No information is available centrally about the size of contractors used by associations and authorities.

Unleaded Petrol

18. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take with regard to benzene levels in unleaded petrol.

Mr. Maclean: The benzene content of petrol, both leaded and unleaded, is already limited to a maximum of 5 per cent. by volume under EC directive 85/210/EEC. New European Community vehicle emission standards which apply from the end of this year will greatly reduce emissions of benzene from new cars.

Renovation Grants

19. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities are able to make discretionary awards in respect of renovation grants for home improvements.

Sir George Young: All local housing authorities.

Opencast Mining

20. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures he proposes to limit the impact of opencast coal mining on the natural environment.

Mr. Howard: My Department announced on 15 July that the planning guidelines for opencast coal will be revised. We expect to bring forward a draft for public consultation next year following completion of the Government's coal review. I hope that the hon. Member will appreciate that I cannot pre-empt what the revised guidelines will say.

30. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to issue new planning guidance in relation to the development of opencast coal mining.

Mr. Howard: We hope to be in a position to issue draft revised guidance for public consultation following the outcome of the recently announced coal review.

23. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received on the review of minerals planning guidance note 3 on opencast coal operations.

Mr. Howard: We received a number of representations as part of a wide-ranging consultation on the practical operation of the guidelines earlier this year. Summaries of the responses to that exercise were placed in the Library when my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning announced our intention to revise the guidelines on 15 July.

Urban Regeneration Agency (Headquarters)

21. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a decision has been reached on the location of the headquarters of the Urban Regeneration Agency.

Mr. Redwood: It is too early to say where the headquarters of the agency will be located. We will look closely at the merits of each region before coming to a decision in consultation with Lord Walker.

New Age Travellers

22. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet representatives of the Association of County Councils to discuss the problem of itinerant new age travellers.

Mr. Baldry: I will shortly be meeting representatives of the Association of County Councils to discuss the Government's proposals to reduce illegal camping set out in the consultation paper, "Reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968". These proposals do not address the public order issues which may arise when huge numbers of new age travellers congregate. Those issues are being considered by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, in consultation with other Government Departments and chief police officers.

Local Government Boundaries

24. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made with the review of local government boundaries.

Mr. Redwood: The Local Government Commission has begun its reviews of local government structure, boundaries and electoral arrangements in all of the areas in the first tranche of its work programme.

Council Tax

25. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the total cost of transitional relief for the operation of the first year of the council tax in 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave earlier this afternoon to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton).

32. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the expected effect on household bills of the introduction of the council tax in London.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have made no predictions of the level of council taxes in London or elsewhere. Council tax is a local tax and bills will be set locally.

29. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for changes in the standard spending assessment allocation formula when the council tax is introduced.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes shortly to announce proposals for SSAs for 1993-94, together with details of the provisional revenue support grant settlement.

Illegal Camping

26. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is planning to deal with illegal camping by travelling people.

Mr. Baldry: We issued on 18 August a consultation paper, "Reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968" which contains proposals for reducing illegal camping. The closing date for responses is 13 November.

Sustainable Development Plan

27. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the process by which the United Kingdom's first sustainable development plan will be drawn up; and what provisions will be made for the involvement of Parliament in that process.

Mr. Maclean: The Government intend to prepare a report to the new United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development by the end of 1993. I want us to have a full national debate so that everyone with a concern for the environment can join in with views on how we can balance the need for economic activity with protection of the environment. It will be essential that this House contributes to that debate.

Local Authority Tendering

28. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on local authority tendering for large capital projects.

Mr. Robin Squire: Local authority tendering for large capital projects is governed by EC regulations and local authorities' own standing orders as well as by the compulsory competitive tendering provisions of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, the Local Government Act 1988, and the Local Government Act 1992.

Right-to-repair Scheme

31. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for improving the right-to-repair scheme for council tenants.

Sir George Young: Provisions for a new right to repair are included in the Housing and Urban Development Bill which was introduced on 22 October.

Property Services Agency Projects

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to offer PSA Projects for sale and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[pursuant to the answer of 22 May 1992, c. 273]:* A total of 860 staff of PSA Projects have chosen to transfer with the business on its sale to Tarmac Construction Ltd. I expect the sale to be completed on 1 December. A further announcement to Parliament will be made shortly giving the financial details of the sale once the implications of staff choice have been assessed.

Norbreck Parade, London (Access)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement about the outcome of the proceedings held at Ealing town hall on 14 October in connection with the appeal against the refusal by the local planning authority to grant planning permission for an access to Norbreck parade, London NW10, from the north circular road;

(2) what was the advice given on 14 October by his Department to the inspector in connection with the proceedings at the Ealing town hall relating to the appeal against the refusal of the local planning authority to grant planning permission for an access to Norbreck parade, London NW10, from the north circular road.

Mr. Baldry: This planning appeal is the responsibility of the planning inspectorate. I have asked the inspectorate's chief executive, Mr. Stephen Crow, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from H. S. Crow to Mr. Paul Boateng, dated 27 October 1992:

The Secretary of State for the Environment has asked me to provide the reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions to him, as their subject matter has been delegated to the Planning Inspectorate Executive Agency.

You ask what advice was given to the Inspector holding the inquiry on 14 October into the planning appeal relating to access to Norbreck Parade, London NW10, from the North Circular Road, and about the outcome of the proceedings.

The Inspector sought advice on a submission, made at the inquiry, that the Secretary of State had no jurisdiction in this matter. He was advised that, by reference to S.79(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Secretary of State had the discretionary power to decline to determine this appeal, in view of the fact that the local planning authority had been directed [by the Secretary of State for Transport] to refuse planning permission. The Secretary of State was not however bound to exercise this power and, therefore, it was within the Inspector's discretion to allow the inquiry to continue.

However, since the parties wished to consider further both the procedural issue and evidence on the merits of the case, the Inspector agreed to adjourn the inquiry until 20 November next.

Following the hearing of the case at the re-convened inquiry, the Inspector will report to the Secretary of State, both on the procedural issue and on the merits of the appeal proposals.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to introduce new wildlife legislation in order to protect sites of special scientific interest for the purposes of implementing the new EC habitats directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We are currently considering what measures are necessary to implement the EC habitats directive and we expect to put our proposals to public consultation in the next few months.

Habitats Directive

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment he has made of the amendments required to sections 36 and 37 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to meet the obligations under the new EC directive on the conservation of flora, fauna and habitats relating to the marine environment;

(2) if he will introduce new legislative measures to guard against the degradation of sites of special scientific interest and other areas requiring special conservation measures under the EC directive on the conservation of flora, fauna and habitats.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will strengthen the marine nature reserve provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in order to meet the obligations of the new EC habitats directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's response to the Select Committee report on coastal zone protection and planning recognises the difficulties in application of sections 36 and 37 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. We shall ensure that the proposals for implementation of the marine conservation aspects of the habitats directive fully meet the directive's requirements.

Hazardous Substances Regulations

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for deemed consent under part 4 of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations 1992 have been made since the introduction of the regulations.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available at present. However, my Department intends to seek the relevant information from local authorities next April, as part of an annual statistical return on hazardous substances consents.

Council Houses (Windows)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what surveys he has conducted into the replacement of metal-framed windows in council-owned housing stock and the consistency of the programme in various parts of England and Wales; and what provisions are extended to those who have already purchased a council house under government regulations.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has conducted no surveys of local authority activity in this area. Private owners who are advised that work of this kind is required may be eligible for assistance under the provisions of the house renovation grant scheme.

Mortgage Arrears

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people in Britain are in arrears with their mortgages.

Mr. Baldry: Figures published by the Council of Mortgage Lenders show that 305,140 mortgages in the United Kingdom were six months or more in arrears at the end of June.

Derelict Land

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sums have been spent on the clearance of derelict and contaminated land and the area covered by the Dearne valley city grant project in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: The amounts spent on the clearance of derelict and contaminated land in the area covered by the Dearne Valley Partnership in each of the last five years is as follows.

	£
1988-89	326,401
1989-90	1,454,482
1990-91	3,244,522
1991-92	5,414,519
[1]1992-93	4,834,158

[1] From 1 April 1992 to 5 November 1992.

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of land in England and Wales are vacant or derelict.

Mr. Redwood: In England, based on the 1988 derelict land survey, there are 100,035 acres of derelict land. The 1990 national survey of vacant land in urban areas of England estimates that there are about 150,000 acres of vacant land in English towns and cities. There will, of course, be overlap between those two figures. Statistics are not available for vacant land in non-urban areas of England.

Vacant and derelict land in Wales are matters for the Secretary of State for Wales.

Earth Summit

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the international conference for non-governmental organisations announced by the Prime Minister at the Earth summit.

Mr. Howard: The Government will host a three-day international conference next year to enable voluntary bodies, local government and the business community to exchange experience on the practical implementation of the Earth summit agreements. The conference will take place in Manchester in September 1993.

The commitment and involvement of all the independent sectors are critical to the effective implementation of the agreements signed at the Earth summit. I am today issuing a consultation note on the conference and welcome views on our proposals from all interested sectors. I have invited Dr. Martin Holdgate, Director General of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, to chair an international steering group to guide the preparation for the conference.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the use of chlorofluorocarbons in the United Kingdom refrigeration and air conditioning industry.

Mr. Maclean: My Department commissioned a study, from the March Consulting Group, on CFC use in the refrigeration and air conditioning industry, which is published by HMSO today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. The report shows that the United Kingdom market for refrigeration and air conditioning equipment has grown from £339 million in 1986 to £632 million in 1990. The industry has cut its consumption of CFCs over this period by some 15 per cent. overall.

The report also shows that 72 per cent. of new CFCs are used for servicing existing equipment. Users of refrigeration and air conditioning equipment must act quickly to set up leak detection systems, to monitor the refrigerant they use, and to recover and recycle. If they do not act quickly and responsibly, they could experience a severe shortage of CFCs after production has stopped, which will be at the end of 1995 at the latest.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals are still outstanding relating to bills received under the uniform business rate as at 1 November in England.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* At the end of September 1992, the latest date at which information is available for England, in respect of the 1990 non-domestic rating list there were about 550,000 outstanding proposals of which around 500,000 had been passed by valuation offices to valuation tribunals as appeals. This follows the clearance of over 400,000 cases.

Rating Appeals

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals are still outstanding relating to bills received under the old domestic rating system in England.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: At the end of September 1992, the latest date at which information is available for England, there were about 2,500 outstanding appeals relating to the old rating system. These related to both domestic and non-domestic cases and separate figures are not available.

Most of the outstanding appeals were awaiting decisions by the Lands Tribunal.

Water Disconnections

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what emergency access arrangements are made to the water supply in properties where the supply has been disconnected for non-payment.

Mr. Maclean: None. However, local authorities are required to be notified of the disconnection of a supply of water to any inhabited house if the supply is not restored within 24 hours. They have powers under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to make such arrangements as they think fit for the supply to be restored in certain circumstances.

Water Companies

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions a water undertaker has been challenged in the courts under section 63 of the Water Industry Act 1991.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not collected by my Department, or by the Office of Water Services, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Council Tax

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library, in hard copy and on floppy disk, the data of each local authority's tax base for the council tax purposes supplied to his Department on form CTB.1.

Mr. Redwood *[pursuant to the answer 30 October 1992, c.863]*: I have today placed in the Library of the House the information requested.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Zambia and Zimbabwe

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how much money is currently allocated by the Overseas Development Administration to assist drought-affected areas of Zambia and Zimbabwe; and what is the total tonnage of cereals which has been pledged to date to each country by the United Kingdom;

(2) what is the timetable for the delivery of pledges granted by the Overseas Development Administration to the draught-affected areas of Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have pledged and fully disbursed £10 million each to Zambia and Zimbabwe in balance of payments grants to help with the cost of additional imports, including food, for drought relief. We are also providing £804,000 for Zambia and £2·475 million for Zimbabwe to assist with emergency water schemes and food distribution.

Apart from small amounts through these ongoing projects, we are not providing food aid directly on a bilateral basis. However, the EC has committed 100,000 tonnes for Zambia and 80,000 tonnes for Zimbabwe this year, mainly in cereal form. We expect this to be delivered over the next 10 weeks. Britain's share of the cost is about £5·5 million.

Madagascar

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much overseas aid has been given by the Overseas Development Administration to counter crop damage by swarms of locusts in Madagascar.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have committed £17,000 towards a field trial of insect growth regulators in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation. In addition, the ODA is currently putting together a package of items to address the specific short-term recommendations of the FAO's locust consultant: the value and extent of that package has yet to be finalised.

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who, in the Overseas Development Administration, has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA has a well-established organisational and policy-making structure to ensure environmental and natural resources issues are taken fully into account in its work. General environmental policy and environmental research is co-ordinated by the natural resources and environment department. All ODA staff involved in the examination of project proposals are required to assess them for environmental impact, using the ODA's own "Manual of Environmental Assessment".

The concept of sustainable development, which was promoted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and set out in "Agenda 21", is central to the ODA's policies. Co-ordinating action on "Agenda 21" is the responsibility of the aid policy department.

We are mobilising the aid programme in further support of the goals of "Agenda 21" and we will contribute our share of the 3 million ecu pledged by the European Community at UNCED. We shall also contribute our share to a replenishment of the global environment facility.

Africa (Aid)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to advocate an initiative for Africa encompassing debt reductions, improved terms of trade and increased overseas aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Africa is already a priority for the United Kingdom aid programme; 40 per cent. of our bilateral aid goes to African countries.

In 1990, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister launched the Trinidad terms debt initiative. As a result, seven countries in Africa have benefited from substantial reductions in their official debt. The Trinidad terms currently reduce eligible payments due to governments by as much as 50 per cent. None the less, we continue to press for even greater relief to be made available to poorest countries. All new United Kingdom aid to low-income African countries is on grant terms.

We believe developing countries must be allowed to trade freely. The GATT Uruguay round is the key to this. We are pressing the European Commission to continue discussions with the USA and to work for the earliest possible resolution of outstanding difficulties on the round.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help is currently offered by the Overseas Development Administration to establish and support food reserves in African countries to help prevent future food shortages.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Food reserves set up in developing countries with international food aid can be expensive to establish and maintain and difficult to protect. For this reason, we give priority to meeting food shortages with food aid, by obtaining food quickly either by purchases from donor countries or surplus-holding countries in the region; or by reallocation of food aid consignments on the high seas.

Some African countries do have food stocks generated by surpluses from their own harvests. In these cases, we will continue to provide help on crop storage at village, district and national level.

Mozambican Refugees

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is currently granted by the Overseas Development Administration to assist the Government of Zimbabwe to deal with refugees from Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Most of our aid for Mozambican refugees is channelled through the co-ordinating offices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, from where it is allocated to relief programmes in refugee host countries, including Zimbabwe. We have made cash grants of £10·5 million in this form since 1989. We are also supporting British non-governmental organisations, including Help Age which is running a programme to address the urgent needs of elderly and disabled Mozambican refugees in Zimbabwe.

Aid Target

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the exact date in 1974 when the Government accepted the 0·7 per cent. of the gross national product target for overseas aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The target was accepted in principle by the newly elected Government of February 1974.

PRIME MINISTER

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Prime Minister what is the average hill livestock compensatory allowance payment to eligible farmers in Wales and the comparable figures for England; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The average payment during the 1991-92 financial year was £2,570 in Wales and £2,781 in England.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Civil Service

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he is taking to ensure that the civil service maintains the progress of its equal opportunities policies by appointing more women on merit to top posts.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The civil service is committed to equal opportunity. It seeks to offer staff at all levels the opportunity to develop their career successfully, combining this where they choose with family commitments. Our aim is to ensure that this opportunity is open to all women, so that those with the ability to reach the top can realise their full potential, to their benefit and that of the service and the public it serves.

Maintaining the principle of selection and promotion on merit, we have concluded that the achievement of our equal opportunity aims will be helped by setting a benchmark, against which progress can be judged. We believe that, if our efforts are sustained, we can realistically expect at least to double the representation of women in the top three grades across the Civil Service as a whole by the year 2000. This will mean a proportion of 15 per cent. or more compared with the 7 per cent. when Opportunity 2000 was launched and under 4 per cent. in 1987. We will review progress each year.

Charter Marks

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications for charter mark awards were rejected after their contents were subjected to verification procedures.

Mr. Robert Jackson: This year's charter mark scheme attracted 296 applications from public sector organisations throughout the United Kingdom. Following assessment by the Prime Minister's advisory panel, and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 36 charter marks were awarded.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what procedures were followed to verify the claims of the shortlisted charter mark applicants; and how many of the applications were submitted to such scrutiny.

Mr. Robert Jackson: All organisations that submitted applications were required to provide evidence against the six charter mark standards, one of which was evidence of independent validation of performance. They had to demonstrate that they had satisfied their customers, and achieved measurable improvements in the quality of the services they provide. They also had to offer a new idea for improving their service at no additional cost to the public purse.

The Prime Minister's citizens charter advisory panel and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster were responsible for judging the charter mark applications. All applications were carefully scrutinised and shortlisted organisations were visited by members of the advisory panel of their representatives, as part of the verification procedures.

EDUCATION

Capital Credit

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state for each local education authority in England the amount of capital credit approval they have applied for, for use in 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is set out in the table.

Total capital bid 1993-94

Local education authority	*£000s*
Barking	3,455
Barnet	19,479
Bexley	7,058
Brent	12,047
Bromley	7,614
Croydon	6,200
Ealing	34,145
Enfield	7,989
Haringey	6,296
Harrow	12,242
Havering	5,593
Hillingdon	13,070
Hounslow	12,997
Kingston	1,664
Merton	8,303
Newham	8,252
Redbridge	6,562
Richmond	8,151
Sutton	3,538
Waltham Forest	13,158
City	0
Camden	2,099
Westminster	1,618
Greenwich	8,229
Hackney	7,240
Hammersmith	4,157
Islington	10,818
Kensington	3,250
Lambeth	7,231
Lewisham	18,440
Southwark	7,080
Wandsworth	12,386
Tower Hamlets	31,542
Birmingham	27,337
Coventry	3,157
Dudley	8,532
Sandwell	8,283
Solihull	7,094
Walsall	4,676
Wolverhampton	14,681
Knowsley	6,437
Liverpool	9,086
St. Helens	5,868
Sefton	5,049
Wirral	8,678
Bolton	3,242
Bury	2,668
Manchester	30,727
Oldham	4,755
Rochdale	16,770
Salford	10,142
Stock[illegible]rt	3,208
Tame[illegible]e	9,405
Trafford	8,072
Wigan	7,498
Barnsley	6,472
Doncaster	4,714
Rotherham	9,807
Sheffield	21,985
Bradford	29,964
Calderdale	4,440
Kirklees	12,195
Leeds	36,185
Wakefield	25,688
Gateshead	5,701
Newcastle	24,769
North Tyneside	9,818
South Tyneside	4,489
Sunderland	10,699
Isles of Scilly	40
Avon	13,012
Bedfordshire	5,219
Berkshire	23,390
Buckinghamshire	13,360
Cambridgeshire	22,773
Cheshire	31,186
Cleveland	10,050
Cornwall	16,439
Cumbria	20,626
Derbyshire	40,570
Devon	22,500
Dorset	20,280
Durham	40,715
East Sussex	41,607
Essex	45,942
Gloucester	29,660
Hampshire	27,187
Hereford and Worcester	10,917
Hertford	18,824
Humberside	25,101
Isle of Wight	6,214
Kent	39,346
Lancashire	38,376
Leicester	16,815
Lincoln	22,446
Norfolk	9,997
North Yorkshire	11,547
Northamptonshire	9,298
Northumberland	4,238
Nottinghamshire	13,001
Oxfordshire	26,064
Shropshire	4,884
Somerset	15,251
Staffordshire	18,470
Suffolk	21,470
Surrey	26,511
Warwickshire	12,411
West Sussex	19,201
Wiltshire	7,519
Total	1,526,651

Discretionary Awards

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many discretionary awards were made by the Inner London education authority in its last full year; and how many have been made by the successor local education authorities in inner London in 1992-93.

Mr. Forman: In the academic year 1989-90 there were 8,373 discretionary awards made by the ILEA. In 1990-91, the latest year for which data are available, the successor authorities—the London residuary body and the boroughs —made 6,375 discretionary awards.

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many discretionary awards were made nationally in 1989 and 1992.

Mr. Forman: In 1990-91 academic year, the latest for which data are available, there were 157,000 discretionary awards in England and Wales—the same as in 1988-89.

Research

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to instruct the higher education inspectors to produce an annual assessment on the use made of funds granted to the Higher Education Funding Council via the dual support scheme for university research.

Mr. Forman: The Government have asked the higher education funding councils to secure increased accountability for the use of council funds for research. It is for the councils themselves to determine how to take this forward. The Higher Education Funding Council for England has recently launched an initiative to achieve this.

Governors

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will introduce legislation to repeal section 15(14) of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 relating to the minimum age of governors.

Mr. Forth: No.

University Teachers

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from the Association of University Teachers on the establishment of a salary review board for university teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The AUT has mounted two parliamentary lobbies and a letter campaign which have supported a pay review body for university teachers. The Government have consistently replied—most recently in my reply to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 19 October, *Official Report*, column 23—that they have no intention of establishing such a body.

TRANSPORT

British Transport Police

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future status of the British Transport police after the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. MacGregor: Paragraph 98 of the White Paper "New Opportunities for the Railways", Cm 2012, announced the Government's broad intentions for the British Transport police—BTP—and promised further consultation.

The Department has today published a document, "The Future Status of the British Transport Police" which considers how the BTP may need to adapt to the proposed new structure of the railways.

The document confirms the Government's intention to maintain the BTP as one force and seeks the views of interested parties on its future accountability; the scope for private operators to make alternative arrangements for some functions; the extent to which functions could be contracted out; and the means of controlling and allocating costs.

I have placed copies of this document in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office.

Fishing Boats

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fishing boats are registered in the ports of Ayr, Troon and Girvan; and how many are owned by other than United Kingdom citizens.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

Port	*Number of registered fishing vessels*	*Number Non-United Kingdom owned*
Ayr	27	9
Troon	5	Nil

Girvan is not a port of registry.

Cohesion Fund

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions have taken place in the Transport Council during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council of Ministers, on the application of the cohesion fund to *(a)* the European transport infrastructure and *(b)* environmental projects as proposed by draft article 130d of the treaty of Rome under the treaty of European Union.

Mr. MacGregor: The Transport Council has not discussed the cohesion fund, but, following its Luxembourg meeting on Monday 26 October, the Council is able, subject, of course, to the views of Parliament, to agree in principle the extension of the current transport infrastructure funding programme for a maximum of two years.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates they will be returned.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport holds 21 records withdrawn temporarily from the Public Record Office for current administrative use. The policy is to return records as soon as the relevant department action is completed.

The titles are:

Harbour Department Papers – Foreshores
Harbour Department – North British Railways Bill
Harbour Department – Correspondence on proposed construction Harbours and Foreshores
Harbour Department – Wrecks and Foreshores
Harbour Department – Wrecks: assents to structures on piers and Foreshores
Channel Tunnel Study Group
Channel Tunnel – Contract Details
Channel Tunnel – Contract Details
Channel Tunnel – Discussions with interested bodies (financial)
Fire applicances – Richards
Ltd., Aberdeen – production of unlined and rubber latex lined hoses. (3 records)
Orders made under Town and Country Planning Acts SIs 1113-1303
Transport Bill 1961/62, clauses 69-71
Ministry of Transport organisation and procedures for reviewing old records
Amendments and additions to be made to the ICE conditions of contract when used for works on classified roads
The north of Twyning-North of Lydiate Ash special road (improvement) order. (2 records)
Reorganisation of Civil Aviation and Common Services Groups
Organisation and staffing, Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation Directory
Motor Vehicle: Licensing: Electrically propelled vehicles

Road Surfaces

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent the use of noise-reducing road surfaces such as porous asphalt are used in the United Kingdom; what assessment he has made of the effect of using such road surfaces on the level of road noise on the mainland of Europe; and if he will consider introducing more of this type of surface.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The use of noise-reducing surfaces in the United Kingdom has until recently been confined to full-scale road trials.

Contacts are well established between officials of the Department and other European countries that use these surfaces selectively depending on the site conditions. Assessment of the noise reduction effect of these surfaces indicates overseas performance similar to the United Kingdom trials.

A specification for porous asphalt which has particular noise-reducing characteristics is about to be issued by my Department. The material may now be used on trunk roads, including motorways, where it can be shown to be suitable and cost effective. At the same time other forms of surface treatment are being developed.

It is a matter for local highway authorities to decide the particular choice of surface for use on their own roads.

Tunnels (Lights)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the effect of relying upon motorists using their lights in tunnels rather than a high quality of public lighting on the number of accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Tunnel lighting requirements depend on a range of factors including the tunnel length and the traffic flows and vehicle speeds; they are set out fully within a British Standard code of practice. For road safety reasons, lighting provision needs to overcome the adaptation problem for drivers when entering a tunnel from bright daylight conditions, but the numbers of accidents are too small to allow reliable studies of the direct relationship between lighting levels and accident causation.

Channel Tunnel

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the effect of rail freight traffic from the channel tunnel on south-east London on the frequency of rail journeys in that area.

Mr. Freeman: With the infrastructure and signalling improvements currently being undertaken on lines in Kent and London, BR believes that it will be able to operate international services without adversely affecting domestic traffic.

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the environmental impact statement of the channel tunnel and rail link on south-east London.

Mr. Freeman: Although an environmental statement was not a requirement of the House for the Channel Tunnel Bill, a report "Channel Fixed Link: Environmental Appraisal of Alternative Proposals" was published in December 1985. Copies were placed in the Library. Eurotunnel also provided supporting documents to the Select Committee that considered the Bill. An environmental statement for the new rail link will be published in support of an application for statutory approval. The rail link is not planned to pass through south-east London.

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library copies of studies on noise and vibration with particular reference to south London carried out by the Derby railway research study centre since 1985.

Mr. Freeman: The studies requested were carried out by British Rail Research on a commercial in confidence basis. The Department cannot therefore deposit the studies in the Library.

A40

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what works are currently being undertaken on the A40 between the start of Westway and the Target roundabout, Northolt; at what cost; when they are due to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department is not currently undertaking any works along the A40 between the western end of Westway and its junction with the A312, at the Target roundabout. However, it has been necessary to close the nearside lane of the westbound carriageway of the A40 between Alperton lane and Perivale lane since 7 September to enable Southern Electric to replace a high-voltage cable. These works are expected to be completed by early December.

Severn Bridge (Tolls)

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the increase in the Severn bridge toll in January 1993 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Severn bridge tolls will be increased on 1 January 1993 by 10·7 per cent. in cash terms. This will represent a year-on-year increase of 6·9 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make arrangements for regular users of the Severn bridge to be able to buy block books of tickets for use after 31 December.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This is a matter for the concessionaire, Severn River Crossing Plc. I understand that the company will be offering for sale books of tickets at the 1993 rates from 7 December onwards.

Emergency Vessels

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column 89, when he expects the assessment of emergency or standby vessels in the offshore oil and gas industry to be completed.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 10 November 1992]*: The new standby vessel code jointly agreed by the Department and the Health and Safety Executive includes a staged approach with the simpler requirements being completed by 1 January 1992 and 1 May 1992, and with full compliance by 31 December 1992. New vessels and new conversions are to comply before entering service. The timing of preparation and presentation of vessels is a matter for owners.

The present situation is that: 86 fully comply with the new code; 41 have applied for and are in the process of assessment; 46 may be put forward for assessment or withdrawn from service.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Curry: Government Departments have a statutory right under the Public Records Acts to retrieve records temporarily from the Public Record Office for their administrative use. My Department currently has 50 records out on loan. A list of titles is being sent out to the hon. Member. Records are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list, for each local authority area in South Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry owns no residential property in South Yorkshire.

Poultry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the voltages normally used for stunning poultry in British slaughterhouses.

Mr. Gummer: The legislation requires that birds must be instantaneously rendered insensible to pain until death. The code of practice on welfare of poultry at slaughter gives guidance on stunning currents. For broilers, it recommends a minimum, average stunning current of 105 milliamperes per bird to produce an adequate period of insensibility.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what statistics are available to indicate the sales to developing countries by each EC country in volume, nature and value of goods produced, under the common agricultural policy in the latest convenient period.

Mr. Curry: The latest statistics on the trade of EC member states with developing countries is given in "Eurostat's External Trade, Analytical Tables, 1990" which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of confirmed cases of BSE, by county, for October.

Mr. Gummer: The information as requested for Great Britain from 3 October to 30 October 1992 is as follows. All these cases will have a date of clinical onset of disease and date of report before 3 October.

County/Region	*Confirmed cases*
England	
Avon	37
Bedfordshire	10
Berkshire	7
Buckinghamshire	14
Cambridge	3
Cheshire	165
Cleveland	3
Cornwall	222
Cumbria	109
Derbyshire	53
Devon	302
Dorset	110
Durham	16
Essex	11
Gloucestershire	37
Hampshire	31
Hereford & Worcester	45
Hertfordshire	16
Humberside	11
Isle of Wight	9
Kent	18
Lancashire	146
Leicestershire	41
Lincolnshire	9
London	1
Manchester	7
Merseyside	1
Norfolk	25
Northamptonshire	16
Northumberland	19

County/Region	*Confirmed cases*
Nottinghamshire	**7**
Oxfordshire	**22**
Shropshire	**67**
Somerset	**151**
Staffordshire	**93**
Suffolk	**15**
Surrey	**12**
Sussex East	**10**
Sussex West	**28**
Tyne and Wear	**1**
Warwickshire	**16**
West Midlands	**2**
Wiltshire	**109**
Yorkshire North	**115**
Yorkshire South	**10**
Yorkshire West	**17**
Wales	
Clwyd	**54**
Dyfed	**149**
Glamorgan Mid	**0**
Glamorgan South	**8**
Glamorgan West	**0**
Gwent	**19**
Gwynedd	**13**
Powys	**41**
Scotland	
Borders	**9**
Central	**2**
Dumfries	**41**
Fife	**2**
Grampian	**23**
Highland	**6**
Lothian	**5**
Orkney	**3**
Shetland	**0**
Strathclyde	**47**
Tayside	**17**
Western Isles	**0**

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

European Law (Breaches)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Attorney-General what has been the total cost to the Exchequer since 1979 arising from United Kingdom legal representation at the European Court in cases brought against Her Majesty's Government by the European Commission for alleged breaches of European law.

The Attorney-General: The information sought by the hon. Member is not readily available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Defence Diversification

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet with the armaments and military equipment manufacturers to discuss options available to diversify into civil technology and engineering business.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I are strongly committed to meeting and continuing a dialogue with companies from all sectors including with defence suppliers on the problems of adjustment that they currently face.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to secure an international GATT meeting to examine the implications of trading policies upon environmental concerns.

Mr. Needham: The GATT already has a group on environmental measures and international trade, which meets regularly in Geneva. The group has met four times in 1992, most recently in October. The European Community, including the United Kingdom, plays an active role in the work of this group. Separately, the United Kingdom plays a leading role in the work of a special Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development group, which brings together trade and environmental policy-makers. This group is formulating policy guidelines to help ensure the proper interaction of trade and environmental policies.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to raise import duties on tropical timber and tropical timber products imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: No. The United Kingdom applies the European Community's common external tariff, which is negotiated and agreed by all EC member states and cannot be changed on an individual national basis. If the EC were to raise its import duties, it would be obliged under the rules of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, to offer offsetting tariff reductions on items of interest to the countries affected by such increases.

Furthermore, restricting trade in tropical timber would mean that forest dwellers who depend on such trade would be forced to seek alternative ways to exploit the forests for economic gain, possibly including using the timber for fuel or clearing the land for cultivation. The Government therefore aim rather to promote the sustainable management of tropical forests which takes into account the needs of their animal, plant and human inhabitants. In this context, the European Community will shortly begin the renegotiation of the international tropical timber agreement.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the importation of tropical hardwoods.

Mr. Needham: Except as provided for under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, there are no restrictions on the import of tropical hardwoods into the United Kingdom. The Government pursue a coherent policy to encourage sustainable management of tropical forests and do not consider that any wider restrictions on timber imports are practicable or desirable.

EC Single Market

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to call for the establishment of new mechanisms to monitor reports on the trade diversion effects of the single market on poorer developing countries during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC.

Mr. Needham: No. The Government do not consider that completion of the single market will have the effect of diverting trade away from developing countries. Removal of internal barriers within the European Community will make it easier for all traders, including developing country exporters, to do business throughout the Community. The trade policy review mechanism—TPRM—of the general agreement on tariffs and trade already provides a forum in which the effects of contracting parties' trade policies and practices on other countries and on the multilateral trading system as a whole can be examined in detail. The Community's trade policy is subject to biennial review under the TPRM.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what trade restrictions on goods made with or containing ozone-depleting substances exist with European Free Trade Association countries.

Mr. Needham: The United Kingdom does not impose any controls on trade in these products with EFTA countries. However, all EFTA countries except Switzerland have notified the EC of their intention to introduce bans on the use of these products and these will equally apply to imports from other countries.

Company Accounts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in what circumstances his Department takes action when a company's accounts are qualified by auditors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Auditors' reports on companies' accounts may be qualified for various reasons, and such qualifications do not necessarily imply financial difficulty or breaches of the law. Routine consideration of every qualified report would require resources that we do not believe could be justified. However my Department considers for appropriate action any case where a qualification is drawn to its attention as indicating a matter for concern.

Aerospace Industry

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what plans he has to meet the chairmen of the major aerospace companies;

(2) what plans he has to meet the employees of major aerospace companies, their trade union and professional association representatives.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has no immediate plans to meet the employees or professional association representatives of the major aerospace companies. However, he and I have visited a number of companies and we have had meetings with the Society of British Aerospace Companies and with the chairmen of several companies including British Aerospace, GEC, Rolls-Royce and Westland.

Textiles

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has received from the textile industry about the effect of subsidies by the Wallonian region to textile companies in Belgium; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the uniformity of a common policy in the European Community on control of state aids to the textile and clothing industry.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 4 November 1992]*: Representations have been made by the British Textile Confederation about alleged subsidies. We are considering these allegations carefully.

There continue to be isolated cases of aid approved to manufacturers in the textile and clothing industries on which we make our concerns known to the Commission. In general, progress appears to be being made in the enforcement of the EC treaty obligations controlling and limiting state aid.

Arms Exports

Dr. David Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many licences were *(a)* applied for and *(b)* granted under the export control system for arms exports in 1991 and to date in 1992.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 9 November 1992]*: The following figures are in respect of export licences for goods covered by group 1 of part II of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1991:

	1991	*1992*
(a) Export licences applied for	13,832	12,907
(b) Export licences issued	13,216	12,005

Coal Uses

Mr. Gallie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what publicly-funded bodies are currently carrying out research, within the United Kingdom, into alternative uses for coal.

Mr. Eggar: Research into alternative uses of coal funded by the public sector in the United Kingdom is mainly undertaken at British Coal's coal research establishment—CRE—near Cheltenham and at its Point of Ayr coal liquefaction pilot plant, north Wales. Work in recent years has focused principally on coal liquefaction, the production of chemicals from coal by prrolysis, coal gasification and carbonisation undertaken at CRE. Both British Coal and my Department are contributing to the £41 million Point of Ayr project with additional public sector funding from the European Commission.

Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, research into alternative uses of coal is undertaken at a number of universities with funding from the British Coal Utilisation Research Association, Science and Engineering Research Council and the European Commission.

A substantial amount of research into alternative uses of coal has also been undertaken by the private sector in the United Kingdom with European Commission funding over the past few years. This includes work by British Gas on producing a synthetic natural gas from coal and work by British Steel on coal carbonisation.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Living Allowance

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what are the actual clearance times on average for disability living allowance claims; and what is the proposed target for new claims and for reviews of earlier claims;

(2) on how many claims for disability living allowance the adjudication officer decided to send an examining doctor to the claimant's home rather than a home visit officer;

(3) what percentage of new claims for disability living allowances are successful; what percentage of successful claimants received each component of the benefit; and what percentage of unsuccessful claims are followed by an application for a review;

(4) what is the current backlog for reviews of disability living allowance claims.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 10 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about claims and reviews for Disability Living Allowance (DLA), their outcome and the types of evidence used in the adjudication officers decisions. I will deal with each of your points in turn.

National clearance times

The Benefits Agency introduced a standard performance measure across benefits some time ago. This is expressed in terms of clearance targets rather than average clearance times as was previously the case.

The primary target set for the clearance of DLA claims is 60 per cent. of claims to be cleared in 30 days. Since the launch of DLA in February 1992 the performance to date has been 33 per cent. of claims cleared in 30 days. The latest performance for the month of October shows 39 per cent. of claims cleared in 30 days.

The success of the advertising campaign and the policy initiatives surrounding the launch of the benefits attracted a much larger number of applications in the early stages than was expected. Backlogs of work arose as a result and this has undoubtedly affected our ability to meet the clearance targets.

I can assure you, however, that whilst we are still some way from meeting the target, firm actions have been taken to reduce the backlog and thereby significantly improve the clearance times. Extra staff have been deployed and overtime is being worked to a considerable extent. We are also reviewing our working practices to ensure the most efficient procedures are in place consistent with our customers' needs. These measures have already borne fruit with the number of claims being cleared rising steadily from approximately 15,600 in April to 57,700 in October.

Reviews

You asked about the target times for reviews of claims to DLA. This is also expressed in the same way as new claims but the primary target for these cases is 60 per cent. in 55 days.

You also asked about the current backlog for reviews of DLA claims. At the end of October 1992 there were 25,985 applications for review still to be cleared. The number of applications for review has been steadily rising as the recovery programme to clear the backlog of new claims has been successfully completed.

The build-up of these reviews has also been affected by the diversion of resources to clear those outstanding Attendance Allowance and Mobility Allowance review and appeal cases inherited at 6 April 1992 when DLA was introduced. I am confident that these inherited cases will be cleared by the end of December 1992, as mentioned in my letter of 19 October 1992 to all MPs, and further resources are now being diverted to tackle the DLA reviews.

Number of claims adjudicated upon after a medical examination has been requested.

From February to the end of October just under 270,000 decisions have been made on new claims to DLA, of these nearly 160,000 decisions were made to award DLA, with almost 110,000 rejections. Over 54,400 decisions, representing 22 per cent., were made based on evidence obtained by way of a medical examination and over 400 decisions, less than 1 per cent., were made using information obtained by a home visit officer.

Numbers and percentages of successful claims

During the period February to October there were around 342,000 new claims to DLA, of these nearly 160,000 were awarded, this is reflected as a success rate of 59 per cent. The table below shows a breakdown by each component and rate:

Rate	*Number*	*As a percentage of successful claims*
Higher rate care	5,300	3
Middle rate care	7,900	5
Lower rate care	15,700	10
Higher rate mobility	45,600	29
Lower rate mobility	11,300	7
Higher rate care plus higher rate mobility	18,300	11
Higher rate care plus lower rate mobility	3,700	2
Middle rate care plus higher rate mobility	10,200	6
Middle rate care plus lower rate mobility	9,100	6
Lower rate care plus higher rate mobility	16,800	10
Lower rate care plus lower rate mobility	15,900	10

I should explain that it is not possible to identify the number of review applications received following a decision to reject a claim to DLA as customers may ask for a review on any decision whether it is favourable or not. However, the total number of review applications received between February and October was 29,664 which is less than 10 per cent. of the total number of decisions made during the same period.

All figures quoted are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people have used the benefit inquiry line or his Department's local offices for help in completing the application form for disability living allowance; and what percentage of total claims are dealt with in this way;

(2) how many claimants have requested home visits for help in completing the disability living allowance form; what percentage of total claims this represents; and, of those requesting such visits, how many claimants were visited by his Department's officers.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 10 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about how many customers have requested home visits for help in completing the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claim form, what percentage of total claims this represents and how many visits were actually made. You also asked how many people have used the Benefit Enquiry Line or his Department's local offices for help in completing DLA forms and what percentage of total claims are dealt with in this way.

Information is not available on the number of requests made for visits. However, since the launch of DLA in February 1992 to the end of October approximately 1,950 home visits had been made by the Customer Service staff in the Disability Benefit Centres.

In this same period over 51,000 claims were completed with the assistance of telephone calls from Benefits Agency staff, which represents approximately 15 per cent. of the total of 342,000 new claims received.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what intervals claimants are advised on the progress of their claims or reviews for disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 10 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking at what intervals claimants are advised on the progress of their claims or reviews for Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

New claims to DLA are administered by 10 Disability Benefit Centres (DBCs) around the country. When a new claim is registered on the computer system an acknowledgment is automatically issued. The claim is then referred to an adjudication officer who may decide that further information is required and if this is the case then the customer will be informed. If the claim has not been cleared after 35 days then the computer system issues a letter automatically informing the customer of the delay.

I should explain that the volume of claims received has resulted in much longer delays in clearance and unfortunately we have been unable to keep customers fully informed of the progress of their claim in the latter stages. However now that the recovery programme to clear the backlog of claims has been successfully completed, clearance of claims will be accelerated and extended delays should not normally occur.

In the case of reviews, which are dealt with at the DLA Unit in Blackpool, due to the volume of work currently on hand customers have not been kept fully informed of the progress of their case. Action is being taken to address the outstanding review cases and staff will be keeping customers informed of any further delays which might arise when they action those cases.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Fraud

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the total number of cases of social security fraud detected in each of the last three years; and how many of these have resulted in prosecutions.

Miss Widdecombe: The investigation of social security fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Graham Allen, dated 10 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for the total number of cases of social security fraud detected in each of the last three years; and how many of these have resulted in prosecutions.

The number of cases which have resulted in a weekly benefit saving and those that have resulted in prosecutions for the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, are given below. I should explain that a weekly benefit saving is where benefit is reduced or terminated as a result of the work of fraud staff.

	Weekly benefit saving cases	*Prosecution cases*
1989-90	159,372	8,671
1990-91	158,178	7,911
1991-92	181,870	4,379

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies of this letter are being placed in the Library.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in the Doncaster area currently qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme; what percentage this is of the total number of households eligible to claim benefits from his Department; and what have been the comparative figures for each year since the scheme was introduced.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 10 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many households in the Doncaster area qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme; what percentage this is of the total number of households eligible to claim benefits from his Department; and what have been the comparative figures for each year since the scheme was introduced.

Doncaster is covered by the Agency's Doncaster District. It is not possible to give an exact figure of how many customers would qualify for a Cold Weather Payment except at disproportionate cost. However, based on figures for those claiming Income Support in August 1992, it is estimated that approximately 18,900 customers in the Doncaster District may qualify for a Cold Weather Payment, should the area be triggered. This represents approximately 50 per cent. of Income Support Customers.

The only period available for comparison is 1 November 1991 to 31 March 1992, when up to 12,820 (approximately 47 per cent. of Income Support customers) were paid during the four periods when the area was triggered. All other local statistics have been destroyed in accordance with standing instructions.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Medical Examinations

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by month since January for the Doncaster area, how many claims for *(a)* invalidity benefit, *(b)* sickness benefit, *(c)* severe disablement allowance and *(d)* income support were referred to the regional medical services; how many of these cases resulted in medical examinations; and what was the outcome (i) where examination took place and (ii) where they did not.

Mr. Scott: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 10 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking by month since January for the Doncaster area, how many claims for *(a)* invalidity benefit, *(b)* sickness benefit *(c)* severe disablement allowance and *(d)* income support were referred to the regional medical services; how many of these cases resulted in medical examinations; and what was the outcome (i) where examinations took place and (ii) where they did not.

The complete range of such information is not available except at disproportionate cost. This is because statistics covering decisions made following references to the Benefits Agency Medical Services are not available in the requested form.

Listed in the annex are the figures available for Invalidity Benefit, Sickness Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance. There have been no references directly from Income Support sections but customers in receipt of the incapacity benefits which I have mentioned may also be in receipt of Income Support.

The above information covers customers of the Agency's Doncaster East, Doncaster West and Mexborough offices.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Annex

Number of cases referred to BA medical services: From Doncaster area by benefit type

1992 year to date	*Invalidity benefit*	*Sickness benefit*	*Severe disablement allowance*	*Not in receipt of an incapacity benefit*[1]	*Total referred*
January	438	172	17	81	708
February	486	191	9	97	783
March	504	162	12	103	781
April	466	193	10	85	754
May	619	199	19	128	965
June	575	164	17	109	865
July	545	224	15	79	863
August	527	168	12	86	793
September	541	208	14	58	821
October	574	194	4	46	818

The results of the above references received to date are:

Incapable of all work	5,545
Capable of work	218
Incapable of normal occupation but capable of work within certain limits	471
Did not attend	263

[1] Included in this column are customers who do not receive a National Insurance Incapacity Benefit but may qualify for Income Support based on incapacity for work.

Community Care Grants

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many DSS offices in each region had, halfway through the year, exhausted their funding provision for community care grants *(a)* for children, *(b)* for the elderly and *(c)* for the disabled.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mrs. Helen Jackson, dated 10 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about community care grant funding in DSS offices.

Annual allocations are made to each Benefits Agency District for community care grants. No District has exhausted its grants allocation for 1992-93.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Incomes

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what statistical information about low incomes it is his practice to give, other than that provided in the households below average income stocktaking report.

Mr. Burt: It is the practice of this Department to give such information as is available within cost constraints. This may be by reference to any published data or from other information collected by the Department.

All statistical information from HBAI data is presented in line with the recommendations of the stocktaking report.

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what reasons 1988 and 1989 data in the

households below average income stocktaking report were combined, but not data for any two of the previous years covered in the report; and if for future years he will ensure that trend data are consistent, whether for individual years or two years combined.

Mr. Burt: Data for 1988 and 1989 are combined in the most recent edition of the households below average income statistics in order to reduce the effect of sampling error. This change in methodology was discussed in the HBAI stocktaking report, published in December 1991, and in appendix 5 of the latest edition. Earlier years were not combined since the effect of sampling error was much smaller: in fact the sampling error for 1988 and 1989 combined was larger than for 1979 alone.

There is no statistical inconsistency in comparing HBAI data for a single year's family expenditure survey with HBAI data based on two combined years' FES data. Future HBAI figures will remain based on combined years post-1988.

Wages Councils

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the change in his Department's spending, on family credit and other benefits, of the proposed abolition of wages councils.

Mr. Burt: It is not possible to predict the effects of the abolition of wages councils on benefit expenditure. In any case, variations in the level of wages are not the major determinant of family credit expenditure.

War Pensions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for war pensions were not determined before the applicant's death in each year over the last 10 years; how many applicants died before they received their benefit and arrears; and how long before the death each application had been made.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Health Service

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he last reviewed the relevance and appropriateness of the criteria for selecting people for the boards of Welsh health authorities in accordance with the procedure in paragraph 52 of "Guidelines of Procedure for Ministers";

(2) what steps he took to solicit suggestions of names for membership of the boards of Welsh health authorities, prior to the announcement of the names appointed by him to those authorities on 30 October, pursuant to the recommendations of paragraph 52 in "Guidelines of Procedure for Ministers"; and what consultations he undertook.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 6 November, at column 473.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the percentage rates of male unemployment in *(a)* the valleys of south Wales and *(b)* Wales as a whole, for each year since 1988.

Mr. David Hunt: Rates for the valleys programme area and Wales are given in the table.

Male unemployment rates[1]
expressed as a percentage of the workforce

September	*Valleys area*	*Wales*
1988	16·8	12·0
1989	13·7	8·6
1990	13·5	8·5
1991	18·4	12·2
1992	18·7	13·3

Source: Employment Department.

[1] Unadjusted.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the change in the level of unemployment in Wales over the last 12 months.

Mr. David Hunt: Between September 1991 and September 1992 the number of unemployed claimants increased by 10,365.

Venture Capital

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to establish a venture capital fund for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: A venture capital fund for Wales already exists.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policies concerning the encouragement of manufacturing industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I will continue to take every possible opportunity to encourage manufacturing industry in Wales, both in respect of locally based companies and inward investors. This will include making full use of schemes of Government financial assistance and of the wide-ranging activities of the Welsh Development Agency and Development Board for Rural Wales.

NHS Research and Development Director

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to announce the appointment of the research and development director of the national health service in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Details of the arrangements for managing the proposed NHS Wales research and development strategy will be given in the strategy document, which I am to publish in December.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received from *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales concerning his review of the assisted areas map.

Mr. David Hunt: Eighty-eight representations have been received from Wales as a whole. Of these, 12 were from Clwyd.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning his review of the assisted areas map in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received a number of representations concerning the review of the assisted areas map from a variety of sources, including hon. Members, local authorities, local businesses, chambers of commerce and a number from all-Wales bodies.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many opencast coal applications for Wales are lodged with his Department.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are four planning appeals and one called-in application in respect of opencast coal mining proposals by the British Coal Corporation and four appeals relating to opencast coal mining proposals by private operators.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidelines he has issued to local authorities in Wales on the format and the details to be included in the contaminated land registers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A consultation exercise on contaminated land registers was undertaken in May 1991 and a copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Library of the House. The Government have recently consulted on revised proposals in the light of responses to that paper and further guidance is planned for issue to local authorities in due course. A copy will be placed in the Library of the House at that stage.

Domestic Water Connections

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many domestic water connections there have been in each of the last 10 years in each of the borough and district council areas of Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not held centrally. The collection of data on domestic water connections is the responsibility of Dwr Cymru Cyfugedig, Wrexham and East Denbighshire Water Company and Chester Waterworks Company as the water undertakers servicing Clwyd.

Health Promotion

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of national health service Wales overall budget is spent on health promotion.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1991-92, identifiable expenditure on health promotion was £7,442,000 and this represented 0·4 per cent. of the total national health service budget in Wales.

Student Grants

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each local education authority the number and proportion of mandatory student grants not paid by 31 October.

Mr. Forman: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 5 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *344*.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase hill livestock compensatory allowances for farmers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The payment arrangements for the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme are considered within the context of the autumn review of economic conditions and prospects for our hill and upland farmers. As part of this process I have met representatives from the National Farmers Union (Wales) and the Farmers Union of Wales who have outlined their views and priorities. The HLCA payment arrangements to apply from 1 January 1993 will be announced as soon as possible.

Tourism

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the amount of revenue from tourism to Wales in 1980, 1990 and 1991; what proposals he has to facilitate increased tourism in 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Estimates of expenditure by overnight visitors to Wales are given in the following table. Since 1989, information on United Kingdom visitors to Wales has been obtained from the United Kingdom tourism survey. It is not possible to make a direct comparison between the results of this and earlier surveys. Information on overseas visitors is not available prior to 1981.

Estimates of expenditure by day visitors are available only for the financial year ending on 31 March 1989 when an estimated £22 milion was spent in Wales.

Expenditure by overnight visitors to Wales[1]

£ million

Year	United Kingdom visitors	Overseas visitors
1980	[2]—	[3]—
1981	[2]—	50
1990	900	130
1991	900	130

Sources: United Kingdom Travel Survey, International Passenger Survey.

[1] These estimates, derived from sample surveys and thus subject to potential random sampling errors, have been rounded to the nearest £5 million.

[2] Not available on a comparable basis.

[3] Not available prior to 1981.

In order to further promote tourism in Wales, the Government uplifted support for Wales tourist board by 20 per cent. in 1992-93 to a record £13·529 million.

Acid Rain

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the report of the Countryside Council for Wales on acid rain.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The report makes a useful contribution to our understanding of the potential threats posed by acid rain to the aquatic environment of sites of special scientific interest in upland Wales; and underlines the importance of the substantial reductions that the Government are seeking in the emissions which lead to acidification. The report acknowledges that more work is needed to identify more clearly the overall effects of acid rain within the Welsh environment and to this end the Welsh Office is currently sponsoring research with the Countryside Council for Wales.

Sheep Quotas

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from farmers in Wales regarding sheep quotas.

Mr. David Hunt: Several.

Education Authorities (Capital Credit)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state for each local education authority in Wales the amount of capital credit approval they have applied for, for use in 1993-94.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Welsh local education aujthorities do not bid for or receive specific capital credit approvals for education services. County councils receive resources within their annual basic credit approvals which are unhypothecated to particular services. Spending priorities are a matter for them.

DEFENCE

Anti-ballistic Missiles

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department is conducting into the prospects for implementing a limited anti-ballistic missile system.

Mr. Aitken: The potential ballistic missile risk and possible ways of countering it are being reviewed in consultation with the United States and other NATO allies.

Krypton-85

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been conducted by the Meteorological Office on the potential effects on the atmospheric balance of the release of radioactive Krypton-85.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Meteorological Office under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. C. R. Hunt to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 9 November 1992:

The Meteorological Office has considered the possible impact of the release of radioactive Krypton-85, but has conducted no specific studies. Although the release affects the electrical conductivity of the atmosphere by a small amount, there are as yet no accepted theories to suggest that this minor effect has a significant influence on weather phenomena such as thunderstorms.

Mammoth Vehicles

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the mammoth major transporter will be replaced; and how many more trips are planned for the mammoth major vehicles.

Mr. Aitken: Replacements for the truck cargo heavy duty Mk 1—sometimes referred to as the mammoth major transport vehicle—are now in service. There are currently no plans for further use of the mammoth major.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answers of 25 June, *Official Report,* column *299,* if the figures for nuclear waste include radioactive waste arising from the decommissioning of disused facilities at the atomic weapons establishment Aldermaston; and how much radioactive waste will arise at Aldermaston up to the year 2000 as a result of decommissioning old facilities.

Mr. Aitken: The estimated volumes of nuclear waste arising at the atomic weapons establishment Aldermaston up to the year 2001 which I quoted in my answer of 25 June included radioactive waste arising from the decommissioning of disused facilities at the atomic weapons establishment Aldermaston.

The current estimated volumes of intermediate and low-level waste to be generated at the atomic weapons establishment Aldermaston by the decommissioning programme between January 1992 and March 2001 are 450 cu m and 3,300 cu m respectively.

On-site Inspections

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the on-site inspections made in the United Kingdom under the Stockholm and Vienna documents; what has been the annual cost of providing escorts for on-site inspections made in the United Kingdom under the Stockholm and Vienna documents; and from which subheads of which votes these funds are taken;

(2) if he will list the on-site inspections made by the United Kingdom under the Stockholm and Vienna documents; what has been the annual cost of carrying out on-site inspections under the Stockholm and Vienna documents; and from which subheads of which votes these funds are taken.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom has received one inspection under the Stockholm and Vienna documents; to south-west district in October 1990. The United Kingdom has conducted two inspections, to Minsk in September 1990 and Moscow in September 1992. It is not possible to identify the costs associated with individual outgoing inspections, or against particular arms control agreements. Provision for the joint arms control implementation group—JACIG—which provides inspectors and escorts for all United Kingdom arms control activity, is made from vote 1, subheads A, B, C, D, E, F and L.

Nuclear Warhead Containers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected timetable for delivery of nuclear warhead containers by the United Kingdom to the Russian Federation.

Mr. Aitken: On 10 November my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence signed a memorandum of understanding with the Russian Foreign Minister which sets out the terms for the supply to Russia of 250 nuclear weapons containers and 20 nuclear weapons transport vehicles. The design process is well advanced and delivery of these equipments is scheduled to commence in late 1993, with completion expected by the end of 1994. Preliminary equipment is due to be delivered later this year.

Deep Space Tracking Station

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current status of the United States Air Force deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell; and when it was first declared operational.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States Air Force deep space tracking system at RAF Feltwell has been working up to operational status since 1 October 1990. It is expected that the system will become operational in the spring of 1993.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the numbers of search and rescue helicopters that will be deployed at each base under his latest proposals; and what steps he will take to guarantee the availability of helicopters at the extremities of the areas covered where there is no longer an overlap between those areas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the open government document "The Future Provision of Royal Air Force Search and Rescue Helicopters", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Shipping Orders

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the *(a)* assault ships, *(b)* helicopter landing ships and *(c)* frigates that have been ordered in each of the last five years, for 1992-93 and estimated for 1993-94; if he will give the type and cost of the order in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The following type 23 frigates have been ordered during the last five years:

	Date
HMS Iron Duke	11 July 1988
HMS Monmouth	11 July 1988
HMS Montrose	11 July 1988
HMS Westminster	22 December 1989
HMS Northumberland	22 December 1989
HMS Richmond	22 December 1989
HMS Somerset	23 January 1992
HMS Grafton	23 January 1992
HMS Sutherland	23 January 1992

No assault ships or helicopter landing ships were ordered during this period. We invited tenders for a helicopter carrier earlier this year and we plan to invite tenders in the spring of next year for the first of two assault ships.

It is not our policy to make the costs of orders public as they are commercially confidential. All these orders were placed as a result of competition.

Seminars

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list of the dates, titles and venues of the seminars that his officials have attended on the subject of defence diversification over the last 24 months.

Mr. Aitken: Officials of my Department have not attended any seminars devoted to the subject of defence diversification. They have attended each of a series of six regional seminars organised by the Department of Trade and Industry earlier this year under the title "Changing Tack—New Perspectives for Defence Suppliers", which was designed to assist small and medium-sized companies supplying the defence market to assess the strategic issues to be faced in the light of current and projected reductions in global expenditure on defence equipment.

The dates and venues of these seminars were:

	Venue
29 April	Tring
12 May	Blackburn
18 May	Southampton
20 May	Solihull
1 June	Bristol
3 June	London

WE177

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expenditure by his Ministry for each year to date, including 1992-93, on studies of the possible replacements for the WE177 tactical nuclear weapon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Expenditure on studies of possible vehicles is as follows:

	£
1989-90	928,518
1990-91	1,372,329
1991-92	1,870,285
[1]1992-93	1,563,918

[1] To end of October.

Expenditure on the warhead programme is classified.

Long-Term Costings

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is now prepared to reconsider his policy relating to the release of information on long-term costings of his Ministry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 13 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *155*.

Fraud

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what estimates he has of the amount of his Ministry's expenditure which has been lost due to fraud in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many incidents of suspected fraud have been reported by his officials to the Ministry of Defence police in each of the last five years; in each year, how many resulted in *(a)* prosecution and *(b)* conviction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Diversification

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place a copy of each paper that his officials have delivered to outside bodies on defence diversification over the last two years in the Library.

Mr. Aitken: Officials of my Department have not delivered any such papers.

Trident

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the outturn cost of the Trident programme in 1991-92; and what is the estimated outturn for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Aitken: Actual capital expenditure on the Trident programme during financial year 1991-92 was £1,163 million. Our current estimate for capital expenditure on the Trident programme for the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94 is £1,019 million and £827 million respectively.

SCOTLAND

Woodland

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to encourage woodland in the United Kingdom.

Sir Hector Monro: The two main aims of the Government's forestry policy are the steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many, diverse benefits that forests provide, and the sustainable management of our existing woods and forests. The Government provide a range of incentives to support this policy, chiefly through the woodland grant scheme administered by the Forestry Commission.

This scheme provides grants for establishing new woodlands and replanting felled woodlands, with higher grants for broadleaved trees and native pinewoods and for woodlands of less than 10 hectares. Special supplements are also available for planting on improved agricultural land and for the creation of new woodlands close to towns and cities. In addition, the scheme provides annual grants for managing existing woodlands, with higher rates for broadleaved woodlands and for woodlands of special environmental value.

The farm woodland premium scheme was introduced earlier this year as a successor to the farm woodland scheme and offers annual payments for new woodlands planted by farmers under the woodland grant scheme.

The Government have recently launched several other projects to encourage the establishment and management of woodland in the United Kingdom. These include a community forests programme, proposals for a national forest in the midlands, a central Scotland woodlands initiative, a Welsh valleys forest initiative and a programme to restore the traditional Sherwood forest.

Highlands and Islands Veterinary Services Scheme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of the highlands and islands veterinary services scheme.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 November]:* The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department commissioned management consultants to review the highlands and islands veterinary services scheme last year. The consultants' report made a number of useful recommendations, which have required further detailed study. I hope to consult interested parties on revised proposals for the future of the scheme shortly.

Water and Sewerage

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the terms of reference for the Quayle Munro report on water and swerage services; what was the fee for this consultancy; and if he will place a copy of the report in the Library.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the replies which were given to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) on 26 October at columns *530-31* and on 6 November at column *424*.

Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by grade the numbers of staff and their cost for 1991-92 and the estimated figures for 1992-93, for each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 5 November]:* The information set out in the tables has been supplied by the chief executives of the agencies.

Executive agency: Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency

	1991-92 Number	1991-92 Cost £	1992-93 Number	1992-93 Estimated cost £
Chief Executive	1·0	42,933	1·0	45,220
Unified Grade 6	2·0	75,726	2·0	78,434
Marine Superintendent	1·0	36,175	1·0	38,635
Engineer Superintendent	1·0	35,230	1·0	37,626
Unified Grade 7	3·0	87,021	3·0	91,878
Commanding Officer	4·0	136,440	4·0	144,628

	1991-92 Number	1991-92 Cost £	1992-93 Number	1992-93 Estimated cost £
First Officer	12·0	279,804	12·0	296,592
Second Officer	22·0	439,296	22·0	465,674
Chief Engineer	4·0	115,548	4·0	122,480
Second Engineer	4·0	93,268	4·0	98,864
Third Engineer	19·0	379,392	19·0	402,173
Chief Petty Officer	8·0	77,896	8·0	81,584
Seaman	20·0	157,240	20·0	167,920
Chief Steward	4·0	44,944	4·0	48,540
Cook Steward	18·0	168,642	18·0	176,742
Motorman	12·0	101,292	12·0	100,752
Inspector of Sea Fisheries	8·0	181,048	8·0	186,720
Fishery Officer I	21·0	386,148	21·0	399,147
Fishery Officer II	34·0	458,558	37·0	546,934
Senior Executive Officer	2·0	45,112	1·0	23,340
Higher Executive Officer	4·0	73,224	4·0	76,028
Executive Officer	8·0	112,392	8·0	118,256
Administration Officer	6·0	62,436	6·0	65,052
Administrative Assistant	9·5	69,378	14·5	113,796
Personal Secretary	3·0	39,378	3·0	40,992
Storeman	2·0	16,916	2·0	17,610
Typist	1·0	10,502	1·0	10,933
TOTAL	233·5	3,725,939	240·5	3,996,550

Note: Costs include earnings-related national insurance contributions.

Executive agency: Scottish Agricultural Science Agency

Grade	1991-92 Number	1991-92 Cost £	1992-93 Number	1992-93 Estimated cost £
5	1·0	42,970	1·0	44,732
6	2·0	75,208	3·0	117,438
7	14·0	427,560	13·0	413,296
SEO	2·0	47,708	1·0	24,832
HEO	0·0	—	1·0	19,177
EO	3·0	45,456	3·0	47,319
AO	4·0	43,472	5·0	56,570
AA	5·0	40,125	6·0	50,124
PS	3·0	41,793	3·0	43,505
SSO	12·5	296,050	11·5	283,532
HSO	19·0	353,248	22·0	425,788
SO	19·5	300,495	18·0	288,758
ASO	17·5	214,392	24·5	300,150
SG Band 2	3·0	26,985	5·0	46,820
Ind Band 2	1·0	7,684	2·0	15,998
Ind Band 6	7·0	55,244	8·0	65,728
Ind Band 10	3·0	24,495	3·0	25,500
Ind Band 18	1·0	8,712	1·0	9,069
Typist	2·5	30,173	3·0	37,692
Sen Photo	1·0	15,793	1·0	16,441
P&TO	1·0	14,380	1·0	14,970
Farm Worker	7·0	59,535	6·0	53,124
Farm Manager (HPTO)	1·0	19,200	2·0	39,974
Shepherd/Grieve	1·0	10,365	1·0	10,790
Tractorman	3·0	27,639	4·0	38,364
Total	134·0	2,228,682	149·0	2,489,691

Notes:

1. Costs include earnings-related national insurance contributions.
2. Staff costs are increased by the employment of casual-seasonal labour.

Executive Agency: Historic Scotland

	1991-92 Number	1991-92 Cost (£ million)	1992-93 (budgeted) Number	1992-93 (budgeted) Cost (£ million)
Management	31	1·4	31	1·4
Administrative	123	1·9	122	2·3
Professional/Technical	87	2·1	92	2·1

	1991-92		*1992-93 (budgeted)*	
	Number	*Cost (£ million)*	*Number*	*Cost (£ million)*
Custodial	99	1·3	116	1·7
Industrial	284	3·5	299	3·8
Totals	624	10·2	660	11·3

Notes:

1. A breakdown of costs into each grade could only be done at disproportionate cost.
2. Costs include earnings-related national insurance contributions, superannuation and overheads.
3. Numbers and costs exclude casual staff and work carried out by contract.
4. Staff number fluctuate throughout each year with higher seasonal staff during the summer tourist season.
5. The functions and outputs related to these numbers and costs are higher in 1992-93 than in 1991-92.

Executive Agency: Registers of Scotland

Grade	*1991-92*	*1992-93*[1]
Grade 4	1	1
Grade 5	1	2
Grade 6	3	2
Grade 7	22	21·5
SEO	45	48
HEO	200	208
EO	424	414·5
AO	267	269
AA	167	169
Chief Typing Manager	1	1
Typing Manager	5	5
Typist	108	111
Support Manager 2	1	1
Support Manager 3	6	8
Support Grade 1	43	45
Support Grade 2	68	68
Personal Secretary	2	3
Total	1,364	1,377
Cost	£20,201,000	[1]£22,000,000

Note: Costs include allowances, overtime, superannuation and earnings-related national insurance contributions.

[1] Estimated.

Governance

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations his office received from CBI Scotland regarding possible improvements in the governing of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have received one recent representation from CBI Scotland.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many establishments in the Sheffield area have been *(a)* investigated and *(b)* prosecuted under the wages council legislation since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: Statistics for the number of establishments that have been investigated in the Sheffield area since 1979 are not available. There have been two prosecutions under wages council legislation since 1979 in the Sheffield area; one in 1990 and one in 1991.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which employers have complained that wages council settlements have a significantly detrimental effect on industry or service sectors.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have received a number of representations complaining about the detrimental effect wages council settlements have on their business. These include letters from the British Hospitality Association, Butlin's Holidays, the National Association of Master Bakers, Gateway Food Markets Ltd., Grand Metropolitan plc, Trust House Forte plc, Blackpool Pleasure Beach Ltd., the Unquoted Companies Group and the Rank Organisation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received on wages councils from Conservative and from other not-for-profit clubs.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have received two representations from Conservative clubs in the last year, both about the adverse effects of wages council settlements.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which employers and organised groups of employees have determined pay levels at or below wages council rates.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list for each main wages council industry the lowest detected rate of pay in the past three years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people employed in *(a)* Pendle and *(b)* Lancashire are in occupations covered by the wages councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that information on the number of workers covered by wages councils is not available for geographical areas smaller than a wages inspectorate division.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Government last consulted on wages councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: From December 1988 to February 1989.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job vacancies currently notified to the jobcentres in Nelson and Colne are in occupations covered by the wages councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the number of current vacancies notified to Jobcentres in Nelson and Colne which are in occupations covered by the Wages Councils. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

On the 6 November, there were 14 local vacancies available in Nelson Jobcentre and 15 available in Colne Jobcentres covered by the Wages Council.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence she has of the extent of opposition to wages councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: We continue to receive complaints from employers about the adverse effect which wages council settlements have on industry.

Skilled Labour

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the labour force is skilled in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France, *(c)* Germany, *(d)* Spain and *(e)* Portugal.

Mr. McLoughlin: The skills held by people in the labour force vary widely and are often a product of informal training and job experience rather than formal courses. It is not possible, therefore, to provide statistical measures which are comprehensive and comparable between countries.

Training

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she plans to prevent employers who provide adequate training losing staff to those who do not.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have no plans to interfere with the free movement of trained people between employers. The Government recently consulted about the possibility of changing the law on the enforceability of training contracts.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 5 November, *Official Report*, column *343*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), which annnounced the outcome of that consultation.

Wages, Lancashire

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will state separately for full-time, part-time and all workers *(a)* the number and *(b)* the percentage earning less than £120 excluding overtime for (i) men and (ii) women in (1) Lancashire and (2) the United Kingdom for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information on the numbers of full-time employees in Great Britain earning less than £120 per week in April 1992 is published in table 14 of part A of the new earnings survey 1992. A copy of the publication is available in the Library. The available information on the percentages of employees earning less than £120 per week in April 1992 is as folllows:

	Lancashire	*Great Britain*	*Northern Ireland*[1]
Full-time			
Men	2·6	2·0	5·0
Women	9·4	7·3	14·1
Adults	5·0	3·9	8·5
Part-time			
Men	[2]—	76·4	85·0
Women	[2]—	79·9	80·3
Adults	[2]—	79·4	81·1

[1] Denotes including overtime.

[2] Denotes information not available.

Job Search Seminar

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the job entry rates for those who have attended a job search seminar, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about job entry rates for those who have attended a job search seminar. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Over the period October 1991 to September 1992, 12,935 people found jobs during the seminars, giving a job entry rate of 17 per cent.

It may be helpful if I explain the background and aim of the job search seminar programme. Job search seminars were introduced in July 1991 as part of a package of measures to provide additional help for people who had been unemployed for 13 weeks. The aim of the seminars is to enhance people's prospects of finding work, and avoid becoming 'long term unemployed', by widening their job search activity and improving their job search techniques.

Job search seminars normally last for a period of four days spread over five weeks. This usually takes the form of two days in the first week and half a day in each of the subsequent four weeks. No detailed tracking takes place to see whether people who take part in a seminar eventually start work. For management information purposes, rather than as a performance measure, details are recorded of people who have found work over the five week period of the seminar. Many people will take longer than this to actually get a job and will often have applications still pending at the point when the management information is recorded.

An evaluation of job search seminars is currently being undertaken. It will include an assessment of the number of people finding work over a longer period of time. Results are expected by the end of 1992.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current numbers and the changes that have occurred in the male unemployment figures for Coventry over the past 12 months.

Mr. McLoughlin: In September 1992 the number of male unemployed claimants in the local authority district of Coventry was 15,483, and increase of 2,214 over the last 12 months. The figures are on the unadjusted basis.

Maternity Pay

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the changes in the rights of women to maternity pay and to return to work after giving birth since 1980.

Mr. McLoughlin: Changes to the right to return to work after having a baby have been made since the Employment Act 1980 as follows: the initial notification of the woman's intentions must be in writing, rather than in writing only if requested; an additional power has been introduced for an employer to seek confirmation, after a woman has given birth, of her intention to return; the woman's notification of her intended date of return must be written and provided at least 21, rather than seven, days in advance, and her ability to postpone that date for a period in specified circumstances has been increased accordingly from 14 to 28 days; where it is not reasonably possible for an employer to take the woman back in her original job, he may now offer a suitable alternative or, if he has no suitable work and has only five or fewer employees, he may be relieved of the duty to reinstate her.

In April 1987, maternity pay, administered by employers under employment legislation, was replaced by statutory maternity pay—SMP. Employers pay a statutory minimum amount of maternity pay for a maximum of 18 weeks to employees whose average earnings are above the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions and who at the qualifying week —the 15th week before the baby is due—have worked for them for at least six months. The statutory minimum rate of SMP has increased by 3·4 per cent. in real terms since 1987 from £32·85 to £46·30 per week.

Running Water

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many establishments in the Sheffield area have been *(a)* investigated and *(b)* prosecuted under the health and safety legislation relating to the provision of running water.

Mr. McLoughlin: During routine visits to premises for which they are the enforcing authority, Health and Safety Executive factory inspectors will inquire about the provision of running water if they have any reason to believe that the facilities may be inadequate. However, no comprehensive record of such inquiries is kept.

A search of records for the last five years has shown that there have been no prosecutions in the local authority district of Sheffield under health and safety legislation relating to the provision of running water.

Equal Opportunities

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the European social directives concerning the equal treatment of men and women which, at the most recent date, were the subject of infringement proceedings initiated by the European Commission for faulty application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no infringement proceedings under article 169 of the treaty before the European Court of Justice against the United Kingdom in relation to European social directives concerning the equal treatment of men and women.

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will list those jobcentres in Scotland where no provision is made for the job interview guarantee scheme;

(2) what has been the total level of expenditure in Scotland on the job interview guarantee scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mrs. Margaret Ewing, dated November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Questions about Jobcentres in Scotland where no provision is made for the Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) initiative and about expenditure on JIG in Scotland. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The Job Interview Guarantee initiative is not a feature of Jobcentre services in the following locations:

Annan, Lockerbie, Dumfries, Castle Douglas, Sanquhar, Girvan, Stranraer, Newton Stewart, Oban, Campbeltown, Rothesay, Dunoon, Peebles, Galashiels, Hawick, Kelso, Eyemouth, Banff, Elgin, Forres, Fort William, Kirkwall, Nairn and Peterhead.

The initiative offers a range of services to people looking for jobs and to employers with vacancies to fill. The most popular service involves matching unemployed people to notified vacancies and whilst this is not available under the Job Interview Guarantee initiative in the above locations, many of these Jobcentres do offer services which match unemployed people against employer's vacancies. My area managers also keep the position under review and if they identify a demand for the initiative in a particular location, they do their best to meet it.

Turning to your question about expenditure on the Job Interview Guarantee initiative in Scotland. Since April 1991 when Job Interview Guarantee was launched we estimate that expenditure amounts to £1,660,000.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

RUC Officers Appeal

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking against the RUC officers responsible for the convictions of Noel Bell, Winston Allen and James Hegan following the appeal judgment.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

On 29 July 1992 the Court of Appeal directed that its judgment in the appeal of R *v.* Neil Fraser Latimer, James Irwin Hegan, Noel Richmond Bell and Alfred Winston Allen be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland so that he could consider the bringing of prosecutions against officers who he considered had committed criminal offences in connection with the trial of the appellants.

I am informed that on 5 August 1992 the Director issued an interim direction to the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary requesting that certain reports and information be obtained. When these matters have been received and considered the Director will take decisions as to whether or not to institute proceedings.

Once the Director has taken these decisions, and subject to them, it wil be for the Chief Constable of the RUC to decide whether disciplinary charges should be brought against any police officer.

HEALTH

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Healh what discussions she has had with the British Medical Association on the use of CFCs in prescription items; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have not discussed the use of chlorofluorocarbons in prescription items with the British Medical Association.

The Licensing Authority has drawn to the attention of product licence holders the public statement by major suppliers of certain CFCs that they intend to cease production of these materials in the foreseeable future. We understand that the pharmaceutical industry is investigating the suitability of alternatives to CFCs, particularly for metered dose aerosol inhalations. Any company proposing to market a medicinal product using recycled or alternative materials in their manufacture would need first to satisfy the Licensing Authority as to the safety, quality and efficacy of the product by submitting a licensing application with the necessary supporting data.

Health Services, Coventry

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many have been waiting in total and by main specialty *(a)* six months, *(b)* 12 months, and *(c)* over 12 months for treatment in the Coventry health authority area;

(2) what was the patient waiting list for Coventry health authority each month from January 1991 to date.

Mr. Sackville: Waiting time information by district health authority is published twice a year. The most recent figures, for 31 March 1992, are given in "Hospital Waiting List, In-patient and Day Cases—ISBN 1 85839 003 6—copies of which are in the Library. Monthly waiting time figures for individual district health authorities are not collected centrally.

Asthma

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the expenditure and *(b)* the expenditure per head on general practitioner prescribed drugs for the relief of asthma and asthma-related conditions in 1991-92 in each family health service association area, and for each NHS region.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is given in the table.

The data included in the table are for bronchodilators as defined in chapter 3.1 of the British National Formulary. The period covered is April 1991 to March 1992 and the figures are for the net ingredient cost of prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists, prescriptions dispensed by doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.

Bronchodilators

FHSA No.	*FHSA name*	*NIC (pounds)*	*NIC/head* £
321	Cleveland	1,669,706·81	3·04
322	Cumbria	1,355,331·59	2·73
323	Durham	2,136,343·82	3·59
324	Northumberland	957,161·33	3·14
325	Gateshead	622,778·57	3·04
326	Newcastle upon Tyne	864,079·51	3·13
327	North Tyneside	567,180·48	2·96
328	South Tyneside	493,550·71	3·19
329	Sunderland	1,073,062·47	3·62
	Northern	9,739,195·29	3·17
341	Humberside	2,658,963·82	3·09
342	North Yorkshire	1,856,821·52	2·53
343	Bradford	1,346,838·83	2·86
344	Calderdale	609,625·81	3·07
345	Kirklees	1,028,628·15	2·74
346	Leeds	2,130,440·45	2·99
347	Wakefield	1,219,805·73	3·87
	Yorkshire	10,851,124·31	2·96
361	Derbyshire	2,659,395·24	2·84
362	Leicestershire	2,562,079·96	2·84
363	Lincolnshire	1,996,616·78	3·35
364	Nottinghamshire	2,903,519·19	2·84
365	Barnsley	677,550·64	3·05
366	Doncaster	1,073,446·55	3·64
367	Rotherham	816,403·35	3·21
368	Sheffield	1,573,501·72	3·01
	Trent	14,262,513·43	3·00
381	Cambridgeshire	1,684,666·15	2·51
382	Norfolk	2,047,795·40	2·70
383	Suffolk	1,600,230·16	2·46
	East Anglia	5,332,691·71	2·56
401	Bedfordshire	1,434,323·96	2·66
402	Hertfordshire	2,685,494·47	2·71
403	Barnet	633,568·95	2·04
404	Brent and Harrow	1,053,122·56	2·34
405	Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	1,589,867·45	2·48
406	Hillingdon	563,668·64	2·38
407	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	699,548·30	2·28
	North West Thames	8,659,594·33	2·49
421	Essex	3,677,334·05	2·38
422	Barking and Havering	927,474·10	2·45
423	Camden and Islington	498,741·06	1·41
424	City, Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets	1,485,270·18	2·59
425	Enfield and Haringey	969,222·08	2·14
426	Redbridge and Waltham Forest	968,776·19	2·19
	North East Thames	8,526,817·66	2·28
441	East Sussex	2,094,533·13	2·90
442	Kent	3,514,824·86	2·29
443	Bexley and Greenwich	815,618·46	1·88
444	Bromley	606,366·05	2·00
445	Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark	1,896,531·43	2·78
	South East Thames	8,927,873·93	2·43
461	Surrey	2,191,410·73	2·19
462	West Sussex	1,746,588·38	2·44
463	Croydon	626,240·47	1·97
464	Kingston and Richmond	724,604·87	2·38
465	Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	1,441,755·91	2·47
	South West Thames	6,730,600·36	2·30
481	Dorset	1,806,522·47	2·69

FHSA No.	*FHSA name*	*NIC (pounds)*	*NIC/head* £
482	Hampshire	3,585,354·46	2·29
483	Wiltshire	1,420,044·23	2·49
484	Isle of Wight	356,593·25	2·70
	Wessex	7,168,514·41	2·44
501	Berkshire	1,846,457·84	2·43
502	Buckinghamshire	1,628,332·02	2·51
503	Northamptonshire	1,621,906·31	2·76
504	Oxfordshire	1,389,659·24	2·37
	Oxford	6,486,355·41	2·51
521	Avon	2,406,280·28	2·51
522	Cornwall	1,519,497·90	3·21
523	Devon	2,832,277·29	2·70
524	Gloucestershire	1,645,135·93	3·07
525	Somerset	1,055,096·10	2·25
	South Western	9,458,287·50	2·72
541	Hereford and Worcester	2,085,177·18	3·04
542	Salop	1,431,789·11	3·48
543	Staffordshire	3,092,397·40	2·95
544	Warwickshire	1,819,330·85	3·74
545	Birmingham	2,978,763·66	3·01
546	Coventry	935,532·31	3·10
547	Dudley	765,4400·16	2·50
548	Sandwell	1,114,751·60	3·80
549	Solihull	582,544·58	2·84
551	Walsall	767,798·39	2·92
552	Wolverhampton	613,154·02	2·48
	West Midlands	16,186,639·26	3·09
561	Cheshire	2,821,837·36	2·91
562	Liverpool	1,590,608·60	3·51
563	St. Helens and Knowsley	1,187,757·55	3·46
564	Sefton	884,525·50	2·96
565	Wirral	1,058,606·31	3·15
	Mersey	7,543,335·32	3·14
581	Lancashire	4,850,765·25	3·47
582	Bolton	881,691·66	3·31
583	Bury	655,135·46	3·71
584	Manchester	1,739,761·89	3·96
585	Oldham	731,376·69	3·31
586	Rochdale	911,667·39	4·36
587	Salford	979,012·36	4·24
588	Stockport	852,145·89	2·93
589	Tameside	699,991·07	3·20
591	Trafford	781,247·00	3·65
592	Wigan	1,059,568·76	3·41
	North Western	14,142,383·42	3·56
	ENGLAND	134,015,926·34	2·79

Expenditure

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total revenue expenditure in each of the English regions by her Department in the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: Information derived from the 1990-91 annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England is shown in the table. Figures from 1991-92 accounts will be available later in the year.

Total revenue expenditure on hosptial and community health services (HCHS): 1990-91

Region	*£ million cash*
Northern	931·4
Yorkshire	1,058·0
Trent	1,303·1
East Anglian	580·2
North West Thames	1,102·7
North East Thames	1,373·2
South East Thames	1,216·5
South West Thames	960·1
Wessex	796·1
Oxford	635·7
South Western	934·3
West Midlands	1,510·1

Region	*£ million cash*
Mersey	753·7
North Western	1,267·2
Total	14,422·3

Notes:

1. HCHS covers all the services provided or managed by the health authorities concerned including hospital, community health, patient transport (ie ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.
2. The table excludes expenditure by family health services authorities and the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals which, although funded by the Department, is not strictly attributable to particular regions. Expenditure by other special health authorities and bodies comprising the NHS, and expenditure met directly by the Department are generally incurred on a national rather than a regional basis, and are also excluded.

Benzodiazepines

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate of the number of people who have been taking benzodiazepines for longer than the recommended 28-day maximum period.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available centrally.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the current level of benzodiazepine prescribing in England; and if she will make it her policy to reduce benzodiazepine prescribing.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government are aware that prolonged prescribing of benzodiazepines can lead to dependence and severe problems with withdrawal. Because of this, we have ensured that information on both prescribing and withdrawal from these drugs is freely available to doctors. There has been a steady reduction in the number of benzodiazepine prescriptions, from about 24·5[1] million in 1982 to around 15·7[1] million in 1991.

[1] The figures are based on prescriptions dispensed by chemist and appliance contractors in England.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prescriptions were issued for benzodiazepine for individuals by community pharmacists in England in 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is as follows:

Benzodiazepines England 1991

Drug group	*Prescriptions (thousands)*
Temazepam	6,039
Diazepam	3,063
Nitrazepam	3,000
Lorazepam	1,080
Triazolam	1,076
Chlorodiazepoxide	504
Oxazepam	360
Loprazolam	180
Lormetazepam	171
Clonazepam	128
Clobazam	61
TOTAL	15,662

Notes:

1. These figures are actually based on 100 per cent. prescriptions dispensed by chemist and appliance contractors in England.
2. 1991 figures are based on the new prescription cost analysis statistical returns and refer to the number of prescription items as opposed to fees used in previous years.

Prescriptions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sums were allocated to each family health services authority in respect of indicative prescribing budgets for 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what were the outturn figures for 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 30 June 1992 at column *459*. The information requested for 1992-93 has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the *(a)* expenditure and *(b)* expenditure per head on general practitioner prescribed anti-depressant drugs in each family health services association area, and for each NHS region during 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is given in the table.

The data included in the table are for anti-depressant drugs as defined in chapter 4.3 of the British National Formulary. The period covered is April 1991 to March 1992 and the figures are for the net ingredient cost of prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists, prescriptions dispensed by doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.

		Anti-Depressants	
FHSA No.	*FHSA name*	*NIC (pounds)*	*NIC/head £*
321	Cleveland	828,021·14	1·51
322	Cumbria	744,159·16	1·50
323	Durham	1,013,008·03	1·70
324	Northumberland	435,540·59	1·43
325	Gateshead	341,020·58	1·67
326	Newcastle upon Tyne	409,386·05	1·48
327	North Tyneside	314,643·04	1·64
328	South Tyneside	188,621·92	1·22
329	Sunderland	405,151·08	1·37
	Northern	4,679,551·59	1·52
341	Humberside	1,078,678·05	1·25
342	North Yorkshire	923,863·60	1·26

FHSA No.	*FHSA name*	*NIC (pounds)*	*NIC/head* £
343	Bradford	725,352·81	1·54
344	Calderdale	265,855·87	1·34
345	Kirklees	542,287·98	1·45
346	Leeds	1,053,494·95	1·48
347	Wakefield	426,202·89	1·35
	Yorkshire	5,015,736·15	1·37
361	Derbyshire	1,057,830·65	1·13
362	Leicestershire	1,196.084·57	1·32
363	Lincolnshire	985,719·90	1·65
364	Nottinghamshire	1,061,107·70	1·04
365	Barnsley	265,608·38	1·20
366	Doncaster	367,296·56	1·25
367	Rotherham	266,533·44	1·05
368	Sheffield	648,018·70	1·24
	Trent	5,848,199·90	1·23
381	Cambridgeshire	717,480·09	1·07
382	Norfolk	1,186,088·89	1·56
383	Suffolk	900,273·01	1·38
	East Anglia	2,803,841·99	1·35
401	Bedfordshire	584,461·66	1·08
402	Hertfordshire	1,155,851·33	1·17
403	Barnet	295,723·11	0·95
404	Brent and Harrow	377,773·67	0·84
405	Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	618,615·23	0·97
406	Hillingdon	207,923·05	0·88
407	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	442,361·00	1·44
	North West Thames	3,682,709·05	1·06
421	Essex	1,735,054·88	1·12
422	Barking and Havering	333,532·00	0·87
423	Camden and Islington	417,284·60	1·18
424	City, Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets	497,474·60	0·87
425	Enfield and Haringey	374,180·24	0·83
426	Redbridge and Waltham Forest	330,082·81	0·74
	North East Thames	3,684,014·13	0·98
441	East Sussex	994,457·73	1·38
442	Kent	1,693,801·69	1·10
443	Bexley and Greenwich	352,122·88	0·81
444	Bromley	318,490·05	1·05
445	Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark	618,071·71	0·90
	South East Thames	3,976,944·06	1·08
461	Surrey	1,254,371·60	1·26
462	West Sussex	887,010·05	1·24
463	Croydon	303,492·04	0·96
464	Kingston and Richmond	378,917·45	1·25
465	Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	636,867·68	1·09
	South West Thames	3,460,658·82	1·18
481	Dorset	988,409·03	1·47
482	Hampshire	1,979,490·63	1·27
483	Wiltshire	771,882·06	1·35
484	Isle of Wight	202,366·98	1·53
	Wessex	3,942,148·70	1·34
501	Berkshire	897,119·05	11·18
502	Buckinghamshire	566,879·97	0·87
503	Northamptonshire	642,954·11	1·09
504	Oxfordshire	587,035·25	1·00
	Oxford	2,693,988·38	1·04
521	Avon	920,270·05	0·96
522	Cornwall	622,828·17	1·32

FHSA No.	*FHSA name*	*NIC (pounds)*	*NIC/head £*
523	**Devon**	1,299,214·25	1·24
524	**Gloucestershire**	714,334·09	1·33
525	**Somerset**	490,277·15	1·04
	South Western	4,046,923·71	1·16
541	**Hereford and Worcester**	778,074·01	1·13
542	**Salop**	500,953·72	1·22
543	**Staffordshire**	1,285,380·26	1·23
544	**Warwickshire**	525,118·54	1·08
545	**Birmingham**	1,199,510·76	1·21
546	**Coventry**	301,278·02	1·00
547	**Dudley**	291,902·90	0·95
548	**Sandwell**	379,663·60	1·29
549	**Solihull**	255,828·91	1·25
551	**Walsall**	120,055·97	0·46
552	**Wolverhampton**	362,307·84	1·47
	West Midlands	6,000,074·37	1·15
561	**Cheshire**	1,309,186·53	1·35
562	**Liverpool**	715,289·61	1·58
563	**St. Helens and Knowsley**	434,182·92	1·26
564	**Sefton**	439,425·34	1·47
565	**Wirral**	531,423·10	1·58
	Mersey	3,429,507·50	1·43
581	**Lancashire**	1,957,186·68	1·40
582	**Bolton**	328,191·44	1·23
583	**Bury**	270,736·24	1·53
584	**Manchester**	733,955·48	1·67
585	**Oldham**	210,640·55	0·95
586	**Rochdale**	376,689·32	1·80
587	**Salford**	386,218·93	1·67
588	**Stockport**	521,839·22	1·79
589	**Tameside**	279,193·86	1·27
591	**Trafford**	369,634·35	1·73
592	**Wigan**	438,181·41	1·41
	North Western	5,872,467·48	1·48
	ENGLAND	59,136,765·83	1·23

St. Bartholomew's Hospital

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the number of patients, for whom Basildon and Thurrock district health authority is responsible, by age and gender, currently undergoing treatment at St. Bartholomew's hospital, London;

(2) if she will list the number of patients, for whom Basildon and Thurrock district health authority is responsible, by age and gender, that have been referred to St. Bartholomew's hospital for treatment since 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. George Gould, chairman of Basildon and Thurrock health authority, for details.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each local authority area in south Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by her Department; and if she will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. Sackville: The management of residential property owned by the Department of Health has been fully delegated to local health authorities, and the information requested is not held centrally.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many papers her Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if she will list their titles; and when she estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Sackville: Government Departments have a statutory right under the Public Record Acts to retrieve material, temporarily, from the Public Record Office for their own administrative use.

The number of items and frequency of such retrievals can vary considerably but, as at 5 November 1992, the Department of Health had 275 files out on loan to it. A list of these could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Such records are returned to the Public Record Office as soon as departmental action has been completed.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *81*, if she will make it her policy to collect statistics on the numbers of national health service trust staff who are currently in national health service pension schemes and those who elected to change to a private pension scheme run on behalf of a trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. National health service trusts have been established with the minimum of bureaucratic constraints. A requirement to collect statistical data about the exercise of free pension choice would run counter to that principle.

Extra-contractual Refunds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *71*, if she will make it her policy to collect from each regional health authority the number of extra-contractual referrals returned in each financial year.

Mr. Sackville: Extra-contractual referrals account for approximately 1·2 per cent. of expenditure in England. The vast majority of referrals being made within contracts. The management of the extra-contractual referral process is the responsibility of district health authorities as agreed with regional health authorities. It would not, therefore, by appropriate managerially or administratively to collect this information centrally.

North Staffordshire Royal Infirmary

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will increase the West Midlands regional health authority's capital expenditure limits in order to finance the bringing forward of plans for magnetic resonance imaging facilities at the North Staffordshire royal infirmary.

Mr. Sackville: West Midlands regional health authority has received a capital allocation for 1992-93 of £155,550,000. Decisions on how to allocate these funds are a matter for the authority.

Healthtrac and Qa Business Services

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health further to her answer of 3 November to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield, *Official Report*, column *184*, if she will ensure that the Audit Commission report on Healthtrac and Qa Business Services Ltd. is published without any delay.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 10 November. It is not for the Secretary of State for Health to intervene in the work or timetable of the independent statutory auditor.

Community Care

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy that the money transferred to local authorities to fund the community care changes from April 1993 is ring fenced by each local authority.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) on 10 November. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 2 October that local authorities would receive a ring-fenced special transitional grant for community care.

Victory House, London

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many Department of Health and national health service staff have been or will be relocated from Victory house, Tottenham Court road, London, to Bristol.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Diabetes

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will announce the membership of the joint task force she has established with the British Diabetic Association to advise on the implementation of the World Health Organisation/European regional committee of the International Diabetes Federation St. Vincent declaration on the improvement of diabetic care.

Mr. Sackville: The task force will be chaired by Professor Shaw CBE, lately dean of medicine, university of Newcastle, who will be supported by a multi-disciplinary expert team.

The task force will advise on the implementation of the World Health Organisation/International Diabetic Federation St. Vincent declaration on the improvement of diabetic care.

It is expected that the task force will need to seek further expert assistance on the range of specialist areas covered by the St. Vincent declaration.

The membership of the task force is as follows:

Professor David Shaw, CBE, Lately Dean of Medicine University of Newcastle.
Dr. Clive Buxton, Chairman, Director of Public Health, North Durham Health Authority.
Dr. Michael Hall, General Practitioner.
Mrs. Margaret Hunter, Area Co-ordinator (Tyne and Wear), British Diabetic Association.
Mrs. Mary MacKinnon, Diabetes Nurse Specialist, Northern General Hospital Sheffield.
Dr. Robert Young, Consultant Diabetologist, Salford
Dr. Rhys Williams, Lecturer in Community Medicine, University of Cambridge.
Professor Harry Keen, British Diabetic Association.
Mr. Michael Cooper, British Diabetic Association.
Miss Susan Knibbs, British Diabetic Association.
Dr. Doreen Rothman, Department of Health.
Mrs. Patricia Edwards, Department of Health.
Mr. John Garlick, Department of Health.

Crown Car Scheme

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of national health service employees who use the Crown car scheme, or similar schemes, broken down between *(a)* nurses, *(b)* midwives, *(c)* health visitors, *(d)* community dental officers, *(e)* community medical officers, *(f)* managers and *(g)* works officers and other professional and technical staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Contact Lenses

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment her Department has made of the risks of acanthamoeba and related eye infections to users of extended-wear disposable contact lenses; and when these risks were first brought to the attention of her Department;

(2) what steps she has taken to warn the public of the risks of acanthamoeba and related eye infections to users of extended-wear disposable contact lenses; and if she will review the procedures for warning the public of risks of this nature;

(3) what discussions she has had with representatives of *(a)* the ophthalmic professions and retail outlets and *(b)* lens manufacturers about the risks of acanthamoeba and related eye infections from certain types of contact lenses; and which hospitals have supplied her Department with figures relating to such cases.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has been made aware of the risks of acanthamoeba and related eye infections to users of extended-wear disposable contact lenses from:

> A study published late last year from Moorfield's Eye Hospital;
>
> reports to the Department from the Manchester Eye Hospital, of a number of incidents of extended-wear contact lenses associated keratitis; and
>
> three separate studies currently being carried out or completed at Moorfield's Eye Hospital. These are not yet fully analysed but preliminary results indicate that the incidence of contact lens associated keratitis is increasing as a result of a number of different factors.

These risks were first brought to the attention of the Department at the end of last year. The Department subsequently asked the College of Ophthalmologists to set up a working party to assess how these risks could be addressed. Since this time, meetings have been held with representatives of the College of Ophthalmologists, the British College of Optometry, the Institute of Optometry, the Association of British Dispensing Opticians and the Association of Optometrists. At these meetings it was agreed that information documents should be produced to help both eye care practitioners and the wearers of contact lenses.

A working group has been established under the chairmanship of the Department to discuss the detailed wording of these documents. The next meeting will take place at the beginning of December and this will be followed by discussions with the relevant contact lens manufacturers.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had about the use of disclaimer forms by opticians to deprive extended-wear contact lens users of redress.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

NHS Information

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 19 October, *Official Report,* column 87, what consultations will take place during her Department's review of NHS information with individuals and organisations outside her Department and the NHS management executive who make use of information currently collected by her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The current review of the Department of Health's requirements for information from the national health service included a study by management consultants of the uses made by the NHS of information collected on behalf of the Department and the burden it imposes. Proposals for reducing this burden are currently being drawn up by the Department. In considering these, I shall examine what wider consultation might be appropriate.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 12 November 1992

NORTHERN IRELAND

Irish Language

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to promote the Irish language in education, including nursery, primary, secondary and university levels.

Mr. Hanley: Government do not directly promote the teaching of the Irish language but has, through the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, provided a statutory curriculum for grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland within which any school may offer teaching of the Irish language if it so chooses.

The Department of Education also grant-aids two voluntary maintained primary schools in Belfast in which teaching is conducted through the medium of Irish. There is also an Irish-medium unit at Steeltown primary school, Londonderry.

The Department has not funded the provision of Irish-medium nursery schools, in the light of the financial priority which has had to be accorded to nursery education in general and the number of outstanding proposals for nursery schools.

In addition, the Department of Education has:

introduced a prescribed programme of study for Irish for pupils receiving their primary education through the medium of Irish;

provided for the development by the Northern Ireland Schools Examinations and Assessment Council of assessment materials in Irish for pupils receiving their primary education through the medium of Irish; and

provided for the development by the Northern Ireland Schools Examinations and Assessment Council of a special Irish GCSE examination for pupils who have received their primary education through the medium of Irish.

Universities are autonomous and independent institutions and are, as such, entirely responsible for both the range and the content of courses provided by them including those involving Irish language.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many meetings of the Council of Ministers he has attended during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council of Ministers.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: None.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Mates: None. The Northern Ireland Office has been creating records only since 1972—hence no papers have been transferred to the Public Records Office. The Northern Ireland Departments transfer their records to the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland.

SCOTLAND

Council of Ministers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many meetings of the Council of Ministers he has attended during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council of Ministers.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has not attended any meetings of the Council of Ministers but my hon. Friend, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has attended two Councils; the Fisheries Council on 19 October as head of the United Kingdom delegation; and the Agriculture Council on 26 October. On the occasions where Scottish Office Ministers do not personally attend they are represented at all EC Council meetings by senior officials or by their colleagues in the United Kingdom Government.

Domestic Water Supply

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many domestic water disconnections have taken place in Scotland in each of the past 20 years;

(2) if he will specify the authority under which water authorities in Scotland are empowered to seek domestic disconnections.

Sir Hector Monro: Scottish water authorities have no statutory authority to seek permanent domestic disconnections. Water supplies to domestic consumers may be disconnected only for short term operational reasons, for example to undertake repairs, make connections or plumbing alterations. Information on the number of such disconnections is not held centrally.

Ernst and Young

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what tendering procedures were carried out by Highlands and Islands Enterprise prior to the awarding of a contract to Ernst and Young, to perform the former functions of Highlands and Islands Enterprise's management unit.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Highlands and Islands Enterprise carefully considered the experience of locally established firms and concluded that negotiations concentrating on value for money would be more appropriate than tendering. Discussions with Ernst and Young were conducted on this basis.

Road Accidents

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, broken down by road user group and age category, the numbers of people *(a)* slightly injured, *(b)* seriously injured and *(c)* killed on (i) motorways, (ii) built up roads and (iii) non-built up roads in each local authority area in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested amounts to 220 pages and I am therefore arranging that it be lodged in the House of Commons Library.

Warrant Sales

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many warrant sales have been conducted in Scotland, in each of the past five years by sheriffdom.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Provisional figures for numbers of warrant sales reported to the Sheriff Courts from 1987 to 1991 are set out by sheriffdom in the table:

Sheriffdom	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Glasgow and Strathkelvin	63	69	43	44	41
Lothian and Borders	82	135	37	49	38
North Strathclyde	77	123	19	27	59
South Strathclyde	110	116	68	26	62
Tayside, Central and Fife	142	115	31	45	48
Grampian	227	156	81	42	75
TOTAL	701	714	279	233	323

Cash Limits

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he intends to make to the cash limits for 1992-93 within his responsibility.

Mr. Lang: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates I intend to make changes to two cash limits:

a. The cash limit for class XV, vote 3, training programmes, roads and transport services and industrial support, Scotland will be increased by £948,000 from £712,741,000 to £713,689,000. The increase takes account of a £200,000 increase in provision for Scottish Enterprise in respect of European Community projects supported by the RECHAR programme; and to carry forward the £748,000 capital underspend on roads and transport in respect of end-year flexibility arrangements as announced by the Chief Secretary on 15 July 1992, *Official Report*, cols 698-702.

b. The cash limit for class XV, vote 13, education and arts and libraries, Scotland will be increased by £2,341,000 from £260,274,000 to £262,615,000. The increase reflects the full uptake of end-year flexibility as announced by the Chief Secretary on 15 July 1992, *Official Report*, cols 698-702.

All the increases are within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce details of the 1993-94 Scottish local government finance settlement.

Mr. Lang: In considering the settlement for next year I have taken account of the representations made to me by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities; the additional burdens facing local authorities next year, particularly care in the community; the scope for authorities to make further efficiency savings; and the Government's policy on public sector pay.

I propose that aggregate external finance (AEF) should be set for 1993-94 at a total level of £5,147·3 million. This represents an increase in the 1992-93 provision for AEF of 3·2 per cent. after adjusting for:

(a) the transfer of responsibility for further education colleges to central Government; and

(b) the inclusion within the above total of £60·6 million to finance the full implementation of care in the community from 1 April 1993; and

(c) £3·8 million to meet the cost of grants for rates rebates on premises within enterprise zones and £2·8 million to meet the additional cost of grants for rates rebates on premises for disabled persons. From 1993-94 both of these grants will be treated as specific grants within AEF.

I propose that Government supported expenditure (GSE) for 1993-94 should be set at a level of £5,748 million, an increase of 2·75 per cent. on the 1992-93 figure after adjusting for the further education transfer and the inclusion of provision of £60·6 million within GSE for care in the community. I estimate that capital financing will require £725 million next year, leaving a residual amount for grant-aided expenditure (GAE)—excluding the above amount for care in the community—of £5,023 million, an increase of 2·6 per cent. over the adjusted 1992-93 GAE figure.

In determining the above AEF figure, I have assumed that local authorities will contribute £12 million to the next stage of unified business rate policy. Details of the total reduction which I plan to make in Scottish business rates next year are being announced separately.

I have the power to cap a Scottish local authority either where I consider that its planned expenditure is excessive or where there is an excessive increase in its planned expenditure as compared with the previous year. For 1993-94, my intended capping principles are:

1. Any increase in budget between 1992-93 and 1993-94 of more than 2·25 per cent. will be an excessive increase if the resulting budget is above the local authority's grant-aided expenditure (GAE) assessment for 1993-94;

2. Any increase in budget between 1992-93 and 1993-94 of more than 1·5 per cent. will be an excessive increase if the resulting budget is over 1 per cent. above the local authority's GAE assessment for 1993-94;

3. Any increase in budget between 1992-93 and 1993-94 of more than 1·0 per cent. will be an excessive increase if the resulting budget is over 5 per cent. above the local authority's GAE assessment for 1993-94;

4. Any increase in budget between 1992-93 and 1993-94 of more than 0·5 per cent. will be an excessive increase if the resulting budget is over 10 per cent. above the local authority's GAE assessment for 1993-94; and

5. Any budget for 1993-94 more than 12·5 per cent. above the local authority's GAE assessment will be excessive.

These principles are necessarily provisional. Before taking my decisions on capping, I will, of course, take into account all appropriate considerations.

This represents a realistic settlement, especially in view of the need to control public expenditure. If local authorities ensure that pay settlements are as near as possible to zero in the coming year and they maximise efficiency savings, there will be scope for real increases in service provision. If authorities do not budget responsibly, I shall not hesitate to use the capping powers available to me.

The settlement should also enable authorities to set council taxes at reasonable levels. I intend to introduce a council tax transitional relief scheme to ensure that households do not face large increases in their bills next year as a result of the change from the community charge to the council tax.

East Fortune Hospital

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the sale of the site and buildings of East Fortune hospital; and what undertakings are being given to prospective buyers about the relocation of the remaining patients and staff from the hospital.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 November 1992]:* Several expressions of interest in the hospital land and buildings at East Fortune have been received. No undertakings have been given to prospective purchasers on the relocation of those patients and staff remaining at the hospital; only when appropriate alternative accommodation is available, and the NHS has no further use for these facilities, will a sale be progressed.

Forestry

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the proportion of broadleaves of the total planting in Scotland by (i) the Forestry Commission and (ii) private sector companies in the years 1988 to 1992, *(b)* the hectarage of non-surplus plantations, buildings and plantable land sold and the sum raised by the sales since 1985, *(c)* the hectarage of non-surplus plantations sold and the sum raised by the sales since 1985 and *(d)* the hectarage of land sold by the Forestry Commission whether surplus or non-surplus where public access has been preserved by agreement since 1985.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* Between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1992, some 7 per cent. (1,943 hectares) of the Forestry Commission's total planting in Scotland was with broadleaves. The equivalent figure for grant-aided planting by the private sector was 20 per cent. (12,862 hectares).

The Forestry Commission's plantations are not classified as surplus or non-surplus. The total area of land sold by the commission between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1992, including plantations, buildings and plantable land, was 66,323 hectares, of which 34,767 hectares comprised plantations. The total sum realised was £96·7 million, of which £53·0 million came from the sale of 41,807 hectares of forest land, including plantations, plantable land, and associated land. The sum realised from the sale of plantations is not recorded separately.

Public rights of way over land sold by the Forestry Commission are, of course, legally protected. Arrangements for preserving more general public access to such land were put in place in October 1991. Under these arrangements the commission offers to enter into an access agreement with the appropriate local authority before individual woodlands which have enjoyed unencumbered public access are put up for sale. Two such access agreements have been entered into to date, involving a total area of 68·4 hectares, but the sale of only one of these has so far been completed, covering an area of 21·4 hectares. Other agreements are being negotiated.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the value of the planting grants made to the private forestry sector in Scotland, *(b)* the amount of forest recreation and amenity subsidy made to the Forestry Commission in Scotland and in England and Wales, *(c)* the amount of forest recreation and amenity subsidy made to each Scottish conservancy of the Forestry Commission and *(d)* the sums spent on visitor facilities in each of the conservancies in Scotland, in each year since 31 March 1988, in each case giving also the figures adjusted for inflation.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* The information is given in the tables, with the figures updated to 1992 prices being shown in brackets.

£'000s

Year ended 31 March	*1989*		*1990*		*1991*		*1992*
Planting grants paid to the private forestry sector in Scotland							
	5,910	(7,300)	6,545	(7,599)	7,708	(8,248)	7,908
Forest Recreation and Amenity Subsidies							
North Scotland	710	(877)	870	(1,010)	1,131	(1,210)	1,053
Mid Scotland	899	(1,110)	1,045	(1,213)	1,310	(1,402)	1,297
South Scotland	706	(872)	838	(973)	1,087	(1,163)	1,097
Scotland (Total)	2,315	(2,859)	2,753	(3,196)	3,528	(3,775)	3,447
England and Wales	5,748	(7,100)	6,564	(7,621)	8,431	(9,022)	8,660
Expenditure on Visitor Facilities							
North Scotland	267	(330)	395	(458)	508	(544)	504
Mid Scotland	413	(510)	541	(628)	810	(867)	680
South Scotland	390	(481)	396	(460)	701	(750)	657

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the Forestry Commission's industrial labour force and *(b)* the numbers employed by contractors, in each year since 1988.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* The information is as follows:

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Number of industrial workers employed by the Forestry Commission on 31 March	3,032	2,781	2,615	2,447
Approximate number of contractors employed directly or indirectly by the Forestry Commission during the year ended 31 March	1,200	1,300	1,300	1,300
Approximate number of contractors working on Forestry Commission land for purchasers of standing timber during the year ended 31 March	1,500	1,400	1,400	1,300

Further and Higher Education

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the extent of the market research commissioned by his Department to sample the views of students, potential students and people in the wider community in respect of further and higher education in Scotland; and if he will make available the questions to be asked and the results; and who within the wider community will be consulted.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* As part of the process of preparation of the Scottish further and higher education charter, the Scottish Office Education Department has commissioned market research. It will seek the views of a representative sample of almost 1,000 people in Scotland, approximately half of whom will be current or potential students in further and higher education, and the others a cross-section of the population including parents of students and others in the wider community.

The aim of the research is to ascertain what consumers expect of futher and higher education services, what aspects of such provision they regard as most essential, and what they would expect to see in a charter for further and higher education.

The findings will be used to inform the preparation of the charter. No decision has yet been made about the separate publication of the findings or of the questions asked.

In addition to the research, widespread consultation with a range of educational, employment and student bodies has already been undertaken; further consultation on the development of the charter will be carried out.

Drinking Water

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he is giving to the 10 micrograms of lead per litre of water recommended by the World Health Organisation; what level is recommended by the EC drinking water directive; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* It is expected that the World Health Organisation will recommend a new guideline for lead in drinking water in mid-1993. My right hon. Friend is considering this carefully as part of the review of public exposure to lead in drinking water announced in "Scotland's Health—A challenge to us all" published in July this year.

The EC Drinking Water Directive sets a maximum admissible concentration of lead of 50 micrograms per litre in running water. Where lead pipes are present the directive recommends that the lead content should not exceed 50 micrograms per litre in a sample taken after flushing. The directive also recommends that if the sample is taken either directly or after flushing and the lead content either frequently or to an appreciable extent exceeds 100 micrograms per litre, suitable measures must be taken to reduce the exposure to lead on the part of the consumer. The United Kingdom regulatory standard of 50 micrograms per litre in any sample is tighter than that in the directive.

Domestic Rates

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals are still outstanding relating to bills received under the old domestic rating system.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* There are no such valuation appeals outstanding.

Business Rates

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals were still outstanding on 1 November relating to bills received under business rates.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* There were 6,973 valuation appeals outstanding from the 1990 revaluation.

Science Education

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to review the teaching of science in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in view of the findings of the science assessment of achievement programme; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* National guidelines on environmental studies from age five to 14 will be published in the next few months. These contain advice on the teaching of science in primary schools and the first two years of secondary schools. They will take account of the findings of the science assessment of achievement programme. We expect the guidelines to enhance the quality of science teaching, and the progress which pupils make in this subject up to the age of 14.

Any review of the teaching of science in the later years of secondary schooling will be in the context of the Government's response to the proposals on which we are currently consulting for the 14 to 18 curriculum.

Hake

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what steps are taken to ensure non-sector boats keep within hake quota limits within west of Scotland waters;

(2) what measures are taken to monitor boats fishing for hake in west of Scotland waters.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: All vessels fishing in the waters off the west coast of Scotland are subject to inspection by officers of the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency. In 1991, 1,130 fishing vessels were inspected by the agency's fishery protection vessels in west coast waters and over 35,000 landings of whitefish were inspected at Scottish ports. These control measures apply to hake and other species. They are designed to ensure that vessels catch and land only the species for which they are licensed and that the quantities landed by vessels fishing against non-sector allocations do not exceed their quotas. All landings are individually recorded on a computer system to show the quantities and species landed by each vessel.

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what quota arrangements currently exist for hake as applicable to the west coast of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: Quotas for Western hake this year have been managed by two Scottish producer organisations (the Scottish Fishermen's Organisation and the North East of Scotland PO), the two Irish Producer Organisations (NIFPO and ANIFPO), and two English Producer Organisations (Fleetwood and Cornish). A copy of the rules on the quota management arrangements for white fish stocks in 1992 has been placed in the Library. Almost 54 per cent. of this year's quota is allocated to the rest of the fleet and is managed by Fisheries Departments which set monthly limits on vessel's landings, following consultation with relevant fishing interests.

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent Scottish Producers Organisation hake quotas were reduced part way through the quota year for west of Scotland waters; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: The methodology for allocating the United Kingdom quota of Western hake, and area VII anglers and megrim, to producer organisations and vessels in the non-sector was adjusted this year to take account of vessels which were de-registered in 1989, under the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, and which subsequently rejoined the United Kingdom fleet.

In accordance with the timetable for issue of allocations, agreed with the industry, producer organisations were advised on 9 March of their provision allocation and had two weeks to make representations. No representations were received from the Scottish producers organisations and final allocations were issued on 15 April.

Fishing Boats

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what restrictions exist to limit numbers of boats registered in the ports of Ayr, Troon and Girvan.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: Fishing vessel numbers are restricted through the licensing scheme established under the terms of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967. Questions relating to the registration of vessels, including fishing vessels, are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Transport.

Health Boards

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last considered the relevance and appropriateness of the criteria employed in the recruitment and selection of persons for health boards in accordance with the procedure in paragraph 52 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: My right hon. Friend keeps the relevance and appropriateness of the criteria for selection of non-executive members of health boards under review, and this year has widened the base of selection for appointments currently under consideration through press advertisements and approaches to a greatly increased number of organisations.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current ratios of members of health boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: Current health board member ratios, approximately, are:

Male:female = 3:1

Non-executive:executive = 3:2

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many court actions for mortgage repossessions were made at Nelson county court in each year since 1987.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table shows the total number of mortgage possession actions entered in Nelson county court for each year from 1987. At this stage the 1992 figure is provisional and therefore liable to revision in the future.

Mortgage possession actions entered in Nelson county court 1987-1992

	Number
1987	136
1988	207
1989	201
1990	238
1991	286
[1]1992	228

[1] Quarter 1 to quarter 3.

Trial Delays

Mr. Michael: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the average length of time between committal and trial in courts in England and Wales for each of the last four quarters.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table shows the average waiting time between committal to the crown court and start of hearing.

Waiting times—committals for trial England and Wales

	Weeks
Quarter 4 1991	13·17
Quarter 1 1992	13·81
Quarter 2 1992	13·25
Quarter 3 1992	13·74

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on what date Mr. J. I. Disley was appointed an adjudicator for the conduct of immigration appeal tribunal hearings; how many complaints of alleged unfair treatment by appellants or sponsors have been made about Mr. Disley's conduct of proceedings; and how many have been found to be *(a)* substantiated and *(b)* unsubstantiated.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Mr. J. R. Disley (sic) was appointed as an adjudicator of immigration appeals on 1 May 1991. Most appellants complain about the conduct of proceedings by an adjudicator by appealing to the immigration appeal tribunal. No statistics are maintained of the number of cases determined by individual adjudicators and taken to the tribunal. Complaints are also sometimes made to the chief adjudicator. There has been one such complaint in relation to proceedings conducted by Mr. Disley but it was sub judice at the time and the matter was dealt with as part of the appeal by the tribunal which ultimately dismissed the appeal. The chief adjudicator sees every tribunal determination and where necessarry he or the appropriate regional adjudicator brings the matter to the attention of the adjudicator concerned.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many complaints of alleged unfair treatment by an adjudicator at immigration appeal hearings have been lodged with the chief adjudicator of immigration appeals, in each of the last five years; and how many have been found to be *(a)* substantiated and *(b)* unsubstantiated.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No statistics have been maintained as to complaints made directly to the chief adjudicator.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the workload expected to be undertaken by persons appointed to be adjudicators at immigration appeal tribunal hearings.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Adjudicators of immigration appeals (as opposed to immigration appeal tribunal members) who are full time normally sit for five days each week as and when required, including, where necessary, weekends and public holidays. They are allowed 30 days leave a year plus 10½ days public holidays and privilege days (or days in lieu of these). Part-time adjudicators sit for a seven-hour day. The Lord Chancellor expects part-time adjudicators to sit for at least 20 days but not more than 50 days a year (unless the person concerned is retired or a consultant in which case the maximum can be relaxed to 70 days). The precise number of days sat will vary within these parameters.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current remuneration of adjudicators at immigration appeal tribunal hearings, including any expenses; and what was the level from which it was last raised.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The current remuneration of full-time adjudicators of immigration appeals (as opposed to immigration appeal tribunal members) is £52,520 a year. Part-time adjudicators are paid a daily fee of £215. These figures were raised in April 1992 from £50,500 and £207 respectively. Since full-time adjudicators are allocated to a particular hearing centre the question of expenses does not usually arise. Part-time adjudicators are entitled to a first class rail fare to and from the hearing centre (or a mileage allowance if a private car is used). Where their total time exceeds seven hours they are entitled to claim additional expenses for writing up determinations pro rata to their daily fee.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current number of immigration appeal tribunal adjudicators; and if he will give details of sex, age, ethnic background and professional or other qualification.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The relevant information relating to immigration adjudicators (who are not part of the immigration appeal tribunal which deals with appeals from decisions of the adjudicators) is as follows.

There are 17 full-time adjudicators. They are all men. Their ages are 41, 47, 50, 57 (two adjudicators), 59, (two adjudicators), 60 (four adjudicators), 61, 62, 65 (two adjudicators), 67 and 68. Two of them are known to be from the ethnic minorities. Eight are barristers, seven are solicitors, one is a Scottish advocate and one is an experienced civil servant with a history degree.

There are 81 part-time adjudicators: 63 are men and 18 are women. Their ages are 36, 37 (two adjudicators), 39 (two adjudicators), 40 (four adjudicators), 41 (two adjudicators), 42 (six adjudicators), 43, 44 (three adjudicators), 46 (three adjudicators), 47 (seven adjudicators), 48 (three adjudicators), 49 (two adjudicators), 52 (four adjudicators), 53, 54 (four adjudicators), 55 (three adjudicators), 56, 57 (three adjudicators), 58, 60 (three adjudicators), 61 (four adjudicators), 62 (five adjudicators), 62 (two adjudicators), 64 (two adjudicators), 65, 66 (four adjudicators), 67 (two adjudicators), 68, 69, 70 (two adjudicators) and 71. Four are known to be from the ethnic minorities. Twenty-nine are barristers, 50 are solicitors, one is an academic lawyer and one is a non-law graduate.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many immigration appeal tribunal adjudicators have been removed in each of the last five years following complaints of alleged unfair treatment by appellants or sponsors about the adjudicator which have been found to be substantiated.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Adjudicators of immigration appeals are not part of the immigration appeal tribunal which has appellate jurisdiction over decisions of the adjudicators. No adjudicator has been removed in any of the last five years.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action the chief adjudicator of immigration appeals takes when a complaint of alleged unfair treatment at an immigration appeal hearing by an adjudicator is found to be substantiated.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Most appellants complain about the conduct of proceedings by an adjudicator by appealing to the immigration appeal tribunal. The chief adjudicator sees every tribunal determination and where necessary he or the appropriate regional adjudicator bring the matter to the attention of the adjudicator concerned. Where there is a direct complaint to the chief adjudicator he refers the matter to that adjudicator and, where he feels it sufficiently serious, to the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether those making complaints of alleged unfair treatment by an adjudicator at immigration appeal hearings to the chief adjudicator are interviewed to obtain precise details of such complaints.

Mr. John M. Taylor: If complainants seek an interview with the chief adjudicator it is never refused.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department by what process the chief adjudicator of immigration appeals investigates complaints of alleged unfairness in the conduct of appeal hearings by an adjudicator.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Most appellants complain about the proceedings by an adjudicator by appealing to the immigration appeal tribunal. The chief adjudicator sees all determinations by the tribunal and where necessary he or the appropriate regional adjudicator bring the matter to the attention of the adjudicator concerned. Complaints may also be made directly to the chief adjudicator who will investigate the complaint, seek the comments of the adjudicator concerned and respond as he thinks appropriate.

Legal Aid

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures he is proposing to take to restrain the rate of growth in legal aid expenditure.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government's plans for legal aid expenditure over the next three years have been published today. They provide for the net cost of legal aid in England and Wales to grow to £1,284 million in 1993-94, £1,406 million in 1994-95 and £1,528 million in 1995-96. Five years ago spending was £426 million. Legal aid spending will continue to grow rapidly during the next three years, on average by 10 per cent. a year from present levels. A number of measures will be necessary to ensure that legal aid spending does not rise even faster.

As far as financial eligibility is concerned, the Government's objective is to strengthen the legally aided client's financial interest in the progress of the case, and to bring the means assessment for legal aid more closely into line with that used for other means-tested benefits. The Lord Chancellor intends to lay regulations to provide that, from 1 April 1993, the lower income limit for civil legal aid (ie the limit of disposable income below which an applicant for legal aid pays no contribution) will be reduced to the equivalent income support limit. This means that, on current figures, the limit will be reduced from £3,060 per annum to £2,213 per annum.

The Lord Chancellor also intends to lay regulations providing that, from 1 April 1993, dependants allowances for civil legal aid will be reduced to income support levels.

Equivalent changes will be made to the financial eligibility regimes for criminal legal aid and advice and assistance.

The upper eligibility limits for civil legal aid (ie the limits of disposable income above which an applicant for civil legal aid ceases to be eligible for assistance) will not be increased in April 1993.

The Lord Chancellor intends to lay regulations providing that, from 1 April 1993, all those granted civil legal aid will be required to pay a contribution of one-third of their disposable income above the lower limit and that such contributions should continue for the life of the case. Equivalent provisions will be made in respect of criminal legal aid, and assistance by way of representation.

The Lord Chancellor also intends to lay regulations providing that only those who would qualify for assistance free of contribution shall, in future, be able to receive advice and assistance under the green form scheme.

In respect of remuneration, as he has already announced, the Lord Chancellor intends to introduce standard fees in the magistrates courts at the beginning of next year.

The Lord Chancellor will then be taking steps to extend the existing standard fee scheme in the Crown Court to cover more cases. He will also be introducing a fixed hourly rate of payment for solicitors in civil non-matrimonial cases which are legally aided, and taking corresponding steps to gain control over legal aid payments made to barristers in those cases. He intends in setting these rates and fee levels to have regard to whatever rate would attract sufficient firms or barristers to do the work, while maintaining appropriate levels of quality.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Know-how Funds

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring procedures of the maintenance of human rights accompanies the payment of moneys under the terms of the know-how fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The know-how fund provides British expertise to the relevant countries rather than making payments of money. The purpose of the fund is to promote progress towards the market economy and democracy, including human rights. The human rights situation is monitored both bilaterally and through multilateral bodies such as CSCE and the Council of Europe.

Cash Limits

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have been made in the 1992-93 cash limit for expenditure by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit on the external assistance vote (class II vote 5) will be increased by £54,184,000 from £1,743,015,000 to £1,797,199,000. Included in this amount are additional resources of £14,091,000 for the United Kingdom subscription costs to the European bank of reconstruction and development; £2,966,000 for the finacial sector scheme for the former Soviet Union (FSU); £315,000 to cover transport costs of the delivery of the United Kingdom share of emergency EC food aid to the FSU last winter and a transfer of £150,000 from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for assistance to the FSU food sector. Also included is a further transfer of £450,000 from the Department of the Environment for conservation work in Africa. The balance of the increase is for rollover of underspend against 1991-92 EC attribution provision, £15 million of which has been allocated for additional humanitarian relief for former Yugoslavia. The running costs limit for the ODA has been increased by £432,000 from £46,922,000 to £47,354,000. This includes £224,000 in respect of end of year flexibility arrangements, a transfer of £58,000 from Property Holdings and £150,000 from existing resources to cover additional costs of administering the programme of assistance to eastern Europe and the FSU. All the increases are within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Disabled People

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what efforts are being made to ensure that people with disabilities can gain access to the Palace of Westminster while lobbying Parliament.

Mr. Martin: The provisions which exist within the Palace of Westminster for the assistance of disabled people are set out in the leaflet "Arrangements for the Assistance of Disabled Visitors". I am arranging for a copy to be sent to the hon. Member. In the event of mass lobbies involving disabled people, special arrangements are made for their reception and admission to Westminster Hall and additional seating, heating and lavatories are provided. Special arrangements are also made when disabled persons need to reach other parts of the building.

A stairlift was installed on the staircase leading to the Grand Committee Room earlier this year and handrails have been fitted to the steps down to the "W" rooms off Westminster Hall to assist those attending meetings. A comprehensive study by consultants has been commissioned to look at additional means of improving access for disabled people to the main public areas. Its recommendations will be considered by my Committee at the earliest opportunity.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police (Equality of Service)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect he expects the application of the citizens charter to the police to have on equality of service in response times to emergency and other inquiries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A comprehensive set of performance indicators for the police service will be introduced at the end of this year. From April 1993, every police force will be required to set and publish standards of performance for responding to emergencies and telephone enquiries, and publish the achievement of these standards. This fulfils the commitment in the citizens charter that all police forces are expected to set and publish target times for answering telephone calls and arriving at the scene of incidents which require rapid reaction. Work is currently underway in police forces to implement the service's own quality of service initiative by setting standards for the quality of service to be delivered to the public. Every member of the community will know the level of service which they are entitled to expect from their local police.

Primates

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the differences between the minimum standards for primates set out in the Home Office code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures and those applicable to premises in which primates are held for other purposes, including zoos.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures is similar in content to the Laboratory Animals Breeders Association guidelines in relation to primates.

The Home Office code of practice is also broadly similar in content and range to section 9 of the "Standards of Modern Zoo Practice", issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, although the Home Office code is more detailed with regard to the temperatures, lighting, ventilation, noise, humidity and space requirements for the housing of animals, and deals separately with the particular needs of primates. The "Standards of Modern Zoos Practice" contain additional requirements relating to hazards from machinery, supervision of controlled drugs, post mortem facilities and safety of the public.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider consulting a range of independent primatologists and to establish what standards of housing and care are suitable for primates used in research as part of a wider review on the care and use of laboratory primates.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office animals (scientific procedures) inspectorate has regular contacts with experts in the field of primate care, and draws on the knowledge thus gained in assessing and monitoring projects involving the use of primates. Such contacts have also informed the review of facilities for large primates which the inspectorate is currently carrying out, and will contribute to the consideration being given to a possible code of practice for breeding establishments.

I understand that the animal procedures committee may also consult other experts in the course of the review of laboratory primates which it is conducting.

Prisoners' Release Dates

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is provided to prisoners of changes in their release dates.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: When prisoners' release dates change, they are advised of their existing dates of release, the number of days by which these have altered, the reasons for the changes and their new dates of release.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances prisoners can be detained once their sentence expiry date has passed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Prisoners may be detained on the expiry of their sentences where a court has directed this in respect of other proceedings or if they have been ordered to be detained under the Immigration Act 1971.

Visas

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of refusals of visas broken down by country of application for 1991; and what is the current waiting time for refusal in each case.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of applicants from *(a)* Third world countries and *(b)* the United States of America were refused short stay visas to enter the United Kingdom in the first six months of 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The latest information by country of application for grants and refusals of visa applications to enter the United Kingdom, both for settlement and non-settlement is for 1991 and is given in the table. There is no visa requirement for citizens of the United States of America. The information on waiting times for refusal is not held centrally.

Applications from all countries for all types of entry clearance to the United Kingdom in 1991

Number of applicants and percentages

Country where application made	*Settlement*[1]			*Non-settlement*		
	Granted[2]	*Refused initially*[3]	*Proportion refused*[4]	*Granted*[2]	*Refused initially*[3]	*Proportion refused*[4]
Afghanistan	—	—	—	—	—	—
Algeria	31	8	21	6,471	3,931	37
Angola	6	—	0	1,106	27	2
Argentina	46	—	0	102	1	1
Ascension Island	—	—	—	70	—	—
Australia	3,597	44	1	7,563	75	1
Austria	52	2	4	2,322	17	1
Bahamas	29	—	0	139	2	1
Bahrain	25	—	0	3,455	50	1
Bangladesh	3,143	1,012	24	10,676	2,554	19
Barbados	93	9	9	634	137	18
Belgium	37	1	3	3,783	96	2
Belize	20	3	13	29	2	6
Bermuda	5	—	0	219	—	0
Bolivia	4	—	—	23	1	4
Botswana	25	—	0	687	1	0
Brazil	112	3	3	887	4	0
Brunei	17	—	0	1,129	3	0
Bulgaria	38	—	0	5,938	457	7
Burma	5	8	62	485	14	3
Cameroon	6	1	14	1,007	18	2
Canada	1,309	6	0	7,601	65	1
Chile	18	—	0	184	—	0
China	64	46	42	10,861	2,534	19
Colombia	56	8	13	103	2	2
Congo	—	—	—	—	—	—
Costa Rica	—	—	—	53	1	2
Cote D'Ivoire	1	—	0	646	46	7
Cuba	2	1	33	597	—	0
Cyprus	213	17	7	4,884	421	8
Czechoslovakia	12	—	0	754	10	1
Denmark	16	5	24	2,402	88	4
Ecuador	10	—	0	89	—	0
Egypt	91	12	12	20,317	1,222	6
Ethiopia	377	6	2	3,241	456	12
Fiji	48	3	6	356	13	4
Finland	78	5	6	1,116	12	1
France	180	17	9	20,701	532	3
Gabon	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gambia	10	3	23	836	118	12
Germany	88	29	25	17,660	325	2
Ghana	362	113	24	14,854	4,486	23
Gibraltar	1	—	0	176	—	0
Greece	32	1	3	1,018	24	2
Guatemala	0	—	—	22	—	0

Country where application made	*Settlement*[1] *Granted*[2]	*Refused initially*[3]	*Proportion refused*[4]	*Non-settlement* *Granted*[2]	*Refused initially*[3]	*Proportion refused*[4]
Guyana	65	16	20	603	97	14
Holy See	—	—	—	26	—	0
Honduras	7	3	30	11	—	0
Hong Kong	1,943	85	4	20,564	47	0
Hungary	32	—	0	665	73	10
Iceland	9	—	0	110	1	1
India	3,327	1,098	25	89,812	9,828	10
Indonesia	105	3	3	12,260	9	0
Iran	2	—	0	1,578	—	0
Iraq	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ireland	346	2	1	2,350	32	1
Israel	134	—	0	947	2	0
Italy	69	3	4	4,660	410	8
Jamaica	418	152	27	2,517	680	21
Japan	231	—	0	5,022	64	1
Jerusalem	25	—	0	1,223	9	1
Jordan	137	—	0	8,996	730	8
Kenya	595	58	9	1,507	117	7
Korea	16	—	0	524	8	2
Kuwait	22	—	0	1,504	17	1
Lebanon	19	1	5	4,291	318	7
Lesotho	5	—	0	59	1	2
Liberia	—	—	—	—	—	—
Libya	—	—	—	798	7	1
Luxembourg	—	—	—	223	2	1
Madagascar	—	—	—	—	—	—
Malawi	55	1	2	322	5	2
Malaysia	330	17	5	5,725	180	3
Malta	218	1	0	3,665	25	1
Mauritius	88	6	6	1,197	129	10
Mexico	56	1	2	539	—	0
Mongolia	1	—	0	152	—	0
Morocco	72	19	21	5,101	2,101	29
Mozambique	4	—	0	667	16	2
Namibia	6	—	0	42	5	11
Nepal	27	0	0	1,343	127	9
Netherlands	98	10	9	6,141	84	1
New Zealand	3,229	3	0	1,225	29	2
Nigeria	1,142	311	21	49,301	14,728	23
Norway	142	1	1	2,767	184	6
Oman	10	—	0	5,958	75	1
Pakistan	6,331	2,604	30	51,586	16,055	24
Panama	—	—	—	75	1	1
Papua New Guinea	15	—	0	264	—	0
Peru	45	—	0	229	1	0
Philippines	805	374	32	9,766	787	7
Poland	214	—	0	44,487	2,462	5
Portugal	41	1	2	498	13	3
Qatar	4	8	67	2,823	135	5
Romania	210	28	12	9,935	574	5
Saudi Arabia	107	15	12	38,570	701	2
St. Helena	1	—	0	132	—	0
Senegal	7	—	0	635	22	3
Seychelles	9	—	0	158	2	1
Sierra Leone	20	14	41	863	363	30
Singapore	163	5	3	1,777	36	2
Solomon Islands	2	—	0	18	—	0
Somalia	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Africa	651	29	4	922	37	4
Soviet Union	114	—	0	56,619	1,087	2
Spain	104	2	2	1,849	48	3
Sri Lanka	181	68	27	6,882	1,143	14
Sudan	30	6	17	8,030	42	1
Swaziland	3	—	0	30	3	9

Country where application made	*Settlement*[1] *Granted*[2]	*Refused initially*[3]	*Proportion refused*[4]	*Non-settlement Granted*[2]	*Refused initially*[3]	*Proportion refused*[4]
Sweden	193	1	0	4,363	155	3
Switzerland	134	1	1	6,266	50	1
Syria	56	—	0	4,759	413	8
Tanzania	95	18	16	1,093	37	3
Thailand	602	113	16	21,256	809	4
Tonga	—	—	—	16	—	0
Trinidad and Tobago	112	19	15	1,586	122	7
Tunisia	31	14	31	3,094	172	5
Turkey	727	269	27	36,290	2,322	6
Uganda	28	6	18	3,283	516	14
United Arab Emirates	57	11	16	12,109	888	7
United States	2,838	35	1	42,180	154	0
Uruguay	8	—	0	58	—	0
Vanuatu	1	—	0	29	—	0
Venezuela	26	1	4	309	5	2
Vietnam	4	—	0	340	2	1
Yemen (North)	—	—	—	2,667	138	5
Yemen (South)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yugoslavia	54	6	10	414	57	12
Zaire	17	—	0	661	32	5
Zambia	93	12	11	1,423	31	2
Zimbabwe	185	8	4	640	76	11

[1] Includes certificate of entitlement

[2] Granted initially or on appeal

[3] Some of these will be subsequently granted on appeal

[4] Calculate as: $\frac{\text{refusals}}{(\text{grants-refusals})}$ *100

— no application received or, none granted/refused

Aggravated Vehicle Taking Act

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been convicted of offences specified in the Aggravated Vehicle Taking Act 1992 since it received Royal Assent; what assessment he has made of whether the Act is deterring the taking away of vehicles without consent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Court proceedings data under the Aggravated Vehicle Taking Act 1992, which did not come into force until April 1992, will not be available until autumn 1993. It is therefore too early to say what effect the Act may have in deterring the taking away of vehicles without consent.

Probation Service

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by police authority area, the number of probation officers employed for each year since 1987.

Mr. Jack: The numbers are as follows:

Table of probation officers in post by police force area (whole-time equivalent)
Figures relate to end of years and mid-1992

Police force area	*Dec. 1987*	*June 1988*	*Dec. 1988*	*June 1989*	*Dec. 1989*	*June 1990*	*Dec. 1990*	*June 1991*	*Dec. 1991*	*June 1992*
Avon and Somerset	156·0	153·5	159·5	162·0	165·0	171·0	175·5	173·5	181·5	178·0
Bedfordshire	65·8	66·3	66·8	66·3	65·8	65·8	66·1	67·3	69·9	69·2
Cambridgeshire	64·0	62·0	65·0	65·0	62·5	65·0	69·0	67·5	74·0	73·5
Cheshire	99·5	101·5	105·2	101·1	100·1	102·1	104·0	105·1	113·1	108·1
Cleveland	89·0	91·0	96·0	96·0	103·0	101·0	107·5	99·3	108·0	108·0
Cumbria	56·5	60·5	58·0	61·5	59·0	49·0	59·5	59·0	64·0	65·5
Derbyshire	96·7	98·6	103·7	106·7	112·2	107·7	117·0	115·8	117·5	117·5
Devon and Cornwall	150·1	150·9	155·6	153·1	161·3	161·7	167·2	165·4	168·2	173·7
Dorset	71·5	73·5	78·0	78·0	80·0	85·0	87·0	87·5	88·6	87·5
Durham	79·0	79·0	81·0	81·5	83·5	85·5	89·0	90·8	92·5	91·0
Essex	132·2	129·8	139·8	137·2	137·7	136·8	143·2	144·4	146·6	142·0
Gloucestershire	53·0	56·0	55·0	55·0	56·2	57·0	62·5	62·0	64·0	63·5
Greater Manchester	407·0	401·0	413·9	409·5	419·0	415·0	425·7	421·0	445·5	442·2
Hampshire	194·0	191·0	194·0	191·4	196·4	190·9	190·8	186·5	200·4	206·6
Hertfordshire	94·6	91·4	93·9	91·8	98·5	94·5	101·7	102·5	103·6	101·6
Humberside	116·0	115·0	118·0	118·0	133·0	136·5	133·5	133·5	138·5	137·0
Kent	157·5	152·9	160·4	166·4	167·4	171·6	163·2	164·2	170·6	169·8
Lancashire	188·5	190·5	197·0	197·5	197·5	197·5	201·0	204·0	201·3	205·0
Leicestershire	112·5	111·5	115·5	117·5	116·5	117·5	125·5	125·0	124·0	122·0

Police force area	*Dec. 1987*	*June 1988*	*Dec. 1988*	*June 1989*	*Dec. 1989*	*June 1990*	*Dec. 1990*	*June 1991*	*Dec. 1991*	*June 1992*
Lincolnshire	65·0	64·0	69·0	71·0	71·0	69·0	71·0	68·0	72·0	77·0
London City of	4·0	5·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	—	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	293·9	296·4	298·3	296·4	290·1	287·1	297·2	291·0	306·2	311·2
Metropolitan	1,043·3	1,035·9	1,050·8	1,036·2	1,066·0	1,058·9	1,054·3	1,074·6	1,127·2	1,145·4
Norfolk	62·5	61·5	65·5	69·5	74·0	75·0	82·5	79·5	82·5	81·5
Northamptonshire	62·0	65·0	63·5	63·5	63·5	59·5	63·5	69·5	71·0	71·5
Northumbria	208·5	206·0	210·5	217·5	222·0	222·5	237·0	235·0	237·5	239·0
North Yorkshire	53·0	53·0	53·0	52·0	55·0	53·0	54·0	54·0	55·7	58·0
Nottinghamshire	174·9	175·8	160·9	166·9	167·7	174·5	180·5	175·9	176·3	182·9
South Yorkshire	195·5	196·0	202·0	198·0	202·5	203·5	204·5	202·0	221·5	222·5
Staffordshire	161·0	163·0	164·9	164·9	160·5	162·5	169·1	166·7	169·5	168·6
Suffolk	76·0	75·4	80·8	79·8	82·0	81·0	85·0	85·0	84·5	85·0
Surrey	83·1	81·7	86·8	90·0	93·0	84·5	86·6	85·0	89·5	91·0
Sussex	117·3	119·8	119·3	117·0	117·0	113·5	120·5	127·8	130·0	131·0
Thames Valley	228·8	224·5	228·5	228·5	232·0	219·6	228·9	227·4	233·4	240·0
Warwickshire	59·0	58·5	58·0	56·5	55·5	58·5	61·5	61·5	60·5	61·0
West Mercia	137·0	140·5	141·5	136·0	140·5	136·6	144·2	140·6	148·0	144·1
West Midlands	385·2	385·7	391·2	399·4	420·8	401·4	444·0	426·7	458·5	454·1
West Yorkshire	311·0	306·0	307·5	307·5	310·5	319·0	321·0	327·5	319·0	329·0
Wiltshire	57·0	54·5	57·5	57·0	60·0	55·0	61·0	59·5	62·5	61·5
Dyfed Powys	41·0	40·0	43·0	43·0	42·0	41·0	42·0	45·6	46·0	48·3
Gwent	48·0	47·0	47·0	47·0	49·0	50·0	51·0	53·0	54·0	50·0
North Wales	56·0	58·0	59·6	62·8	66·4	65·9	67·9	65·8	69·6	68·6
South Wales	182·0	184·5	181·5	183·0	183·5	187·0	193·0	200·5	206·1	201·0
England and Wales	6,488·3	6,473·5	6,600·9	6,602·4	6,743·2	6,689·5	6,909·3	6,896·2	7,152·7	7,183·9

Some probation areas have small areas not falling within the one police force area (eg the Metropolitan police covers part of Hertfordshire).

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional funding has been provided for the probation service, in each police authority area, as at 1 October, to reflect the demands imposed by the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. Jack: In 1992-93 current grant support of £276 million has been allocated to probation areas as set out in the following table. This total provides for 560 additional probation staff to take account of the estimated first-year demands placed on area services by the Criminal Justice Act 1991. The information requested cannot be broken down by police area.

Area	*1990-91 outturn*	*Formula provision*	*Hypothecated grant (BIS)*	*1992-93 cash limit*	*Percentage increase*
Avon	3,539,782	4,415,552	71,014	4,486,566	26·7
Bedfordshire	2,043,678	2,534,184	52,472	2,586,656	26·6
Berkshire	3,138,288	3,891,513	129,462	4,020,975	28·1
Buckinghamshire	2,449,242	2,990,295	47,118	3,037,413	24·0
Cambridgeshire	2,201,759	2,748,260	—	2,748,260	24·8
Cheshire	3,240,943	4,018,807	23,202	4,042,009	24·7
Cleveland	2,824,295	3,471,882	47,448	3,519,330	24·6
Cornwall	1,387,532	1,746,588	—	1,746,588	25·9
Cumbria	2,324,443	2,856,081	77,905	2,933,986	26·2
Derbyshire	2,888,693	3,572,137	37,108	3,609,245	24·9
Devon	4,012,354	4,975,365	96,807	5,072,172	26·4
Dorset	2,465,674	3,021,058	59,446	3,080,504	24·9
Durham	2,556,783	3,126,310	25,958	3,152,268	23·3
Essex	5,074,777	6,292,782	16,062	6,308,844	24·3
Gloucestershire	2,130,777	2,642,188	—	2,642,188	24·0
Hampshire	5,015,854	6,330,972	38,538	6,369,510	27·0
Hereford and Worcester	2,536,313	3,109,325	45,609	3,154,934	24·4
Hertfordshire	3,264,506	4,028,037	36,275	4,064,312	24·5
Humberside	3,476,194	4,310,521	65,073	4,375,594	25·9
Kent	5,398,108	6,711,112	—	6,711,112	24·3
Lancashire	5,061,772	6,276,656	26,985	6,303,641	24·5
Leicestershire	3,018,982	3,743,572	51,356	3,794,928	25·7
Lincolnshire	2,151,318	2,667,659	55,824	2,723,483	26·6
Greater Manchester	13,473,050	16,706,737	196,702	16,903,439	25·5
Merseyside	9,041,311	11,037,793	238,994	11,276,787	24·7
Norfolk	2,136,926	2,686,449	88,616	2,775,065	29·9
Northamptonshire	1,879,072	2,330,071	—	2,330,071	24·0
Northumbria	6,861,946	8,508,892	118,462	8,627,354	25·7
Nottinghamshire	4,973,540	6,167,247	—	6,167,247	24·0
Oxfordshire	2,041,161	2,509,837	27,632	2,537,469	24·3
Shropshire	1,420,021	1,760,842	77,842	1,838,684	29·5
Somerset	2,384,044	2,892,907	34,200	2,927,107	22·8
Staffordshire	4,415,682	5,365,018	74,289	5,439,307	23·2
Suffolk	2,027,942	2,494,900	37,461	2,532,361	24·9
Surrey	3,054,273	3,839,281	30,598	3,869,879	26·7
East Sussex	2,234,020	2,816,819	76,443	2,893,262	29·5

Area	*1990-91 outturn*	*Formula provision*	*Hypothecated grant (BIS)*	*1992-93 cash limit*	*Percentage increase*
West Sussex	1,657,289	2,092,069	67,181	2,159,250	30·3
Warwickshire	1,995,645	2,424,131	23,928	2,448,059	22·7
West Midlands	14,073,724	17,451,580	322,184	17,773,764	26·3
Wiltshire	1,880,029	2,331,258	25,678	2,356,936	25·4
North Yorkshire	1,723,677	2,165,394	—	2,165,394	25·6
South Yorkshire	6,922,146	8,510,388	99,851	8,610,239	24·4
West Yorkshire	10,721,366	13,294,617	166,907	13,461,524	25·6
Dyfed	1,056,002	1,309,455	22,265	1,331,720	26·1
Gwent	1,497,241	1,874,253	—	1,874,253	25·2
North Wales	1,907,830	2,386,566	20,746	2,407,312	26·2
Powys	425,395	513,721	—	513,721	20·8
South Glamorgan	2,130,779	2,642,191	36,352	2,678,543	25·7
Mid Glamorgan	2,274,378	2,820,255	—	2,820,255	24·0
West Glamorgan	1,820,796	2,257,808	51,697	2,309,505	26·8
Inner London	21,525,437	26,809,665	457,172	27,266,837	26·7
North East London	5,081,522	6,385,496	27,831	6,413,327	26·2
South East London	3,205,182	4,079,642	48,283	4,127,925	28·8
South West London	2,480,301	3,139,042	14,959	3,154,001	27·2
Middlesex	9,123,613	11,502,075	111,198	11,613,273	27·3
Total	219,647,407	272,587,255	3,501,133	276,088,388	25·7

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what number of asylum seekers have sought judicial review of their cases in each of the past three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Lord Chancellor's Department that in 1990 there were 102 asylum-related applications for leave to move for judicial review; in 1991 the figure was 95 and in the first half of 1992, 68. The information before 1990 can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what number of cases of exceptional leave to remain given to asylum applicants have been terminated in the past three years; and under what circumstances.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information, which may not be fully reliable, is given in the table.

Exceptional leave is given to certain asylum applicants who are found not to be refugees under the 1951 United Nations convention if it would be unreasonable or impracticable in all the circumstances of the case to seek to enforce their return to the country of origin. Leave is usually given initially for a year but applicants may apply for extensions, and for settlement after seven years with exceptional leave status. The decision as to whether to grant an extension is based on the individual circumstances of the case including where relevant, the practicability of removal at that stage.

Refusals of applications for an extension of a grant of exceptional leave made to an asylum applicant, excluding dependants

	Number
1989	10
1990	3
1991	3

Police Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities about maintaining the present composition of local police authorities;

(2) what representations he has received from the Association of County Councils about maintaining the present composition of local police authorities;

(3) what representations he has received from the Association of Chief Police Officers about maintaining the present composition of local police authorities;

(4) what representations he has received from the Police Federation about maintaining the present composition of local police authorities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Ministers and officials have discussed this subject on several occasions with various representatives of those bodies. My right hon. and learned Friend is due to meet the chairmen of the local authority associations on 7 December to hear their views about the future development of the police service.

Drug Traffickers (Assets)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing for each police area in England and Wales for each year since the power was introduced *(a)* the number of applications for an order for the confiscation of the assets of drug traffickers, *(b)* the number of applications approved and *(c)* the value of assets seized in that year.

Mr. Jack: Information is not available by police area, nor in the form requested at *(a)*. As regards *(b)*, details of the confiscation orders made under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 between 1987 and 1990 are given in the table.

Offenders ordered to pay confiscation orders under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 by amount[1]
England and Wales

	Offenders sentenced at Crown Court for drug trafficking			
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Total[2]	3,372	3,231	3,665	3,713
No order made	3,169	2,692	2,863	2,842
Under £1,000	135	339	528	568
£1,000 and under £3,000	39	98	133	149
3,000 and under £10,000	15	47	81	77
£10,000 and under £30,000	8	18	36	48
£30,000 and under £100,000	—	8	14	13
£100,000 and under £300,000	6	21	7	10
£300,000 and under £1 million	—	8	1	4
£1 million and over	—	—	2	2
Total amount ordered to be confiscated (£)	1,177,000	8,096,700	7,851,900	10,142,500

[1] *Source*—"Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1990" Cm. 1935.

[2] Excludes offenders committed for sentence or where the sentence could have been awarded at the magistrates' court.

As regards *(c)*, the amount of money actually realised was £1·1 million in 1989-90 and £1·45 million in 1990-91. Recent estimates show that a cumulative total of £35 million had been ordered to be confiscated under the 1986 Act up to May 1992, of which £15 million has either been realised or is subject to receivership. I would also refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on 20 October, *Official Report*, columns *262-63*.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the shortfall between the estimated population eligible for inclusion in electoral registers and those who are on current electoral registers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) on 9 November, *Official Report*, column *630*.

Police Overtime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what constraints he has placed on police overtime in England and Wales during the last three months; and what circulars or instructions have been issued to police committees on the subject of expenditure since April 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is the responsibility of a police authority to allocate its resources so as to provide an efficient service. The use of police overtime is a matter for individual police authorities.

The following Home Office circulars which bear on the subject of expenditure have been issued since April 1992:

Circular	*Title*
41/92	The Police (Amendment) Regulation 1990
50/92	Capital Expenditure *etc*
55/92	Amendment to Circular 41/92, The Police (Amendment) Regulation 1990
68/92	Financing of the Common Police Services
77/92	Police Pension Scheme
89/92	Special Constables Sick Pay
92/92	Revision of Management of Police Building Programme *etc*
97/92	Charges for Road Traffic Reports *etc*
98/92	Pay of Chief Constables *etc*

Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing the total number of persons sentenced to custody in England and Wales during August, September and October 1992, and for the same months in 1991; and if he will provide the figures for each police authority in each month of 1992 to date.

Mr. Jack: Provisional 1991 sentencing data will not be available until the end of 1992. 1992 data will not be available until autumn 1993.

Immigration (Carriers Liability)

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the value of outstanding charges levied on carriers under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987; and what steps are being taken to recover this money from the carriers concerned.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 6 November 1992, a total of £24,114,000 was unpaid. Payments are demanded as and when charges are incurred. The immigration service has recently written to 133 carriers with unpaid charges which arose before 1 July 1992 requesting payment.

Cash Limits

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for changes to the 1992-93 cash limits within his responsibilities and to his Department's running costs limit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for Home Office administration, immigration and police support services, England and Wales (class IX, vote 3) will be reduced by £1,281,000 from £1,243,473,000 to £1,242,192,000 to reflect the following transfers of responsibility:

- (i) magistrates courts to the Lord Chancellor's Department;
- (ii) social work training to the Department of Education;
- (iii) juvenile remand accommodation to the Welsh Office;
- (iv) dog byelaw administration to the Department of the Environment; and

(v) broadcasting and sports ground safety to the Department of National Heritage.

The Home Office running costs limit is similarly reduced, by £944,000 from £1,450,020,000 to £1,449,076,000.

Forensic Science Service

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the annual report for the forensic science service; and if he will make a statement about the financial targets for 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have today placed copies of the forensic science service's annual report and accounts for 1991-92 in the Library of the House. Further copies can be obtained from FSS headquarters.

I announced on 14 May at column *207* financial and service level targets for the forensic science service for 1992-93 based on a forecast out-turn for 1991-92. The actual out-turn for 1991-92 was better than originally forecast, meaning that the unit cost and associated unit cost efficiency targets were not sufficiently challenging. I have, therefore, agreed that the unit cost target should be £456·86, with a unit cost productivity gain of 1·8 per cent. These targets are more exacting than those originally set. The other performance targets remain the same.

Criminal Welfare

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were brought by the police relating to criminal welfare; and how many were successful.

Mr. Jack: The information is given in the table. Provisional 1991 data will be available by the end of 1992.

Number of prosecutions brought by the police for offences relating to animal welfare by result, 1990

England and Wales

Offence	*Police prosecutions*	*Convictions*
Cruelty to animals	502	374
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, Sec 22(3), 23 and 25(3)	4	4
Protection of Animals Act, 1911 (as amended)	388	290
Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, Sec 8	5	5
Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925	—	—
Protection of Animals (Cruelty to dogs) Act, 1933	16	11
Protection of Animals Act, 1934	1	1
Pet Animals Act, 1951	2	2
Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act, 1954	5	5
Animal Health Act, 1981, Secs 40-42, 46, 49 and Orders under Secs 8, 9, 37, 38, 39 and 43	13	11
Slaughterhouses Act 1974	2	—
Abandonment of Animals Act, 1960, Sec 1	19	13
Animal Boarding Establishments Act, 1963	2	1
Riding Establishments Acts, 1964 and 1970	—	—
Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1968, Secs 1, 2 and 6	3	2
Badgers Act, 1973	35	22
Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, Sec 9	3	3
Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, Sec 11	1	1
Other	3	3
Diseases of animals Act	50	47
Wild Birds Protection Acts	74	49

Vehicle Marking

Mrs. Chaplin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces have adopted vehicle marking schemes.

Mr. Jack *[pursuant to his answer, 22 October 1992, column 374]:* I wish to advise that vehicle watch schemes —some force-wide, some more local—are now operating in 27 police force areas in England; the four Welsh force areas are covered by the all-Wales vehicle watch scheme. A proprietary scheme called "Match Up" has been introduced in five police force areas in England; two of these forces also operate vehicle watch schemes.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Lord President of the Council who in his Department has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office participates in initiatives on recycling and energy conservation. Given its size (32 staff), it would be inappropriate to devote particular posts or resources to issues of this kind.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office currently holds three volumes of Council papers dating from the early 18th century and a small number of papers relating to chartered corporations founded in the 19th century, for purposes of research. All will be returned to the Public Record Office in due course.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when testing of the warheads for missiles on the Trident submarine will be complete.

Mr. Aitken: The underground testing programme for development of our Trident warhead is complete, and the warhead is now in production.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many nuclear tests have been allocated to Britain in the new limited programme in the United States for 1993 to 1996; and what financial arrangements now exist between Britain and the United States of America to enable tests to continue.

Mr. Aitken: United States legislation provides for the United Kingdom to carry out three tests between 1 July 1993 and 30 September 1996. United Kingdom nuclear tests are carried out at the Nevada test site under the 1958 agreement between the United Kingdom and United States Governments for co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes.

Tactical Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether work has started at the atomic weapons establishment at Aldermaston on the design of a new tactical warhead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Preliminary work has begun on the design of a warhead that could be suitable for a replacement for the WE177 free-fall bomb.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what options, other than a tactical air-to-surface missile, are being studied for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Aitken: We are continuing to study a range of possible options for the eventual replacement of the WE177. No decision has yet been taken.

Challenger II

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will authorise the release by his Department of a Challenger II prototype to take part in the contest for the Swedish requirement of 200 tanks.

Mr. Aitken: It is a matter for Vicker's commercial judgment to decide the allocation of priorities for the Challenger 2 prototypes.

Defence Research Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) of 27 October, *Official Report*, column 852, if he will make a further statement on the links between the Chilean military and the British Defence Research Agency.

Mr. Aitken: The Aberporth range referred to by the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) in his question of 27 October is no longer the responsibility of the Defence Research Agency (DRA). It was transferred to the newly-formed directorate general of test and evaluation (DGT&E) on 1 April 1992. Neither whilst Aberporth belonged to the DRA, nor since then, has the DRA had any formal or direct links with the Chilean military. One Chilean officer visited the site two years ago.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on procedures used in the measurement and categorisation of radioactive waste at the atomic weapons establishment Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: The procedures used in the measurement and categorisation of radioactive wastes at AWE Aldermaston are very similar to and of equivalent quality to the procedures used elsewhere in the United Kingdom nuclear industry.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 6 November 1992, some 1,697 pieces were on loan to the Ministry of Defence. It is not possible to list the title of each without disproportionate cost.

The MOD, like all Government Departments, has a statutory right, under the Public Records Act, to retrieve records temporarily from the Public Record Office for its own administrative use. Records which are in the public domain but on loan to the MOD are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed. There are well established procedures to ensure that the public continues to have access whilst the records are on loan.

RAF Bands (Sponsorship)

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the sponsorship by Superkings cigarettes of the recent concert tour of the massed bands of the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The concert tour—which this year was held between 24 October and 1 November—is organised and sponsored annually on behalf of the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund by the fund's commercial arm, the international air tattoo. Neither the fund nor the tattoo have any formal links with the Ministry of Defence, and make their own sponsorship arrangement for the concert tour. The international air tattoo has negotiated with 11 commercial firms for financial and other assistance to offset their costs in arranging the concert tour, which provides excellent public relations for the RAF and makes an invaluable contribution to the RAF Benevolent Fund's charitable efforts.

Amphibious Forces

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the provisions for amphibious forces announced by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement in the House on 13 February.

Mr. Aitken: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 11 November, *Official Report*, column 823.

Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation

Mr. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has yet reached a decision on the future of the fleet maintenance and repair organisation, Portsmouth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of our continuing efforts to find the most cost-effective arrangements for the support of the Fleet, we propose to cease all ship refits at the Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation (FMRO) in Portsmouth. Such work will in future be undertaken in the Royal dockyards and industry. The FMRO will continue to undertake repair, maintenance and enhancement work for ships based at Portsmouth, and unprogrammed work in respect of defects in operational ships. We expect that some 400 civilian staff would be affected by this proposal. Every effort will be made to find alternative employment in the Ministry of Defence or other Government Departments, but some redundancies may be unavoidable. Where that is the case, staff will be eligible for compensation under the relevant pension scheme and for counselling on alternative employment prospects.

This proposal is the subject of consultation with the trade unions and final decisions will be taken in the light of any representations made by interested parties. A copy of the consultative document has been placed in the Library of the House.

We also plan to market test the FMRO. This will be the subject of separate consultation with the trade unions.

Sea Training

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of operational sea training for the Royal Navy and Portland naval base.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of our continuing work to achieve the best balance between the front line and support we are proposing to transfer the Royal Navy's operational sea training (OST) base from Portland to Devonport and to close Portland naval base by April 1996.

This proposal will save some £70 million over the next ten years and some £11 million per annum thereafter. Some 550 service and 475 civilian personnel will be affected by the proposal. While every effort will be made to redeploy civilian staff within the Ministry of Defence or with other Government Departments, some redundancies may be unavoidable. Where that is the case, staff will be eligible for compensation under the relevant pension scheme and for counselling on alternative employment prospects.

Some 1,200 naval personnel and 200 MOD civilians will continue to be based at the royal naval air station at Portland, which will remain in operation.

This proposal is the subject of consultation with the trade unions and final decisions will be taken in the light of any representations made by interested parties. A copy of the consultative document has been placed in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister what consideration has been given to publishing an explanatory booklet on Maastricht for general distribution to all United Kingdom households.

The Prime Minister: The Government's pamphlet on the European Community and the Maastricht treaty was published on 10 November. It will not be sent to every household, but copies are being distributed to all right hon. and hon. Members, public libraries and other institutions and are available free on request. Freepost and freephone facilities are being provided.

The freepost address is PO Box 1992, Burgess hill, West Sussex. The freephone number is 0800 778866.

Government Publications

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list for each of the past 20 years the booklets or leaflets published by the Government and distributed free of charge to all households in the United Kingdom giving the publication costs in each case in 1992 prices.

The Prime Minister: This information is not available centrally.

Pay Fixing

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister what statutory bases there are for pay fixing, other than wages councils; and what plans there are for their abolition in each case.

The Prime Minister: The Agricultural Wages Board (AWB) has statutory powers under the Agricultural Wages Act 1948 to set wages for agricultural workers in England and Wales. Separate legislation and boards exist for Scotland and Northern Ireland. Wages orders made by the AWB enable the United Kingdom to fulfil two conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and these cannot legally be reviewed until the second half of next year and 1994. Decisions on the future of agricultural wages legislation will be taken when we are able to review our ILO commitments.

Engagements

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Cash Limits

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals there are to change the 1992-93 cash limit or running costs limit for the Cabinet Office: other services vote.

The Prime Minister: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for the Cabinet Office: other services vote (class XIX vote 2) will be increased by £2,000,000 from £23,647,000 to £25,647,000. This increase reflects take-up under the end year flexibility arrangements for capital expenditure as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992 (*Official Report*, columns 698-702). Also, the running costs limit for this vote will be reduced by £120,000 from £20,410,000 to £20,290,000, reflecting the transfer of certain administrative functions following the machinery of Government changes announced after the general election. All the changes are within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

Meetings

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what advice he gives to Ministers in respect of the time within which a request from an hon. Member for a meeting should be acknowledged and replied to.

The Prime Minister: It is for Ministers in each Department to decide how such requests are handled.

Political Parties (Funding)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to make funding available to political parties for security costs associated with the annual party conferences.

The Prime Minister: Central funding for this purpose has been available to all parties since 1986. The scheme, which was extended this year to include part of the cost of issuing photographic security passes, provides for political parties to be reimbursed for specified security costs, where the chief constable concerned certifies that the expenditure was incurred on security measures which were necessary and in line with the assessed threat.

WALES

Clinical Scientific Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish an information guide for area health authorities and fund-holding general practitioners on the availability of specialist clinical scientific services outside their own geographical boundaries.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have no plans to do so.

Warrant Sales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many warrant sales have been conducted in each of the last five years in each of the borough and district councils of Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally.

Animals (Transport)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to improve the welfare of live animals transported *(a)* within the United Kingdom and *(b)* to the rest of the European Community.

Mr. David Hunt: A new EC directive on the protection of animals during transport is due to be implemented across the Community by 1 January 1993. The Commission is to table proposals for further detailed rules to supplement the directive and during negotiations the Government will be seeking the highest possible safeguards for all animals.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the transportation of live animals.

Mr. David Hunt: Several.

Mardy Hospital, Merthyr Tydfil

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his estimate is of the captial cost of establishing the elderly mentally infirm unit at the Mardy hospital, Merthyr Tydfil; and under what budget this expenditure was incurred.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The capital cost of establishing the elderly mentally infirm unit at Mardy hospital, amount to £456,000, was met by Mid Glamorgan health authority from its discretionary allocation.

Home Helps

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage change in the number of home helps in Wales from 1979 to 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of home helps—whole-time equivalent—increased by 51 per cent. from 1979 to 1991, the latest date for which information is available.

Local Government

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to make a statement on the future organisation of local government in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my statement on 3 March 1992, at column 171.

Emergency Ambulances

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of emergency ambulances in Wales, since April 1992, arrived within *(a)* 14 minutes in an urban area, *(b)* 18 minutes in a rural area or *(c)* 21 minutes in a sparsely populated area.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available information relates to the quarter ended 30 June 1992 and is as follows:

Urban areas—91 per cent. arrived within 14 minutes
Rural areas—97 per cent. arrived within 18 minutes
Sparsely populated areas—92 per cent. arrived within 21 minutes

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales for what remaining period he expects his grade 7 official to remain on secondment with the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The grade 7 official referred to is expected to complete his agreed period of secondment in March 1993.

Fluoride

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what powers he has to require the fluoridation of water supplies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. Section 87(1) of the Water Industry Act 1991 provides only that water undertakers may increase the fluoride content of water supplies at the request of a health authority.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has issued to hospital managers to cover their operations in the period between approval as NHS trusts and commencement of actual operations as trusts.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A wide range of advice has already been issued to support the preparation for formal operation as an NHS trust. The order establishing each NHS trust specifies the functions of the trust, both before and after its operational date.

Wrexham Maelor Hospital

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received relating to the establishment of an opt-out trust at the Wrexham Maelor hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Up to and including 29 October, the number of representations received are as follows:

	Number
In support	9
Opposed	10
Undeclared	10
Total	29

NHS trusts are, and will remain, an integral part of the national health service.

Deeside Industrial Park

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *778*, and his speech of 21 October, *Official Report*, columns 527-28, what was the source of the figure of 10,000 people employed on the Deeside industrial park.

Mr. David Hunt: Census of employment figures.

Cardiff Bay Opera House

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of the Cardiff Bay opera house feasibility study; and how much and what percentage of the total cost was spent on each of the studies by *(a)* Comedia on the demand, size and scope plus artistic profile, *(b)* Symonds and Co. on quantity surveying, *(c)* Ahrends, Burton and Koralek on the architectural brief, *(d)* Veryard and Partners on civil engineering, *(e)* KPMG management consultancy on economic appraisal, *(f)* Cooke and Arkwright on the betterment analysis, and *(g)* AEA on project funding.

Mr. David Hunt: The total cost of the Cardiff Bay opera house feasibility study was £105,225·72, broken down as follows:

	£	*per cent.*
Comedia	21,824·02	20·7
Ahrends Burton and Koralek	2,460·00	2·3
Veryard and Partners	7,550·00	7·2
KPMG Management Consulting	31,244·40	29·7
AEA	37,297·30	35·4

A sum of £4,850—4·6 per cent.—was paid to Grant Thornton as commissioning costs for the inception study. Symonds and Cooke and Arkwright supplied information direct to the Comedia and KPMG Management Consulting; they received no direct payment from Cardiff Bay development corporation.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the engineering and infrastructure study carried out under paragraph (b) of the terms of reference of the feasibility study on the proposed Cardiff Bay opera house.

Mr. David Hunt: I arranged for the executive summary to be placed in the Library of the House on 4 November. I have no plans to publish any further documents relating to the feasibility study on the proposed opera house.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation concerning the feasibility study of the opera house; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The chairman of Cardiff Bay development corporation and I have discussed the proposed Cardiff Bay opera house and I look forward to receiving further advice on this matter from the corporation in due course.

St. Lawrence Hospital, Chepstow

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions the regional burns unit for Wales at St. Lawrence hospital, Chepstow, has been closed to admissions from *(a)* 1 April 1991 to 1 April 1992 and *(b)* since 1 April 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The operational responsibility for the burns unit at St. Lawrence hospital is a matter for the unit's management. However, I understand that the burns unit has not been closed in the period 1 April 1991 to present, although on one occasion the dependency of patients on the burns unit was such that for a 24-hour period—2 November—arrangements were made for resuscitation cases to be taken to the Frenchay burns unit at Bristol.

General Practitioner Fund Holders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has issued on the parity of access to hospital treatment for non-emergency surgery and procedures between fund holding general practitioners and non-fund holding general practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The National Health Service Management Executive for England and the joint consultants committee of the British Medical Association has issued guidance on general practitioner fund holding on EL(91)84. This sets out the criteria for acceptable contracts to be agreed between general practitioner fund holders and all national health service hospitals. It clearly states that hospitals should not offer contracts to fund holders which would disadvantage patients of other purchasers. This guidance has been issued to general practitioner fund holders in Wales.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will undertake a study into the side effects on the Welsh economy of the Severn bridge toll increases over the period 1992 to the year 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Evidence produced for inquiries into toll increases on the existing bridge, and research undertaken by the Planning, Industrial and Economic Development Advisers on the economic impact of the second Severn crossing, does not indicate a detrimental effect on the Welsh economy.

Cash Limits

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for changes to the cash limits for his Department in the current financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit on class XVI, vote 5 will be increased by £4,690,000 from £496,482,000 to £501,172,000; the cash limit on class XVI, vote 8 will be increased by £6,389,000 from £1,270,525,000 to £1,276,914,000; the cash limit on class XVI, vote 9 will be reduced by £1,174,000 from £60,297,000 to £59,123,000; and the cash limit for class XVI, vote 10 will be reduced by £2,960,000 from £2,172,936,000 to £2,169,976,000. In addition, a new cash limited vote has been introduced, class XVI, vote 12—provision for which has been set at £1,832,000. The urban block cash limit—WO/UA—will be increased by £3,694,000 from £78,315,000 to £82,009,000, the local authority capital cash limit—WO/LACAP—will be reduced by £5,900,000 from £457,234,000 to £451,334,000, the running costs limit for the Department will be reduced by £1,273,000 from £74,361,000 to £73,088,000 and a new running costs limit of £1,819,000 has been introduced in respect of the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, in Wales.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 5 represents the net effect of: (a) increases in respect of (i) the take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement of £60,000 for running costs expenditure; (ii) a transfer of £9,000 from class VIII vote 7 to cover additional maintenance costs; (iii) an increase of £70,000 to cover the residual costs of water privatisation; (iv) a transfer of £4,220,000 from class XVI, vote 10 in respect of the annual maintenance grants of grant maintained schools; (v) a transfer of £223,000 from class XVI, vote 8 to cover the costs of medical course organisers; (vi) a transfer of £150,000 from class XI, vote 3 in respect of secure accommodation; and (vii) additional provision of £59,000 following the 1992 report of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine; and (b) reductions in respect of (i) a transfer of £59,000 to class XVI, vote 12 to cover publicity and other costs to be incurred by the new office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales (OHMCI); and (ii) a transfer of £42,000 to class XI, vote 2 in respect of social work funds.

The increase in the cash limit for vote 8 comprises the take-up of both capital, £6,352,000, and current £200,000, end-year flexibility entitlement, and a transfer from class XVI, vote 7, £60,000, for the safe disposal of medicines; partly offset by a transfer, £223,000, to class XVI, vote 5 to cover the costs of medical course organisers.

The reduction in the cash limit for vote 9 represents the net effect of: *(a)* increases in respect of (i) the take-up of both running costs, £234,000, and capital £181,000, end-year flexibility entitlement; and (ii) a transfer of £184,000 from class VIII, vote 7 to cover additional accommodation costs;

and *(b)* a transfer to class XVI, vote 12 to cover (i) the running costs expenditure, £1,760,000, and (ii) the capital expenditure, £13,000, of OHMCI.

The net reduction in the cash limit for vote 10 takes account of the transfer of £4,220,000 to class XVI, vote 5 in respect of grant maintained schools, partly offset by an increase of £1,260,000 in respect of rating work services.

The cash limit for vote 12 comprises transfers from class XVI, vote 5 of £59,000 and vote 9 of £1,773,000 in respect of the administration and associated costs of OHMCI.

The increase in the WO/UA cash limit represents the take-up of capital end-year flexibility entitlement from 1991-92 of £3,694,000.

The WO/LACAP cash limit will be reduced by £5,900,000 because provision which was made for prior-year capital grant adjustments is no longer required.

The entitlements to end-year flexibility for WO/UA and votes 8 and 9 were announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July, *Official Report*, columns *698-702*. So also was the increase in the Department's running costs limit which features in both vote 5, £60,000, and vote 9, £234,000.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his current estimate of the date of publication of the Welsh Development Agency's annual report and accounts for 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Arrangements are being made for the agency's annual report to be laid before the House on 20 November together with the statement of accounts and the Comptroller and Auditor General's report thereon. The annual report and accounts will be published the same day.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his proposals are for local government revenue spending in 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: I propose to set a level of £2,598 million for total standard spending (TSS) in Wales in 1993-94. This figure comprises an increase of 3·1 per cent. on the TSS for 1992-93, adjusted for functional transfers, and £35·9 million in additional resources for county authorities' new responsibilities for care in the community from 1 April 1993, as announced to the House by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on 2 October. I propose to set central Government support for TSS through aggregate external finance (AEF) at £2,343 million. This comprises a 1·7 per cent. increase on the comparable level of AEF for 1992-93 and 100 per cent. funding for the £35·9 million community care spending.

I am still considering whether there is need for transitional arrangements to accompany the introduction of the council tax. I will announce my decision in due course. Any transitional arrangements would be funded from within AEF.

The levels of TSS and AEF I propose take account of other changes in local government functions which take effect on 1 April 1993. Responsibility for the majority of further education services will transfer to the Further Education Funding Council and similarly residual higher education services will transfer to the Higher Education Funding Council. The phased transfer of responsibility for school inspection to the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector for Wales also begins in 1993-94. I consider that £126 million is an appropriate level of funding to transfer from local authorities to these bodies in 1993-94. I have adjusted the levels of TSS and AEF accordingly.

I consider my proposals to be realistic in the current economic climate. They give a level of settlement increase above projected inflation.

I recognise that local government in Wales will have to make hard choices about spending priorities if authorities are to stay within my plans. They are not alone in this. The Government have had to take very tough public expenditure decisions for 1993-94. It is essential to economic recovery that we continue to keep inflation and public expenditure down. Local government must play its full part in this and Welsh local authorities will need rigorously to examine their budgetary priorities and pursue efficiency savings.

I shall be announcing provisional standard spending assessments and council tax-capping criteria for 1993-94 in due course to help local authorities with their budgeting.

I intend to consult the Welsh local authority associations on my settlement proposals later this month and I will announce final settlement details to the House early in the new year.

Finally, I propose to raise the non-domestic rate poundage for 1993-94 to 44p from its 1992-93 level of 42·5p. This is an increase of 3·5 per cent. in line with the change in the retail prices index over the 12 months to September 1992. It is consistent with the statutory requirement to limit increases to the rate of inflation.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Cash Limits

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what changes will be made to his Department's cash limit or running costs limit for 1992-93.

Mr. Brooke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

(i) The cash limit for class VIII, vote 6 (Royal Palaces, Royal Parks, historic buildings, etc) will be increased by £28,000 from £190,596,000 to £190,624,000. The increase is required to cover the cost of new charges by Property Holdings for services provided to the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments for England. This increase is offset by equivalent transfers of provision from class VIII, vote 7 (Department of the Environment (Property Holdings and Central Support Services)).

(ii) The cash limit for class XII, vote 2 (Arts) will be increased by £458,000 from £252,903,000 to £253,361,000. The increase is to meet the balance of Government support for the European Arts Festival in 1992. A corresponding saving is being made on class XII vote 1.

(iii) The cash limit for class XII, vote 4 (Administration) will be increased by £9,218,000 from £2,446,000 to £11,664,000 and the running costs limit increased by £4,878,000 from £5,574,000 to £10,452,000. The increase is to provide additional provision for the administration costs associated with the creation of the Department of National Heritage. A combined offsetting saving of £9,218,000 is being made on class XII, vote 1 and vote 3.

(iv) The departmental running cost limit will be increased from £13,930,000 to £18,731,000 as a result of the reallocation of resources to meet the needs of the new department (£4,878,000 on class XII, vote 4). This increase is offset by savings of £77,000 made in the programme of consultancies which provides specialist advice to the Royal Parks division (class VIII, vote 6). There is no change to the net running cost control of the Historic Royal Palaces Agency.

All the changes are within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many *(a)* public libraries, *(b)* galleries and *(c)* museums he has visited in an official capacity since taking up his appointment.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* The information is as follows:

(a) I have not visited any public libraries since taking up my appointment as Secretary of State.

(b) The Yorkshire sculpture park. I am due to visit the Tate gallery shortly.

(c) The Royal Pavilion, Brighton, the natural history museum and the opening of the Joseph E Hotung gallery of oriental antiquities by Her Majesty the Queen at the British museum. I have also met representatives from the science museum to discuss their future plans and I have incidentally visited the pathology museum at St. Bartholomew's hospital.

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on what dates he met the chairman of *(a)* the Arts Council, *(b)* the Library Association, *(c)* the Publishers Association, *(d)* the Museums and Galleries Commission, *(e)* English Heritage, *(f)* the Royal Fine Art Commission, *(g)* the Radio Authority and *(h)* the Independent Television Commission, in an official capacity since taking up his appointment.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* So far, I have met the chairmen of the Arts Council (on several occasions), the Radio Authority and English Heritage, and I shall shortly be meeting a delegation from the Library Association which will include its president and its chief executive. I have met informally the chairmen of the Museums and Galleries Commission and the Independent Television Commission. I look forward to meeting the chairman of the other bodies referred to by the hon. Member as soon as my diary allows.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many formal complaints he has received from parents alleging misconduct by a local education authority during the holding of a parental ballot on grant-maintained status;

(2) how many formal complaints he has received alleging misconduct by a headteacher or governing body during the holding of a parental ballot on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: This information is not available centrally. Complaints about misconduct during GM ballots are received in various quarters. Some are made to the local authority, some to the school, some to us at the Department and some to the grant-maintained schools centre. My right hon. Friend has made clear that any complaints made to the Department will receive full consideration and, where necessary, he will call for a report from the local authority concerned.

Cash Limits

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals there are for changes to the cash limits on votes within his responsibility for 1992-93.

Mr. Patten: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limits for class XI, vote 1, schools, research and miscellaneous services, vote 2, higher and further education and vote 4, administration, will be increased. The cash limit changes are as follows:

Class and vote	*Current cash limit £*	*Change £*	*Revised cash limit £*
XI.1	766,535,000	+1,831,000	768,366,000
XI.2	3,034,485,000	+2,505,000	3,036,990,000
XI.4	108,427,000	+1,566,000	109,993,000

The increase on class XI, vote 1 includes the take-up of £1,977,000 capital end-year flexibility entitlement announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992 at columns 698-702. It also takes account of a reduction of £146,000 to offset in full an increase to the cash limit on the higher and further education vote, class XI, vote 2.

The increase on class XI, vote 2 includes the take up of £839,000 capital end-year flexibility entitlement. It also takes account of an increase of £1,392,000 in provision for the costs of extended and upgraded courses in social work, offset in full by transfers of funding from the Home Office, the Department of Health and the Welsh Office; an increase of £146,000 to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council following the transfer of responsibility for the funding of the YMCA National College, offset in full by a reduction to provision for youth services on Class XI, Vote 1; and an increase of £128,000 in provision for grant-in-aid for the running costs of the Further Education Funding Council, offset in full by a reduction on the administration vote, class XI, vote 4.

The increase on class XI, vote 4 includes the take-up of £1,543,000 capital and running costs end year flexibility entitlement and a transfer of £151,000 from Property Holdings. It is net of the transfer of £128,000 to class XI, vote 2. The Department's running costs limit has been reduced by £7,933,000 to £95,597,000 principally as a result of transfers to the new vote for the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (class XI, vote 7) and to the Office of Public Services and Science (class XIX, vote 4).

All the increases are within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement today.

Advertising Expenditure

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the actual expenditure in the financial year 1991-92 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Forman: The actual expenditure figures for advertising and other promotional materials by this Department for the financial year 1991-92 and the latest estimate for 1992-93 are given in the table.

	£000s 1991-92	*£000s 1992-93 (estimate)*
Television advertising	800·0	—
Radio advertising	—	—
Newspaper advertising	2,237·9	718·0
Other promotional material	5,842·7	5,822·0

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about his Department's expenditure plans for the financial years 1993-94 to 1995-96.

Mr. Patten: The information is as follows:

1. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his statement today, the Department for Education's spending programme in 1993-94 will total £9,523 million. That total is £523 million or 5·8 per cent. higher than equivalent expenditure in 1992-93.

2. Total expenditure in 1994-95 is planned to be £10,115 million and in 1995-96 £10,497 million.

3. Within these totals the Government have given high priority to the launch of the new further education sector so as to build up the supply of those with technical and other skills, where this country still falls short of its main competitors such as Germany and Japan. The staying-on rate at age 16 and 17 has increased sharply in the last few years. With the co-operation of the colleges, the Government's plans should over the next three years lift us towards the top of the international league table for participation in education among 16-19 year olds. The Government have also given priority to the funding of the rapidly expanding grant-maintained schools programe, and to enabling higher education participation to continue at its present record level. Against the background of the exceptionally demanding Public Expenditure Survey the Government are planning for continuing growth in their expenditure on education.

Grant-maintained schools

4. There are currently 342 grant-maintained schools open or approved. That number is projected on present trends to rise to some 500 by next April. The Government's spending plans provide for the number of GM schools to grow to 1,500 in April 1994.

5. The great bulk of recurrent funding for GM schools is found from within the totals for local authority expenditure. Central Government expenditure on recurrent and capital grants to GM schools is planned to rise substantially over the next three years as the number of GM schools grows. Total central Government expenditure on GM schools is planned to total £61 million in 1992-93 and £157 million, £294 million and £446 million in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. Capital expenditure alone will total £501 million over the next three years. The funding plans include provision for the running costs of the proposed funding agency for schools.

Further education

6. From 1 April 1993 further education and sixth form colleges will be funded direct by the new Further Education Funding Council, set up under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The plans provide for the launch of the newly independent sector. Total recurrent spending is planned at £2,549 million, £2,734 million and £2,943 million in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. That increase in funding will allow for an assumed 25 per cent. increase in student numbers between 1992-93 and 1995-96:

Financial year	*FT student numbers (thousand)*
1992-93	899
1993-94	970
1994-95	1,038
1995-96	1,121

7. The priority being given to this expansion in numbers will be a direct contribution to enhancing the skills of the nation: those skills will be increasingly in demand to sustain and improve our competitiveness.

8. In order to encourage efficiency in the achievement of these increased student numbers, part of the provision to be made available to the Further Education Funding Council will be directly related to actual student numbers. This funding approach will encourage institutions to compete for students and will enable the sector as a whole to improve its efficiency.

9. Capital expenditure on FE is planned to be £152 million, £157 million and £159 million in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. The current level of capital spending on colleges will be sustained and the new sector will be able to begin to improve the state of its accommodation and stock of its equipment.

Higher Education

10. The number of students on full-time and sandwich courses in higher education has expanded even faster than the rapid rate of growth envisaged as recently as in the Government's Higher Education White Paper (Cm 1541) of May 1991, on which the Government's previous expenditure plans were based. The numbers of young people entering higher education in 1992 are already between one in four and one in three.

11. The Government have provided substantial additional funding for further education to enable the country's needs for skills to be met. Given the need to strike a balance with the rate of expansion of further education, the government envisages a period of consolidation in higher education after its recent very rapid growth beyond the levels projected as recently as May 1991. The figures underlying the expenditure plans announced today accordingly assume that the proportion of young people entering higher education will remain broadly steady in the next three years, and increase to the level of one in three at the end of the decade which has long been assumed in our forward projections.

12. The expenditure plans provide for total FTE student numbers in higher education to rise by 13 per cent between 1992-93 and 1995-96:

Financial year	*FTE student numbers (thousand)*
1992-93	776
1993-94	842
1994-95	877
1995-96	880

13. Total recurrent funding for teaching and research in universities and colleges in England—including grant paid by the HE Funding Council for England and related tuition fees—is planned at £3,824 million, £3,995 million and £4,024 million in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. I shall be inviting the Funding Council to consider its approach to funding in the light of these revised assumptions about growth.

14. Provision for capital spending through the Funding Council will be £319 million, £322 million and £329 million in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. In addition the Government are ending the prohibition of borrowing by HE institutions against the security of Exchequer funded assets: this will be widely welcomed in the university world.

15. Some of the increase above projected numbers of total students flows from the increasing proportion of students on longer courses. I have already asked the Funding Council to develop funding incentives for two year diploma vocational courses. In order to enable universities and colleges to admit as many young people as possible within the total numbers assumed, I am also asking the Funding Council to advise me on what action it can take to deter any trend towards longer courses.

16. Many of the new vocational diploma courses will be in engineering and technology. In addition, I am encouraging the Funding Council to promote continuing expansion at all levels in engineering and technology, where recruitment in recent years has continued to be disappointing. The Government's commitment to high quality research in the humanities is reflected in an increase of 11 per cent. in the grant to the British Academy.

Pay

17. The Department's spending plans assume that pay settlements in 1993-94 will fall within the range 0 to 1½ per cent. in line with the terms of the Chancellor's statement. I shall direct the School Teachers' Review Body to have regard to this policy. I shall hold back £50 million of the planned provision for the Further Education Funding Council and £50 million from the Higher Education

Funding Council for England against the delivery of pay settlements within this range for all of the staff of the institutions within their sectors.

Student Support

18. The spending plans allow for total expenditure on student maintenance in England and Wales of £1,206 million, £1,311 million and £1,360 million in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. The level of student loans will be increased in the academic year 1993-94 so that the average value of student support in grants and loans rises by 2·75 per cent. in line with the assumed increase in the GDP deflator. Spending on the access funds will be sustained in 1993-94.

Capital Expenditure on Schools

19. Total central Government provision for capital expenditure on grant-maintained and LEA-maintained schools is £598 million, £613 million and £624 million in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. Local education authorities will in addition be able to take advantage of the change which the Chancellor has announced on the permitted use of capital receipts. Taking account of that and other flexibilities, gross capital spending on schools in real terms should be at least equal to the total in 1992-93, which will reflect the 15 per cent. increase in central Government provision announced last year by my predecessor. Further details of annual capital guidelines and allocations to voluntary aided and grant-maintained schools will be announced later.

Students (Funding)

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes he intends to make to the arrangements through which validation fees for higher education courses are met from student awards.

Mr. Forman: Following consultation with the higher education sector, I have decided that, for publicly-funded institutions, the costs of external validation by institutions with degree awarding powers for colleges without degree-awarding powers should be met by those colleges from funds made available to them, rather than through fees paid with the student award. This arrangement will enable the charge for validation and related services to be negotiated, within the public funds available, in a way which more closely reflects the range and cost of the services provided. The change will come into effect for the 1993-94 academic year. Appropriate transfers will be made for this purpose from the planned public expenditure provision for mandatory awards to that for the Higher Education Funding Councils for England and for Wales. These will be reflected in the relevant supply estimates for 1993-94 to be laid before Parliament in due course. The Mandatory Award Regulations will be amended for 1993-94 on account of the change.

The arrangements for meeting the costs of validation fees for mandatory award holders at privately funded institutions will remain unchanged for the time being.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many checks were carried out by wages councils in London which found workers underpaid in each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information for the wages inspectorate's London division is as follows:

Year	*Number of checks which found workers underpaid*	*Percentage of total checks*
1979	680	18·9
1980	754	25·2
1981	710	25·9
1982	685	30·0
1983	780	35·8
1984	678	23·9
1985	655	30·3
1986	608	21·3
1987	270	7·2
1988	317	8·5
1989	229	9·0
1990	172	7·3
1991	294	5·5

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many establishments in London were (i) found failing to post wages council notices, (ii) found failing to keep adequate records of wages paid, (iii) found failing to keep adequate records of hours worked and (iv) the subject of criminal prosecutions against employers under the Wages Acts, for each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information for the wages inspectorate's London division is as follows:

Number of establishments in London which

During the year	*Failed to post notices*	*Percentage of total checks*	*Failed to keep adequate records of wages paid*	*Percentage of total checks*	*Failed to keep adequate records of hours worked*	*Percentage of total checks*	*Were the subject of criminal prosecution under the wages act*	*Percentage of total checks*
1979	955	26·5	589	16·4	2,229	61·9	3	0·08
1980	977	32·7	499	16·7	1,954	65·4	0	0
1981	690	25·2	308	11·3	1,397	51·04	1	0·04
1982	758	33·2	216	9·5	1,278	56·0	0	0
1983	609	27·9	276	12·7	1,367	62·7	0	0
1984	804	28·3	204	7·2	1,311	46·1	0	0
1985	726	33·6	174	8·0	1,178	54·5	0	0
1986	700	24·5	128	4·5	899	31·5	0	0
1987	480	12·7	47	1·3	430	11·4	0	0
1988	540	14·5	32	0·9	260	7·2	0	0
1989	304	11·9	18	0·7	111	4·4	0	0

During the year	*Failed to post notices*	*Percentage of total checks*	*Failed to keep adequate records of wages paid*	*Percentage of total checks*	*Failed to keep adequate records of hours worked*	*Percentage of total checks*	*Were the subject of criminal prosecution under the wages act*	*Percentage of total checks*
1990	371	15·6	20	0·8	151	6·4	0	0
1991	672	12·7	73	1·4	310	5·9	1	0·02

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the level of bureaucracy added to the labour market or to burdens on business by the wages councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: Employers are required to maintain records, keep them for three years, make sure they are available for inspection on request, display notices of proposals made by wages councils, display notices of orders made by wages councils and provide any other information to do with the enforcement of a wages order requested by a wages inspector. When negotiating pay employers are constrained by existing minimum rates and the likely timing and magnitude of wages council increases for the different councils which may affect their businesses. Administration and wages inspection cost taxpayers some £2,500,000 per year and occupies about 130 civil servants.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will estimate the employment elasticity for *(a)* each main wages council industry and *(b)* all employees in the public sector.

Mr. McLoughlin: The margins for error in estimating employing elasticities are far greater for individual industries than for the economy as a whole, and it is not possible to provide reliable estimates for particular industries. However, it is clear that the repeal of legislation, which prevents employers from offering jobs below specified minimum rates, should lead to additional opportunities for employment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been *(a)* nominal and *(b)* real change in (i) wages council rates and (ii) rates agreed by Government for their own employees, since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: Since 1979, the responsibilities of wages councils have changed and a number of councils have merged. It is not possible to calculate changes in rates on a comprehensive basis but the following figures are based on the average minimum rates set by six of the largest councils.

Changes in rates of pay: 1979-92

Minimum rates set by Wages Councils
(a) nominal change of some 170 per cent.,
(b) real percentage growth of about 16 per cent.;

Pay rates of non-industrial civil servants
(a) nominal change of 128 per cent.,
(b) real change of *minus* 3 per cent.

I regret that information on industrial grades is not available.

16 to 18-year-olds

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of 16 to 18-year-olds are in education and training in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* Japan and *(d)* the USA.

Mr. McLoughlin: Latest estimates of the percentage of 16 to 18-year-olds in education and training in the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and the USA are given in the following table.

Participation in education and training[1] of 16 to 18-year-olds

percentages

		All full and part-time[2]
United Kingdom[3]	1988	69
	1989	70
Germany (Federal Republic)[4]	1988	92
Japan[5]	1988	87
USA[5]	1987	81

[1] Includes apprenticeships, YTS and similar schemes.

[2] Includes higher education for some 18-year-olds.

[3] Includes estimates for those studying only in the evening and for private sector further and higher education, including training courses with employers.

[4] Includes compulsory part-time education for 16 and 17-year-olds.

[5] Includes private sector higher education.

Source: Department for Education.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently in work; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The work force in employment in the United Kingdom stood at 25,361,000 in June 1992—1,798,000 higher than in March 1983, the low-point in employment during the last recession.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those leaving employment training *(a)* entered further education or training, *(b)* entered a job club, *(c)* found voluntary work and *(d)* became self-employed in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the following table:

Employment Training Great Britain: January—December 1991 leavers outcomes—3 months after leaving

	per cent. of all respondents
Entered other Government training programme or full-time education/training	4
Entered a job club	2
Found voluntary work	3
Self-employed (including EAS)	6

Source: ET National follow-up survey

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the job entry rates for those leaving employment action at *(a)* three months and *(b)* six months in the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information about employment action outcomes is not yet available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those attending a job interview guarantee got the job in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 12 November 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the Job Interview Guarantee. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

You asked what percentage of those attending a Job Interview Guarantee got the job in the latest year for which figures are available. In 1991/92, 20% of people who went forward for an interview under this initiative were placed into jobs.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Employment Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what percentage of those leaving employment training gained a vocational credit in the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) what percentage of those leaving employment training gained a vocational qualification in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the table:

Employment training
Great Britain: January to December 1991
leavers gained a qualification or credit
(Per cent. of all respondents)

	January to May 1991	*June to December 1991*
Gained a full qualification	[1]29	26
Gained a credit towards a qualification		7
Awaiting results	2	2

[1] Information not available separately for credits and full qualifications.

Source: ET national follow-up survey.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those leaving employment training found employment *(a)* immediately, *(b)* within three months and *(c)* within six months, excluding those who started self-employment, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the table:

Employment training Great Britain:
January—December 1991 leavers outcomes
(Per cent. of notified leavers)

	Leavers in full-time and part-time work
Immediately on leaving	[1]19
Three months after leaving	[2]24
Six months after leaving	[3]25

[1] Base for calculating percentages excludes not stateds (5 per cent. of all leavers) and leavers whose destination was not known (14 per cent. of all leavers).

[2] Base for calculating percentages excludes not stateds (15 per cent. of all leavers).

[3] Base for calculating percentages excludes not stateds (4 per cent. of all leavers).

Sources:

Immediate destinations—ET leavers database based on training provider returns.

Three and six month activity—ET National follow-up survey based on questionnaire responses.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those leaving employment training remained unemployed *(a)* three months later and *(b)* six months later in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the table:

Employment training Great Britain: January—December 1991 leavers outcomes, three months after leaving
(Per cent. of all respondents)

	[1]*Respondents who were unemployed*
Three months after leaving	61
Six months after leaving	57

[1] Unemployed and claiming benefit, unemployed and not claiming benefit and at a job club.

Source: ET national follow-up survey

Sunday Working

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the role of the wages councils in determining rates of pay for Sunday working.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The wages councils have no such role. Their powers to set special rates for Sundays were removed in 1986.

Training Review

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she has completed her review of her Department's employment and training measures for unemployed people; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have concluded my review and am today announcing a new framework of employment and training measures to help unemployed people back to work. This will operate from April 1993 onwards.

As a result of these changes, there will be half a million more opportunities on our programmes in 1993-94 than we are providing this year. The extra opportunities will be concentrated on long-term unemployed people and those who face particular difficulties in the labour market, such as people with disabilities. These are the people who are most in need of special assistance to get back to work.

TEC-delivered programmes

Training for Work, a new adult training and work programme, to be run by training and enterprise councils (TECs) in England and Wales and local enterprise companies (LECs) in Scotland, will replace employment training and employment action. TECs and LECs will have important new flexibilities to develop programmes of skills training, temporary work and job preparation to meet the needs of local unemployed people and local circumstances. TECs and LECs will be encouraged to use these flexibilities to make best use of their resources, for example by developing training credit schemes and expanding useful temporary work in our public services. I expect the new programme to provide 320,000 opportunities in 1993-94.

In order to help improve performance, the funding regime will be developed to offer a progressively higher proportion of payment for results, including payments for participants gaining jobs or qualifications. This will strengthen the incentives for TECs to deliver programmes that best help individuals and meet labour market needs.

Today's announcement incorporates most of the recommendations made by the TEC adult training working group, including the merger of employment training and employment action and the development of a new payment system based on starts and outputs.

Employment Service Measures

There will be a further expansion of the successful job club and job interview guarantee programmes. We will also be developing work trials of up to three weeks with employers, which give unemployed people the opportunity to prove themselves in a job, without their benefits being affected. In all, these employment service measures are expected to provide an extra 180,000 opportunities in 1993-94.

A major point of entry into other opportunities will be the new jobplan workshops to be run by the employment service. These will advise and assess the needs of people unemployed for a year or more, principally those who have not taken up other offers of help open to them. The successful experience of existing Restart courses and job review workshops will be drawn on, but the new workshops will offer more intensive support from workshop leaders, including one-to-one advice and guidance, new computer-aided guidance and an enhanced action plan. Those completing workshops will have priority access to other programmes. It is expected that around 300,000 people will pass through the programme in 1993-94.

Employment service advisers will offer places in job plan workshops to all those out of work for a year who have not taken up an offer of help back to work. As is currently the case with Restart courses offered to people unemployed for two years those who do not take up places offered to them may lose their benefit for a period of time. The social security advisory committee will be consulted shortly about the benefit for non-attendance in these circumstances.

Eligibility

All those unemployed for over six months, including lone parents, will be eligible for these programmes, with earlier access available to all of them for people with disabilities, ex-service personnel, ex-detainees, labour market returners, people who need help with literacy, numeracy or basic English and those unemployed as a result of major redundancies.

Unemployed people with disabilities and those leaving the new job plan workshops will have priority access to these programmes. These priorities will replace the current aim and guarantee which were designed to help certain groups of unemployed people in rather different labour market circumstances.

Other measures

All unemployed people will of course remain entitled to the full range of jobcentre services to help them back to work as soon as possible. There will also be an extra 10 thousand places in job review workshops for short-term unemployed people and more career development loans will be made available to enable more unemployed people to invest in their own training.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the social fund budget in total and for *(a)* crisis loans, *(b)* community care grants and *(c)* budgeting loans for each social security or Benefits Agency office in each year since 1988-89, in cash and real terms.

Mr. Scott: Expenditure on crisis and budgeting loans comes from a single loans budget. Information on expenditure on grants and loans for the years 1988-89 to 1991-92 has been placed in the Library.

Real term figures have been calculated using the current GDP deflator and may alter.

Motability

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will give details of the extent of the computer breakdown dealing with Motability claims;

(2) how many claimants from Stoke-on-Trent, North have had their Motability claims delayed; how soon he expects to deal with this backlog; what emergency arrangements have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the scheme is a matter for Motability which is an independent organisation. Any questions on the issue should be directed to Mr. K. Keen, director of Motability.

Cash Limits

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to change the cash limits or running costs limit of his Department for 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIV, vote 3 (housing benefit administration, payments into the social fund in respect of discretionary expenditure and other grants) will be increased by £4,250,000 from £365,972,000 to £370,222,000. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 4 (administration and miscellaneous services) will be increased by £1,922,000 from £2,270,076,000 to £2,271,998,000.

The revision for vote 3 takes account of a grant to make repayable sums available to pension funds linked to the former companies of Robert Maxwell to assist in the payment of pensions (£2,500,000) and subsidies to housing and local authorities toward the costs of administering the housing benefit scheme and to charging and levying authorities towards the costs of administering the community charge benefit scheme (£1,750,000).

Vote 4 revisions take account of the additional administrative expenditure arising from higher unemployment (£9,472,000), of which £6,496,000 is running costs, an increase of £16,528,000 (of which £10,795,000 is running costs) in respect of end year flexibility arrangements, a transfer from Department of the Environment (property holdings and central support services): civil accommodation and administration etc., class VIII, vote 7 of £2,015,000 (running costs) an increase of £60,000 towards the administration costs of the Maxwell Pensioners Trust, a transfer from Department of Health and Social Security (Northern Ireland) vote 3 of £437,000 (running costs) a transfer to Department of Employment: programmes and central services, class VI, vote 1 of £58,000 (running costs) and a reduction of £35,000 following the transfer of responsibility for the departmental records officer to the Department of Health. The additional requirements are partially offset by an increase in receipts of £26,497,000 and the balance (£1,922,000) totally represents transfers from other Departments.

In addition to the running costs changes included above there is also a reduction of £2,906,000 to take account of expenditure previously classified running costs now being reclassified as capital and other current.

As a result of these changes the running costs limit of the Department of Social Security will be increased by £16,779,000 from £2,521,125,000 to £2,537,904,000.

All these increases are within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

Income Support

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consultations he has had over the proposed income support regulations concerning unemployed people not actively seeking work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Following consultation with the social security advisory committee, we have today laid regulations which will remove entitlement to income support from most unemployed single people and childless couples who fail actively to seek work. Accompanying the regulations, as Cd 2099, are the social security advisory committee's report and my response. Pregnant women, the disabled and people responsible for the care of a child or young person will remain eligible for a reduced rate of income support if they would otherwise suffer hardship.

Benefits Expenditure

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the latest plans for expenditure on the social security programme including details on the new rates of benefits proposed for April 1993.

Mr. Lilley: Economic recovery means keeping public expenditure under control, while preserving capital programmes. Spending on social security, therefore, which comprises one third of total Government spending, must play its part in this. In his autumn statement to the House today my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer reported that expenditure on social security would be £79·8 billion in 1993-94, £82·9 billion in 1994-95 and £87 billion in 1995-96. These plans reflect the Government's manifesto commitments on retirement pension and child benefit. I have also made it a high priority to protect less well-off people by increasing all major benefits in line with prices, but I have also rigorously scrutinised my programme for areas where value for money can be improved.

Social security fraud

Efforts to tackle fraud and abuse of benefits will be stepped up. DSS fraud teams are already saving significant sums—nearly £500 million this year—and they will be improving their efficiency. Increasing use of computer technology will weed out false claims and ensure money goes only to bona fide recipients, who make up the vast majority.

These measures should save some £80 million extra from fraud in the first year, rising to £120 million by 1995-96. In addition, consultations will begin with the local authority associations about fresh incentives for local authorities to investigate fraud affecting housing benefit and the new council tax benefit.

From next April, I intend that local authorities will receive direct financial reward for their increased efforts to prevent payment of benefits to those not entitled to them. These incentives will benefit local finances, and also save the taxpayer as much as £180 million next year, on top of the fraud savings already made by local authorities. By taking these measures I hope the total of fraud identified and stopped will increase to nearly £1 billion each year.

Operational resources

There will be continued investment in information technology and further improvements in the Department's offices around the country. The public will receive a standard of service which continues to reflect my Department's full commitment to the aims of the citizens charter. Capital spending will increase by some £159 million over the next three years, bringing capital spending to over £1 billion in that period.

My programme to ensure best use of operational resources includes action to extend and encourage the use of automated credit transfer for the payment of benefits. This will improve the method of payment on offer and also save resources. In addition, my Department will be working with the Post Office to improve efficiency and to reduce theft and fraud involving order books and giros.

Uprating

The uprating of social security benefits will take place for most benefits, as usual, in the first full week of the tax year—which in 1993 will be the week beginning 12 April. I have reviewed social security benefits in accordance with section 150 of the 1992 Administration Act and my proposals are set out below. The statutory instruments to implement them will be laid before both Houses for debate. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland proposes to introduce similar changes for Northern Ireland. All the proposed new benefit rates are in the schedule.

The normal basis for uprating most benefits is the annual increase in the retail prices index up to September which this yeaer is 3·6 per cent.

Retirement pensions

Retirement pension, which is received by 10 million people, will rise next April in line with the RPI. The basic pension for a single person will be increased by £1·95 per week to £56·10 and for couples by £3·10 to £89·80. This uprating alone will cost the national insurance fund almost £1 billion next year. Public service pensions will be increased across the board by 3·6 per cent.

War pensions

War pensions will be uprated fully in line with prices.

The special Ministry of Defence payments to pre-1973 war widows, which are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, will rise in line with the RPI from £46·18 to £47·84 per week.

There are two other proposals affecting the war pensions scheme.

I propose to introduce a threshold for claims for noise induced hearing loss, bringing the war pensions rules more into line with those for industrial injury awards. The effect will be that those with less than 20 per cent. disablement in respect of noise induced hearing loss will in future receive no award. We propose to use savings from that change to remove rank differentials in war disablement pensions.

As a result of these changes, almost 200,000 severely disabled ex-service men will gain up to an extra £5 per week. No existing war pensioner will suffer a reduction in the cash he or she is receiving.

The Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions will be consulted on the proposed changes.

Other benefits

All national insurance benefits will be increased by 3·6 per cent. Unemployment benefit for a single person will therefore rise from £43·10 to £44·65 per week and the rate for couples will rise from £69·70 to £72·20.

All disability benefits will also be uprated in line with prices. For example the disability living allowance care component at the higher rate will go up in April from £43·35 to £44·90 per week.

Child benefit will also be fully uprated in line with prices. The new rates of child benefit will be £10 for the first or eldest eligible child, and £8·10 for each subsequent child. One-parent benefit will also be increased to £6·05. The lower rate of statutory maternity pay will be increased from £46·30 to £47·95.

Sickness benefit and invalidity benefit will also be uprated by prices. For example, invalidity benefit for a single person will go up from £54·15 to £56·10 and for a couple from £86·70 to £89·80. I have been considering the operation of the statutory sick pay scheme—which now covers most short term sickness. The lower rate of statutory sick pay will rise in line with the RPI from £45·30 to £46[illegible]5. I judge however that an increase in the higher rate, which goes to employees earning more than £195 per week, would not be a sensible use of scarce resources, especially as most of these employees will already be working for employers who operate occupational sick pay schemes. I therefore propose to make no change in the higher rate of statutory sick pay next year.

Changes to invalidity benefit

There has been a significant increase in expenditure on invalidity benefit and in the numbers receiving it.

Since 1978-79, the caseload has more than doubled and the costs have risen by nearly 140 per cent. in real terms. By 1995-96, invalidity benefit will be costing well over £7 billion.

Against this background, in order to ensure that the benefit is focused on those for whom Parliament intended it, I plan to tighten up the administrative and medical control procedures from April 1993, operated by my Department. This will ensure that medical examinations are better targeted and that more effective action will be taken when people fail to attend for examination or are found capable of work. These changes are expected to reduce expenditure by £240 million over the survey period.

A major research study into IVB was launched in August 1991. Some results have been received and others will be received during 1993. I will consider these results carefully as they become available.

Income-Related benefits

Income-related benefits are normally uprated by the retail prices index less certain housing costs—the so-called Rossi index. This year the September—September increase in the Rossi index was the same as for the RPI, that is 3·6 per cent.

Premiums for income-related benefits for elderly people have been uprated twice in the past year as part of our policy to target benefits on the most vulnerable groups in society. From next April all the relevant income-related benefit allowances and premiums (eg for income support, housing benefit, family credit and disability working allowance) will rise by 3·6 per cent.; for council tax benefit the rates will be set at these new levels. This means for example that a pensioner couple aged 75 or more will receive an increase in income support from £94·60 per week to £98·00 and benefit for a single person over 25 will go up from £42·45 to £44·00

Earlier this year the Government introduced improvements to the arrangements in respect of non-dependant deductions which apply both to housing benefit and housing costs in income support. This year the three earnings thresholds which determine the appropriate level of deduction will increase by £5. However, the three lowest rates of deduction will not rise pro-rata but will remain at their present level, which will provide extra help to 295,000 households with lower paid non-dependants. The top rate deduction will increase by £3 a week from £18 to £21, which means a fairer contribution from those non-dependents with the most substantial income.

I have also taken the opportunity to raise the levels of the earnings thresholds for non-dependant deductions and second adult rebates in council tax benefit. This will bring further small gains to around 3,000 people liable to pay the council tax.

As foreshadowed in the social security benefits (uprating) statement made in October 1991, we will not reduce benefits to compensate for the removal of the minimum contribution to local taxes. This means a real increase in the disposable income of the least well off. For example, a single person aged 25 or over on income support will benefit by £1·60 per week, and a couple by £2·80 per week.

Social fund

Following my recent announcement of the allocation of an additional £8 million to the social fund discretionary budget in the current year, there will be a further substantial increase next year when I expect this budget to increase to around £340 million. This further large increase means that the budget will be 12 per cent. higher than at April 1992 and nearly 50 per cent. above its 1991 level.

These increases have been made possible largely by the success of the loans system introduced in 1988 which enables more help to go to more people than would be possible if the same amount of taxpayers' money were only used for grants.

Residential care and nursing homes

From the 1 April next year, new residents requiring help with their care needs will be assessed by local authorities under the new community care arrangements. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 2 October the funding for the new arrangements including the transfer of funds from the Department of Social Security. The new limits I propose will therefore apply only to existing income support recipients in residential care and nursing homes, that is to say those with preserved rights to support under the present arrangements.

All the limits in residential care homes will be increased by £10 a week, including those for elderly people, mental illness, mental handicap and drug and alcohol abuse. This is well above the amount which a straight inflation increase would produce. I am also able to improve the relative amount given to the lowest limit—that for elderly people. I have done this in recognition of the increasing age and frailty at which people enter care.

I also propose to increase almost all the limits for nursing homes by £10 a week. The only exception is the limit referred to as the terminal illness limit. I propose instead to steer additional help to hospices.

Last year, my predecessor announced that additional funds of £1 million a year would be transferred from the social security budget to the NHS for the direct funding of hospices for each of the three survey years. I am pleased to announce a further £1 million transfer in 1993-94.

The personal expenses allowance will be increased fully in line with inflation to £12·65. The total annual cost of the increases will be over £100 million. This significant increase reflects this Government's continuing commitment to elderly and disabled people in residential or nursing care.

Other proposals

There are also some proposals for changes which involve only relatively small amounts of money, but will be welcomed by those helped. These fall into three main categories: measures which help disabled people; those for carers; and measures which mainly affect orphans.

First, disabled people. In income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit the severe disability premium is at present only available where the recipient is a disabled person on disability living allowance (DLA) or attendance allowance (AA) who is living independently or with someone who is also getting DLA/AA. From next year, I intend to extend eligibility to those who cannot get it now because they live with a person, and that person is registered blind.

More resources will be given to Motability, the charity which arranges the provision of vehicles for disabled people. Their success has meant a 15 per cent. increase in business in the last year and this trend is projected to increase into the future. My Department will increase its core funding for Motability's administrative costs in line with this expansion—taking our total funding to £2·8 million in 1995-96. In addition I intend to increase on an ongoing basis the Mobility Equipment Fund which allows Motability to make charitable donations to customers who require very expensive vehicle adaptations which they cannot afford. From April I intend to double the amount of money available to £2 million and place the grant on a three year basis thereby replacing the existing arrangement where our funding is re-considered every year. This will assist their financial planning.

I intend to give £45,000 per annum to the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association to assist them with the provision of specialised car components, eg gearboxes, for arm amputee war pensioners.

For carers, I intend to introduce two measures next April. The first would increase from £40 to £50 the amount which recipients of invalid care allowance can earn before losing their benefit. This is further to last year's increase which raised the ceiling from £30 to £40. The second will introduce into income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit a carers' earnings disregard of £15. Those people who presently qualify for an earnings disregard of less than £15 and who are entitled to the carer premium will now be able to earn up to £15 a week without losing any of their income related benefit. Both of these measures will help many carers who wish to keep in touch with the world of work, as well as giving them valuable additional cash.

Finally, I am pleased to announce changes which will provide significant extra help for two groups of people who, in difficult personal circumstances, take responsibility for bringing up children whose parents have died.

Guardian's allowance will be ignored in family credit, housing benefit, council tax benefit and disability working allowance.

Those who have to bring up a child on their own will be able to receive one-parent benefit in addition to guardian's allowance. At present—following a commissioner's decision—these benefits can only be paid together if the child whose parents have died is not the eldest child in the new family. Both these changes will be implemented from 1993.

Schedule of main proposed Social Security Benefit Rates from April 1993

(weekly rates unless otherwise shown)

Attendance Allowance

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Higher rate	43·35	44·90
Lower rate	28·95	30·00

Child Benefit

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Only, elder or eldest for whom child benefit is payable	9·65	10·00
Each subsequent child	7·80	8·10

Child's Special Allowance

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
See note on Child Dependency Increase	10·85	10·95

Council tax benefit

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Personal allowances		
single		
18 to 24	33·60	34·80
25 or over	42·45	44·00
lone parent—18 or over	42·45	44·00
couple—one or both over 18	66·60	69·00
dependent children		
under 11	14·55	15·05
11 to 15	21·40	22·15
16 to 17	25·55	26·45
18	33·60	34·80
Premiums		
family	9·30	9·65
lone parent	10·60	10·95
pensioner		
single	16·70	17·30
couple	25·35	26·25
pensioner (enhanced)		
single	18·65	19·30
couple	28·00	29·00
pensioner (higher)		
single	22·75	23·55
couple	32·55	33·70
disability		
single	17·80	18·45
couple	25·55	26·45
severe disability		
single	32·55	33·70
couple (one qualifies)	32·55	33·70
couple (both qualify)	65·10	67·40
disabled child	17·80	18·45
carer	11·55	11·95
Allowance for personal expenses for claimants in hospital		
higher rate	13·55	14·05
lower rate	10·85	11·20
Non-dependent deductions aged 18 or over and in remunerative work		
gross income: £105·00 or more	2·00	2·00
gross income: up to £104·99	1·00	1·00
others, aged 18 or over	1·00	1·00
Alternative maximum council tax benefit		
second adult on Income Support (per cent.)		25
second adult's gross income:		
up to £105 (per cent.)		15
£105·01 to £135 (per cent.)		7·5
Capital		
upper limit	16,000·00	16,000·00
amount disregarded	3,000·00	3,000·00
child's limit	3,000·00	3,000·00
Tariff income		
£1 for every complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Earnings disregards		
where disability premium awarded	15·00	15·00
various specified employments	15·00	15·00
lone parent	25·00	25·00
where the claimant has a partner	10·00	10·00
single claimant	5·00	5·00
where carer premium awarded	0·00	15·00
Other income disregards		
maintenance disregard	15·00	15·00
war disablement pension and war widow's pension	10·00	10·00
voluntary and charitable payments	10·00	10·00
student loan	10·00	10·00
student's covenanted income	5·00	5·00
income from boarders:		
disregard the fixed amount (£20) plus 50 per cent. of the balance of the charge	20·00	20·00
Expenses for subtenants		
furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
where heating is included, additional	8·60	8·60

Dependency increases

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Adult Dependency Increases		
For spouse or person looking after children, with:		
retirement pension on own insurance, invalidity pension, unemployability supplement and, if beneficiary over pension age, unemployment benefit	32·55	33·70
non-contributory retirement pension, invalid care allowance and severe disablement allowance	19·45	20·15
sickness benefit if beneficiary over pension age	31·20	32·30

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
unemployment benefit	26·60	27·55
maternity allowance/sickness benefit	25·50	26·40
Child Dependency Increases		
For each child, with:		
retirement pension, widows benefit, invalidity benefit, invalid care allowance, severe disablement allowance, higher rate industrial death benefit, unemployability supplement and sickness/unemployment benefit if beneficiary over pension age	10·85	10·95

Note: The Overlapping Benefits Regulations provide for the rate of child dependency increases, guardian's allowance and child special allowance to be adjusted where the increase or allowance is payable for the eldest eligible child for whom child benefit is also payable. The weekly rate of the increase or allowance is reduced by the differential (less the 75p derived from the October increase in child benefit) between the rate of child benefit payable for the oldest eligible child and that payable for a subsequent child.

Disability Living Allowance

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Care component		
Highest	43·35	44·90
Middle	28·95	30·00
Lowest	11·55	11·95
Mobility component		
Higher	30·30	31·40
Lower	11·55	11·95

Disability Working Allowance

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Adult allowance		
Single people	42·40	43·95
Couples/Lone parents	58·80	60·95
Child allowance		
Under 11	10·40	10·75
11 to 15	17·25	17·85
16 to 17	21·45	22·20
18	29·90	31·00
Applicable amount (ie taper threshold)		
Single people	39·95	41·40
Couples/Lone parents	66·60	69.000
Capital		
Upper limit	16,000·00	16,000·00
Amount disregarded	3,000·00	3,000·00
Child's limit	3,000·00	3,000·00
Tariff income		
£1 for every complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Disregards		
Maintenance disregard	15·00	15·00
War disablement pension and war widow's pension	10·00	10·00
Voluntary and charitable payments	10·00	10·00
Student loan	10·00	10·00
Student's covenanted income	5·00	5·00

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Income from boarders:		
Disregard the fixed amount (£20) plus 50 per cent. of the balance of the charge	20·00	20·00
Expenses for subtenants		
Furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
Where heating is included, additional	8·60	8·60

Earnings Rules

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Invalid Care Allowance	40·00	50·00
Unemployment Benefit (daily rate)	2·00	2·00
Unemployment Benefit (maximum weekly amount)	54·00	56·00
Therapeutic earnings limit	40·50	42·00
Industrial injuries unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	2,106·00	2,184·00
War pensioners' unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	2,106·00	2,184·00
Adult dependency increases with sickness benefit where claimant is		
(a) under pension age	25·50	26·40
(b) over pension age	31·20	32·30
maternity allowance	25·50	26·40
unemployment benefit where claimant is		
(a) under pension age	26·60	27·55
(b) over pension age	32·25	33·70
retirement pension, invalidity pension, severe disablement allowance, unemployability supplement where dependant		
(a) is living with claimant	43·10	44·65
(b) still qualifies for the tapered earnings rule	45·09	45·09
retirement pension, invalidity pension and unemployability supplement where dependant not living with claimant	32·55	33·70
severe disablement allowance where dependant not living with claimant	19·45	20·15
invalid care allowance	19·45	20·15
Child dependency increases		
level at which CDIs payable with long-term benefits are affected by earnings of claimant's spouse or partner		
for first child	115·00	120·00
for each subsequent child	15·00	16·00

Family credit

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Adult credit	41·00	42·50
Child credit		
under 11	10·40	10·75
11 to 15	17·25	17·85
16 to 17	21·45	22·20
18	29·90	31·00
Applicable amount (ie taper threshold)	66·60	69·00
Capital		
upper limit	8,000·00	8,000·00
amount disregarded	3,000·00	3,000·00
child's limit	3,000·00	3,000·00
Tariff income		
£1 for every complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Disregards		
maintenance disregard	15·00	15·00
war disablement pension and war widow's pension	10·00	10·00
voluntary and charitable payments	10·00	10·00
student loan	10·00	10·00
student's covenanted income	5·00	5·00
income from boarders:		
disregard the fixed amount (£20) plus 50 per cent. of the balance of the charge	20·00	20·00
Expenses for subtenants		
furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
where heating is included, additional	8·60	8·60

Guardian's allowance

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
See note on Child Dependency Increase	10·85	10·95

Hospital downrating

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
20 per cent. rate	10·85	11·20
40 per cent. rate	21·70	22·40

Housing Benefit

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Personal allowances		
single		
16 to 24	33·60	34·80
25 or over	42·45	44·00
lone parent		
under 18	33·60	34·80
18 or over	42·45	44·00
couple		
both under 18	50·60	52·40
one or both over 18	66·60	69·00
dependent children		
under 11	14·55	15·05
11 to 15	21·40	22·15
16 to 17	25·55	26·45
18	33·60	34·80
Premiums		
family	9·30	9·65
lone parent	10·60	10·95
pensioner		
single	16·70	17·30
couple	25·35	26·25
pensioner (enhanced)		
single	18·65	19·30
couple	28·00	29·00
pensioner (higher)		
single	22·75	23·55
couple	32·55	33·70
disability		
single	17·80	18·45
couple	25·55	26·45
severe disability		
single	32·55	33·70
couple (one qualifies)	32·55	33·70
couple (both qualify)	65·10	67·40
disabled child	17·80	18·45
carer	11·55	11·95
Allowance for personal expenses for claimants in hospital		
higher rate	13·55	14·05
lower rate	10·85	11·20
Non-dependant deductions rent rebates and allowances		
aged 25 and over, in receipt of Income Support		
aged 18 or over, not in work or gross income under £70	4·00	4·00
gross income: £70 to £104·99	8·00	8·00
gross income: £105 to £134·99	12·00	12·00
gross income: £135 or more	18·00	21·00
Service charges for fuel		
heating	8·60	8·60
hot water	1·05	1·05
lighting	·70	·70
cooking	1·05	1·05
Amount ineligible for meals		
three or more meals a day		
single claimant	15·20	15·75
each person in family aged 16 or over	15·20	15·75
each child under 16	7·65	7·95
less than three meals a day		
single claimant	10·10	10·45
each person in family aged 16 or over	10·10	10·45
each child under 16	5·05	5·25
breakfast only—claimant and each member of family	1·85	1·90
Capital		
upper limit	16,000·00	16,000·00
amount disregarded	3,000·00	3,000·00
child's limit	3,000·00	3,000·00
Tariff income		
£1 for every complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Earnings disregards		
where disability premium awarded	**15·00**	**15·00**
various specified employments	**15·00**	**15·00**
lone parent—not in receipt of IS	**25·00**	**25·00**
where the claimant has a partner	**10·00**	**10·00**
single claimant	**5·00**	**5·00**
where carer premium awarded	**·00**	**15·00**
Other income disregards		
maintenance disregard	**15·00**	**15·00**
war disablement pension and war widow's pension	**10·00**	**10·00**
voluntary and charitable payments	**10·00**	**10·00**
student loan	**10·00**	**10·00**
student's covenanted income	**5·00**	**5·00**
income from boarders:		
disregard the fixed amount (£20) plus 50 per cent. of the balance of the charge	**20·00**	**20·00**
Expenses for subtenants		
furnished or unfurnished	**4·00**	**4·00**
where heating is included, additional	**8·60**	**8·60**

Income support

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Personal allowances		
single		
under 18—usual rate	**25·55**	[illegible]
under 18—higher rate payable in specific circumstances	**33·60**	**34·80**
18 to 24	**33·60**	**34·80**
25 or over	**42·45**	**44·00**
lone parent		
under 18—usual rate	**25·55**	**26·45**
under 18—higher rate payable in specific circumstances	**33·60**	**34·80**
18 or over	**42·45**	**44·00**
couple		
both under 18	**50·60**	**52·40**
one or both over 18	**66·60**	**69·00**
dependent children		
under 11	**14·55**	**15·05**
11 to 15	**21·40**	**22·15**
16 to 17	**25·55**	**26·45**
18	**33·60**	**34·80**
Premiums		
family	**9·30**	**9·65**
lone parent	**4·75**	**4·90**
pensioner		
single	**16·70**	**17·30**
couple	**25·35**	**26·25**
pensioner (enhanced)		
single	**18·65**	**19·30**
couple	**28·00**	**29·00**
pensioner (higher)		
single	**22·75**	**23·55**
couple	**32·55**	**33·70**
disability		
single	**17·80**	**18·45**
couple	**25·55**	**26·45**
severe disability		
single	**32·55**	**33·70**
couple (one qualifies)	**32·55**	**33·70**
couple (both qualify)	**65·10**	**67·40**
disabled child	**17·80**	**18·45**
carer	**11·55**	**11·95**
Maximum amounts for accommodation and meals in residential care homes		
old age	**175·00**	**185·00**
very dependent elderly	**205·00**	**215·00**
mental disorder (not handicap)	**185·00**	**195·00**
drug/alcohol dependence	**185·00**	**195·00**
mental handicap	**215·00**	**225·00**
physical disablement		
***(a)* (under pension age)**	**245·00**	**255·00**
***(b)* (over pension age)**	**175·00**	**185·00**
others	**175·00**	**185·00**
maximum Greater London increase	**25·00**	**25·00**
nursing homes		
mental disorder (not handicap)	**270·00**	**280·00**
drug/alcohol dependence	**270·00**	**280·00**
mental handicap	**275·00**	**285·00**
terminal illness	**280·00**	**280·00**
physical disablement		
***(a)* (under pension age)**	**305·00**	**315·00**
***(b)* (over pension age)**	**270·00**	**280·00**
others (including elderly)	**270·00**	**280·00**
maximum Greater London increase	**35·00**	**35·00**
Amounts for meals where these cannot be purchased within the accommodation (Daily Rate)		
breakfast	**1·10**	**1·10**
midday meal	**1·55**	**1·55**
evening meal	**1·55**	**1·55**
Allowances for personal expenses for claimants in		
private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes personal expenses	**12·20**	**12·65**
dependent children		
***(a)* under 11**	**5·00**	**5·20**
***(b)* 11 to 15**	**7·35**	**7·60**
***(c)* 16 to 17**	**8·50**	**8·80**
***(d)* age 18**	**12·20**	**12·65**
hospital		
higher rate	**13·55**	**14·05**
lower rate	**10·85**	**11·20**
local authority (Pt III) accommodation	**10·85**	**11·20**
the Polish home Ilford Park		
max amount for accommodation and meals	**175·00**	**185·00**
personal expenses for claimant	**16·15**	**16·75**
personal expenses for partner	**16·15**	**16·75**
personal expenses for dep children		
***(a)* under 11**	**5·00**	**5·20**
***(b)* 11 to 15**	**7·35**	**7·60**
***(c)* 16 to 17**	**8·50**	**8·80**
***(d)* 18**	**14·50**	**15·00**

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Housing costs		
Deduction for non-dependants aged 25 and over, in receipt of income support aged 18 or over, not in work or		
gross income under £70	4·00	4·00
gross income: £70 to £104·99	8·00	8·00
gross income: £105 to £134·99	12·00	12·00
gross income: £135 or more	18·00	21·00
Deduction for direct payments		
arrears of housing, fuel and water costs and fines default	2·15	2·20
arrears of community charge court order against claimant	2·15	2·20
court order against couple	3·35	3·45
Child maintenance and arrears of Council Tax (planned from April 1993)	—	2·20
Maximum rates for recovery of overpayments		
ordinary overpayments	6·45	6·60
where claimant convicted of fraud	8·60	8·80
Reduction in benefit for strikers	22·50	23·50
Capital		
upper limit	8,000·00	8,000·00
amount disregarded	3,000·00	3,000·00
child's limit	3,000·00	3,000·00
Tariff income		
£1 for every complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Disregards		
standard earnings	5·00	5·00
higher earnings	15·00	15·00
war disablement pension and war widow's pension	10·00	10·00
voluntary and charitable payments	10·00	10·00
student loan	10·00	10·00
student's covenanted income	5·00	5·00
income from boarders:		
disregard the fixed amount (£20) plus 50 per cent. of the balance of the charge	20·00	20·00
Expenses for subtenants		
furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
where heating is included, additional	8·60	8·60

Industrial death benefit

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Widow's pension		
higher rate	54·15	56·10
lower rate	16·25	16·83

Industrial disablement pension

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
18 and over, or under 18 with dependants		
100 per cent.	88·40	91·60
90 per cent.	79·56	82·44
80 per cent.	70·72	73·28
70 per cent.	61·88	64·12
60 per cent.	53·04	54·96
50 per cent.	44·20	45·80
40 per cent.	35·36	36·64
30 per cent.	26·52	27·48
20 per cent.	17·68	18·32
Under 18		
100 per cent.	54·15	56·10
90 per cent.	48·74	50·49
80 per cent.	43·32	44·88
70 per cent.	37·91	39·27
60 per cent.	32·49	33·66
50 per cent.	27·08	28·05
40 per cent.	21·66	22·44
30 per cent.	16·25	16·83
20 per cent.	10·83	11·22
Maximum life gratuity (lump sum)	5,870·00	6,080·00
Unemployability Supplement	54·15	56·10
plus where appropriate an increase for early incapacity		
higher rate	11·55	11·95
middle rate	7·20	7·50
lower rate	3·60	3·75
Maximum reduced earnings allowance	35·36	36·64
Maximum retirement allowance	8·84	9·16
Constant attendance allowance		
exceptional rate	70·80	73·40
intermediate rate	53·10	55·05
normal maximum rate	35·40	36·70
part-time rate	17·70	18·35
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	35·40	36·70

Invalidity allowances and benefits

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Invalid care allowance	32·55	33·70
Invalidity benefit		
Invalidity pension	54·15	56·10
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	11·55	11·95
middle rate	7·20	7·50
lower rate	3·60	3·75

Maternity and parent benefits

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Maternity allowance	42·25	43·75
One parent benefit	5·85	6·05

Pneumoconiosis, byssinosis, workmen's compensation (supplementation) and other schemes

	Old rates 1992	*New rates 1993*
Total disablement allowance and major incapacity allowance (maximum)	88·40	91·60
Partial disablement allowance	32·55	33·70
Unemployability supplement	54·15	56·10
plus where appropriate increases for early incapacity		
higher rate	11·55	11·95
middle rate	7·20	7·50
lower rate	3·60	3·75

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Constant attendance allowance		
exceptional rate	70·80	73·40
intermediate rate	53·10	55·05
normal maximum rate	35·40	36·70
part-time rate	17·70	18·35
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	35·40	36·70
Lesser incapacity allowance		
maximum rate of allowance	32·55	33·70
based on loss of earnings over	43·35	44·90

Retirement Pension

	Old Rates 1992	New Rates 1993
Category A or B	54·15	56·10
Category B (lower)—husband's insurance	32·55	33·70
Category C or D—non-contributory	32·55	33·70
Category C (lower)—non-contributory	19·45	20·15
Additional pension		—
Increments to basic and additional pension, contracted out deductions (from pre April 1988 earnings) and graduated retirement benefit	—	—
Contracted out deductions (CODS) and increments to CODS (from post April 1988 earnings) (3 per cent. paid by scheme, RPI minus 3 per cent. by state)	—	—
Graduated retirement benefit (unit) (pence)	7·09	7·35
Addition at age 80	0·25	0·25

Severe disablement allowance

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Basic rate	32·55	33·70
Age-related addition (from December 1990)		
Higher rate	11·55	11·95
Middle rate	7·20	7·50
Lower rate	3·60	3·75

Sickness benefit

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Over pension age	51·95	53·80
Under pension age	41·20	42·70

Social fund

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Maternity payment	100·00	100·00
Capital limit		
aged under 60	500·00	500·00
aged 60 and over	1,000·00	1,000·00

Statutory maternity pay

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Earnings threshold	54·00	56·00
Lower rate	46·30	47·95

Statutory sick pay

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Earnings threshold	54·00	56·00
Standard rate threshold	190·00	195·00
Lower rate	45·30	46·95
Standard rate	52·50	52·50

Unemployment Benefit

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Over pension age	54·15	56·10
Under pension age	43·10	44·65
Occupational pension abatement	35·00	35·00

War pensions

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Disablement pension (100 per cent. rates)		
private or equivalent	89·00	92·20
non-commissioned officer	·00	93·00
officer (£ per annum)	4,650·00	5,081·00

Note.—Under the further package of changes, which are to be discussed with the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions the rates would be:—

private or equivalent	89·00	97·20
officer (£ per annum)	4,650·00	5,072·00
Age allowances		
40-50 per cent.	6·25	6·50
over 50 but not over 70 per cent.	9·65	10·00
over 70 but not over 90 per cent.	13·80	14·30
over 90 per cent.	19·30	20·00
Disablement gratuity (base figures for calculation purposes only)		
specified minor injury	5,870·00	6,080·00
unspecified minor injury	3,228·50	3,344·00
Unemployability allowance		
personal	57·50	59·55
adult dependency increase	32·55	33·70
(a) increase for first child	9·75	9·80
(b) increase for subsequent children	10·85	10·95
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	11·55	11·95
middle rate	7·20	7·50
lower rate	3·60	3·75
Constant attendance allowance		
exceptional rate	70·80	73·40
intermediate rate	53·10	55·05
normal maximum rate	35·40	36·70
part-time rate	17·70	18·35
Comforts allowance		
higher rate	15·20	15·70
lower rate	7·60	7·85

	Old rates 1992	New rates 1993
Mobility supplement	33·70	34·90
Allowance for lowered standard of occupation (maximum)	35·36	36·64
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	35·40	36·70
Severe disablement occupational allowance	17·70	18·35
Clothing allowance (£ per annum)		
higher rate	120·00	124·00
lower rate	76·00	79·00
Education allowance (£ per annum) (maximum)	120·00	120·00
War widow's pension (private)		
widow	70·35	72·90
childless widow under 40	16·25	16·83
age allowance		
(a) age 65 to 69	8·05	8·35
(b) age 70 to 79	15·55	16·10
(c) age 80 and over	23·10	23·95
children's allowance		
(a) increase for first child (adjusted for child benefit increase)	13·75	13·85
(b) increase for subsequent children	14·85	15·00
Orphan's pension		
(a) increase for first child (adjusted for child benefit increase)	15·30	15·45
(b) increase for subsequent children	16·40	16·60
Unmarried dependant living as spouse (maximum)	68·30	70·85
Rent allowance (maximum)	26·80	27·75
Adult orphan's pension (maximum)	54·15	56·10
Widower's pension (maximum)	70·35	72·90

Widow's Benefit

	Old Rates 1992	New Rates 1993
Widow's payment (lump sum)	1,000·00	1,000·00
Widowed mother's allowance	54·15	56·10
Widow's pension		
standard rate	54·15	56·10
age-related		
age 54 (49)	50·36	52·17
age 53 (48)	46·57	48·25
age 52 (47)	42·78	44·32
age 51 (46)	38·99	40·39
age 50 (45)	35·20	36·47
age 49 (44)	31·41	32·54
age 48 (43)	27·62	28·61
age 47 (42)	23·83	24·68
age 46 (41)	20·04	20·76
age 45 (40)	16·25	16·83

Note: For deaths occurring before 11 April 1988 refer to age-points shown in brackets.

National Insurance

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has yet completed his review of national insurance contributions for 1993-94.

Mr. Lilley: I have completed the annual review under section 141 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992. My proposals will take effect from 6 April 1993. The levels of contributory benefit expenditure I am maintaining will mean a shortfall in the national insurance fund between income and outgoings. I propose to meet this shortfall by introducing legislation to make an Exchequer grant available; in 1993-94, the first year, this would be up to 20 per cent. of contributory benefit expenditure. This legislation will also introduce the 1 per cent. additional rebate for appropriate personal pension holders aged 30 and over.

Employers and employees

There will be no change to the standard rates of contributions for either employees or employers, which remain at 9 per cent. and 10·4 per cent. respectively.

In line with the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, the lower earnings limit for class 1 contributions is to be raised to £56 a week, which is the nearest whole pound to the basic retirement pension rate for a single person from April 1993. The upper earnings limit is to be raised to £420 a week, which is slightly less than seven and a half times the new basic pension rate as provided by the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act. These new earnings limits will replace the current ones of £54 and £405 respectively.

Under the current structure employees whose earnings reach the lower earnings limit will continue to pay an initial contribution of 2 per cent. of that limit and standard rate contributions of 9 per cent. on that portion of their earnings which exceeds the lower but not the upper earnings limit. For employers the reduced contribution rates of 4·6 per cent., 6·6 per cent. and 8·6 per cent. for the lower paid will continue unchanged. However, the thresholds for these rates will be raised so that from April 1993 they apply to weekly earnings which fall below the ceilings of £95, £140 and £195 respectively, compared with £90, £135 and £190 at present.

Not contracted-out employees and their employers

Neither the employee nor his employer will have to pay any contributions if earnings are less than £56 a week. Those whose earnings do not exceed £405 (the former upper earnings limit) will pay 14 pence a week less in contributions than at present. This is because a further £2 of their weekly earnings will be subject to a deduction of 2 per cent. rather than 9 per cent. For employees with earnings above £405 a week the maximum possible increase will be £1·21 a week. Employers' contributions will generally be unchanged although some will pay less where employees' earnings which were above the former thresholds fall below the new thresholds. There will be no increase for employers of the higher paid since there is no upper earnings limit for employers' contributions.

Contracted-out employees and their employers

The statutory review of the contracted-out rebate for employees and employers, the result of which was announced last February, resulted in a reduction in the rebate from April 1993. Although the main rates of contributions remain unchanged the effect of the reduced rebate is that many employees will pay a little more. Those with earnings between £110 and £405 (the former upper earnings limit) will pay up to 59p a week more. Those who earn more than £405 will pay contributions on the next £15 of earnings from next April (ie up to £420 a week, the proposed upper earnings limit), a maximum increase of £1·67 a week. Contracted-out employees who earn £110 or less will pay the same or slightly less.

Because of the fall in the rebate employers will generally pay more although some will pay less where employees' earnings which were above the former thresholds fall below the new thresholds.

Self-employed people

The flat rate class 2 contribution will be raised by 20p to £5·55 a week.

There will be no increase in the rate of class 4 contributions, currently 6·3 per cent. The annual limits of profits between which class 4 contributions are paid will be raised to £6,340 and £21,840 from £6,120 and £21,060 respectively. Self-employed people who pay only class 2 contributions will pay an extra £10·40 a year in 1993-94.

For people with profits between £6,340 and £21,060 (the former upper profits limit) class 4 contributions will be reduced by £13·86 per year assuming an unaltered level of profits. For those self-employed people with profits at or above the new upper profits limit the annual charge for class 4 contributions will be £35·28 higher.

Class 3 (voluntary) contributions

The rate of class 3 contributions will be raised by 20p to £5·45 a week.

National health service allocation

The allocation to the national health service, currently 1·05 per cent. from employees and 0·9 per cent. from employers, remains unchanged.

As usual, I shall be laying a draft order before Parliament together with a report by the Government actuary describing the effects of my proposals.

Maternity Grants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security further to his answer of 30 October, *Official Report*, columns *924-27*, if he will list by Benefits Agency district office the number of maternity grants paid in 1990 and 1989.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 6 November 1992]*: For 1989-90 information by office is not available. However, the number of maternity payments in the year was 173,600. As the Benefits Agency was formed in April 1991, information for 1990-91 is shown in the table by DSS local office.

Local Office	*Payments*
Aberdare	357
Aberdeen North	378
Aberdeen South	236
Abertillery	162
Aberystwth	167
Accrington	442
Airdrie	273
Aldershot	370
Ammanford	107
Andover	155
Anglesey	296
Arbroath	252
Ashford	231
Ashington	366
Ashton-under-Lyne	502
Aylesbury	242
Ayr	610
Banbury	224
Bargoed	201
Barking	538
Barnet	147
Barnsley East	584
Barnsley West	334
Barnstaple	297
Barrow in Furness	333
Barry	325
Basildon	643
Basingstoke	212
Bath	364
Bathgate	563
Bedford	438
Bellshill	222
Berwick on Tweed	39
Bexley	533
Birkenhead North	766
Birkenhead South	429
Birmingham Edgebaston	750
Birmingham Erdington	687
Birmingham Handsworth	1,000
Birmingham Ladywood	817
Birmingham Northfield	693
Birmingham Perry Barr	508
Birmingham Ravenhurst	574
Birmingham South Yardley	803
Birmingham Sparkhill	421
Birmingham Washwood Heath	686
Bishop Auckland	548
Blackburn	1,005
Blackpool North	721
Blackpool South	282
Blackwood	196
Blyth	390
Bognor Regis	198
Bolton	1,006
Boston	260
Bournemouth	463
Bracknell	216
Bradford East	860
Bradford South	707
Bradford West	718
Braintree	256
Bridgend	476
Bridgwater	267
Bridlington	215
Brighton	470
Bristol Central	390
Bristol East	538
Bristol Horfield	248
Bristol South	622
Bristol West	148
Bromley	186
Burnley	985
Burton on Trent	292
Bury	589
Bury St. Edmunds	305
Buxton	62
Caernarfon	265
Caerphilly	291
Cambridge	411
Campbeltown	37
Cannock	369
Canterbury	303
Cardiff Central	370
Cardiff East	712
Cardiff West	569
Carlisle	376
Carmarthen	134
Castleford	273
Chatham	596
Chelmsford	260

Local Office	*Payments*
Cheltenham	390
Chester	394
Chesterfield	644
Chester le Street	262
Chichester	127
Chippenham	197
Clacton-on-Sea	240
Clydebank	295
Coatbridge	247
Colchester	425
Colwyn Bay	309
Corby	235
Coventry East	893
Coventry West	515
Cowdenbeath	223
Crawley	267
Crewe	453
Croydon	683
Cumbernauld	359
Cwmbran	499
Darlington	615
Dartford	242
Deeside	234
Derby Beckett Street	467
Derby Heritage Gate	245
Derby London Road	710
Dewsbury	827
Diss	76
Doncaster East	507
Doncaster West	703
Dover	280
Dudley North	630
Dudley South	298
Dumbarton	269
Dumfries	329
Dundee East	432
Dundee West	453
Dunfermline	316
Dunstable	177
Durham	243
Eastbourne	319
East Kilbride	177
Ebbw Vale	285
Edgware	222
Edinburgh East	473
Edinburgh City	254
Edinburgh North	354
Edinburgh South	474
Edinburgh West	415
Elgin	231
Ellesmere Port	316
Epsom	99
Eston	491
Exeter	654
Falkirk	495
Fareham	350
Farnworth	543
Folkestone	215
Fort William	84
Galashiels	222
Gateshead	816
Glasgow Anniesland	386
Glasgow Bridgeton	277
Glasgow City	223
Glasgow Craigton	396
Glasgow Cranstonhill	4
Glasgow Laurieston	335
Glasgow Maryhill	314
Glasgow Partick	166
Glasgow Provan	649
Glasgow Rutherglen	486
Glasgow Shettleston	373
Glasgow Southside	494
Glasgow Springburn	487
Gloucester	537
Goole	165
Grantham	234
Gravesend	239
Grays	370
Greenock	387
Grimsby	1,073
Great Yarmouth	300
Guildford	240
Halifax	773
Hamilton	517
Harlow	276
Harrogate	202
Harrow	277
Hartlepool	582
Hastings	445
Havant	304
Haverfordwest	244
Hemel Hempstead	203
Hemsworth	244
Hereford	365
Hertford	214
Hexham	98
High Wycombe	279
Houghton Le Spring	230
Hounslow	513
Hove	184
Huddersfield	782
Hull East	1,235
Hull West	934
Hyde	497
Ilford	444
Ilkeston	355
Inverness	385
Ipswich	609
Irvine	389
Isle of Wight	386
Jarrow	306
Johnstone	264
Keighley	414
Kendal	89
Kidderminster	359
Kilmarnock	373
King's Lynn	533
Kingston	172
Kirkcaldy	511
Lancaster	440
Launceston	160
Leamington Spa	345
Leeds East	809
Leeds North	729
Leeds North West	555
Leeds South	431
Leeds West	499
Leicester Burleys Way	329
Leicester Lower Hill Street	581
Leicester Norton Street	517
Leicester Yeoman Street	761
Leigh	430
Lerwick	35
Leven	205
Lewes	202
Lichfield	501
Lincoln Newland	418
Lincoln Orchard Street	533
Liverpool Belle Vale	370
Liverpool Bootle	611
Liverpool Breckfield	689
Liverpool City	295
Liverpool Crosby	442
Liverpool Edgehill	567
Liverpool Garston	371
Liverpool Huyton	777
Liverpool Kirkby	748
Liverpool Norris Green	379
Liverpool Toxteth	550
Liverpool West Derby	175
Llanelli	308
London Balham	418
London Battersea	403
London Bloomsbury	154
London Brixton	421

Local Office	*Payments*
London Camberwell	506
London Canning Town	277
London Chelsea	172
London City	108
London Cricklewood	205
London Crystal Palace	466
London Ealing	1,359
London Edmonton	505
London Euston	930
London Finsbury Park	482
London Fulham	124
London Greenwich Park	218
London Hackney	585
London Harlesden	451
London Hendon	274
London Highgate	265
London Hither Green	34
London Hoxton	404
London Kennington Park	375
London Kensington	136
London Lewisham	762
London Leytonstone	484
London Mitcham	239
London Neasden	454
London Oval	248
London Paddington	106
London Peckham	370
London Plaistow	474
London Poplar	586
London Shoreditch	403
London Southwark	440
London Stepney	514
London Stoke Newington	341
London Streatham	321
London Thames South	3
London Tottenham	665
London Walthamstow	470
London Wandsworth	194
London Westminster	130
London Wimbledon	256
London Woodgrange Park	636
London Wood Green	394
London Woolwich	877
Loughborough	383
Lowestoft	277
Luton	672
Macclesfield	140
Maidstone	337
Manchester Central	182
Manchester Cheetham	645
Manchester Chorlton	405
Manchester Failsworth	620
Manchester Longsight	655
Manchester Middleton	439
Manchester Openshaw	608
Manchester Rusholme	505
Manchester Sale	562
Manchester Wythenshawe	724
Mansfield	660
Merthyr Tydfil	431
Middlesbrough	1,117
Milton Keynes	572
Morriston	320
Motherwell	446
Neath	224
New Forest	248
New Malden	102
Newbury	159
Newcastle East	540
Newcastle St. James	623
Newcastle West	516
Newcastle Staffs	351
Newport Gwent	878
Newtown	197
Northampton	741
North Shields	335
Northallerton	172
Northwich	342

Local Office	*Payments*
Norwich Chantry	371
Norwich Mountergate	547
Nottingham Castlegate	587
Nottingham David Lane	695
Nottingham Shakespeare Street	793
Nottingham Station Street	701
Nuneaton	502
Oban	48
Oldham	1,002
Orpington	175
Oxford	655
Paisley	597
Pembroke Dock	185
Penrith	62
Penzance	256
Perth	352
Peterborough	892
Peterhead	170
Peterlee	451
Plymouth	541
Plymouth Crownhill	581
Pontefract	311
Pontypridd	281
Poole	382
Port Glasgow	160
Portsmouth North	471
Portsmouth South	344
Port Talbot	212
Porth	221
Porthmadog	177
Preston North	743
Preston South	580
Reading	428
Redcar	367
Redditch	436
Redhill	196
Rhyl	488
Rochdale	745
Romford	308
Rossendale	234
Rotherham North	278
Rotherham South	879
Rugby	187
Salford North	578
Salford South	515
Salisbury	254
Scarborough	340
Scunthorpe	547
Seaham	205
Sheffield North East	244
Sheffield North West	630
Sheffield South East	466
Sheffield South West	410
Shrewsbury	475
Sittinghbourne	336
Skegness	199
Skelmersdale	516
Skipton	50
Slough	405
Smethwick	772
Southampton	941
Southend on Sea	527
Southport	192
South Shields	495
Stafford	237
St. Albans	244
Stanley	418
St. Austell	399
Stevenage	414
St. Helens	898
Stirling	462
Stockport North	450
Stockport South	374
Stockton	946
Stoke on Trent North	717
Stoke on Trent South	559
Stornoway	58
Stranraer	113

Local Office	*Payments*
Stroud	253
Sunderland North	1,006
Sunderland South	671
Sutton	201
Sutton in Ashfield	442
Swansea	672
Swindon	511
Taunton	346
Telford	695
Thanet	507
Tonypandy	253
Torbay	629
Trowbridge	207
Truro	506
Tunbridge Wells	214
Twickenham	114
Uxbridge	389
Wakefield	500
Wallasey	387
Wallsend	320
Walsall East	547
Walsall West	762
Warrington	730
Watford	240
Wath on Dearne	440
Wellingborough	457
West Bromwich	815
Weston super Mare	223
Weymouth	334
Whitehaven	229
Wick	153
Widnes	828
Wigan	785
Wilmslow	72
Winchester	176
Woking	228
Wolverhampton North	880
Wolverhampton South	619
Worcester	521
Workington	217
Worksop	432
Worthing	312
Wrexham	606
Yeovil	262
York	386

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Treaties

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the treaties which Her Majesty's Government have either ratified or signed since 1962 published with the side heading "Refugees".

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Treaties under the side heading "Refugees" either signed or ratified by Her Majesty's Government since 1 January 1962 are listed. Command Paper references are given for ease of reference.

REFUGEES

Multilateral agreement

European Agreement on the Abolition of Visas for Refugees
Signed at Strasbourg on 20 April 1959
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 032/1969 Cmnd 3922

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Reducation of Statelessness
Signed at New York on 30 August 1961 and 31 May 1962
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 158/1975 Cmnd 6364

Multilateral agreement

Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees
Signed at New York on 31 January 1967
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 015/1969 Cmnd 3906

Multilateral agreement

Protocol relating to Refugee Seamen
Signed at The Hague on 12 June 1973
Definitive date of entry into force on 30 March 1975
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: The Netherlands Government
Published text: Misc. Series No. 018/1973 Cmnd 5381
Treaty Series/Command No. 038/1975 Cmnd 6035

Multilateral agreement

European Agreement on Transfer of Responsibility for Refugees
Signed at Strasbourg on 16 October 1980
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 December 1980
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Misc 003/1981 Cmnd 8127
Treaty Series/Command No. 050/1987 Cmnd 222

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the treaties Her Majesty's Government either ratified or signed since 1962 published with the side heading "Conservation";

(2) if he will list the treaties Her Majesty's Government either ratified or signed since 1962 published with the side heading "Animals".

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Treaties under the side heading "Conservation" and "Animals" either signed or ratified by Her Majesty's Government since 1 January 1962 are listed. Current indexing practice combines "Animal" and "Conservation" side headings. Command Paper references are given for ease of reference.

ANIMALS AND CONSERVATION

Multilateral agreement

European Convention for the Protection of Animals during International Transport
Signed at Paris on 13 December 1968
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 031/1974 Cmnd 5613

Multilateral agreement

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
Signed at Washington on 3 March 1976
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 101/1976 Cmnd 6647

Multilateral agreement

Revised Appendices I, II and III to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
Adopted in March 1979
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 033/1980 Cmnd 7857

Multilateral agreement

Revised Appendices I, II and III to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
Adopted in March 1981
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 077/1981 Cmnd 8395

ANIMALS AND CONSERVATION

Multilateral agreement

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat

Adopted at Ramsar on 2 February 1971
Definitive date of entry into force on 21 December 1975
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: UNESCO
Published text: Misc 027/1973 Cmnd 5483
Treaty Series/Command No. TS 034/1976 Cmnd 6465

Multilateral agreement

European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes

Signed at Strasbourg on 10 March 1976
Definitive date of entry into force on 10 September 1978
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 028/1976 Cmnd 6614
Treaty Series/Command No. 070/1979 Cmnd 7684

Multilateral agreement

European convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter

Signed at Strasbourg on 10 May 1979
Definitive date of entry into force on 11 June 1982
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Misc No. 002/1980 Cmnd 7776

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Signed at Bonn on 23 June 1979, closed on 22 June 1980
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 November 1983
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Federal Republic of Germany
Published text: Misc Series No. 11 (1980) Cmnd 7888
Treaty Series/Command No. 087/1990 Cmnd1332

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Signed at Berne on 19 September 1979
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 June 1982
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Misc Series No. 003/1980 Cmnd 7809
Treaty Series/Command No. 056/1982 Cmnd 8738

Multilateral agreement

Additional Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Animals during International Transport

Signed at Strasbourg on 10 May 1979
Definitive date of entry into force on 7 November 1989
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Misc Series No. 22 (1980) Cmnd 8040
Treaty Series/Command No. 034/1991 Cmnd 1540

Multilateral agreement

Protocol to amend the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat

Adopted at Paris on 3 December 1982
Signed at Paris on 3 December 1982
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 October 1986
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositories: UNESCO
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 001/1984 Cmnd 9113

Multilateral agreement

Protocol concerning Co-operation in Combating Oil Spills in the Wider Caribbean Region

Signed at Cartagena de Indias on 24 March 1983
Definitive date of entry into force on 11 October 1986
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Government of the Republic of Colombia
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 019/1983 Cmnd 9022
Treaty Series/Command No. 038/1988 Cm 399

Multilateral agreement

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region

Signed at Cartagena de Indias on 24 March 1983
Definitive date of entry into force on 11 October 1986
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Government of the R[illegible]ublic of Colombia
Published text: Misc[illegible]eous Series No. 019/1983 Cmnd 9022
Treaty Series/Command No. 038/1988 Cm 399

Multilateral agreement

Agreement establishing an International Foot and Mouth disease Vaccine Bank

Signed at London on 26 June 1985
Definitive date of entry into force on 26 June 1985
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Kingdom
Treaty Series/Command no. 043/1985 Cmnd 9602

Multilateral agreement

European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes

Signed at Strasbourg on 18 March 1986
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 January 1991
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 004/1986 Cmnd 9884

Multilateral agreement

Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe

Signed at London on 4 December 1991
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositories: Government of the United Kingdom
Published text: Miscellaneous Series 001/1992 Cm 1830

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Protection and the Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

Signed at Helsinki on 17 March 1992
closed on 18 September 1992
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United NationsPublished text: Miscellaneous Series publication in hand

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

Signed at Helsinki on 17 March 1992
closed on 18 September 1992
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Finnish Government
Published text: Certified copy of the Convention awaited

Multilateral agreement

Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas

Signed at New York on 17 March 1992
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text: Miscellaneous Series publication in hand

Multilateral agreement

Convention on Biological Diversity

Adopted at Nairobi on 11 May 1992
Signed at Rio de Janeiro on 5 June 1992
closed on 14 June 1992
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations
Published text: Miscellaneous Series publication in hand.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the treaties

which Her Majesty's Government have either ratified or signed since 1962 published with the side heading "Human Rights".

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Treaties under the side heading "Human Rights" either signed or ratified by Her Majesty's Government since 1 January 1962 are listed. Command Paper references are given for ease of reference.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Political Rights of Women
Signed at New York on 31 March 1953
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 101/1967 Cmnd 3449

Multilateral agreement

Protocol No. 2 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, conferring upon the European Court of Human rights competence to give Advisory Opinions
Signed at Strasbourg on 6 May 1963
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 104/1970 Cmnd 4551

Multilateral agreement

Protocol No. 3 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, amending Article 29, 30 and 34 of the Convention
Signed at Strasbourg on 6 May 1963
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 106/1970 Cmnd 4552

Multilateral agreement

Protocol No. 4 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, signed at Rome on 4 November 1950
Signed at Strasbourg on 16 September 1963
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Miscellaneous Series No. 006/1964 Cmnd 2309

Multilateral agreement

Protocol No. 5 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, amending Articles 22 and 40 of the Convention
Signed at Strasbourg on 20 January 1966
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 048/1972 Cmnd 4963

Multilateral agreement

International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
Signed at New York on 7 March 1966
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 077/1969 Cmnd 4108

Multilateral agreement

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
Signed at New York on 19 December 1966
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 006/1977 Cmnd 6702

Multilateral agreement

European Agreement relating to Persons participating in Proceedings of the European Commission and Court of Human Rights
Signed at London on 6 May 1969
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 044/1971 Cmnd 4699

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Adopted at New York (UN) on 18 December 1979
Signed at New York (UN) on 1 March 1980
Definitive date of entry into force on 3 September 1981
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations Secretary General
Published text: Miscellaneous No. 001/1982 Cmnd 8444
Treaty Series/Command No. 002/1989 Cm 643

Multilateral agreement

Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Council of Europe No. 108)
Signed at Strasbourg on 28 January 1981
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 October 1985
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Secretary General of the Council of Europe
Published text: Miscellaneous No. 019/1981 Cmnd 8341
Treaty Series/Command No. 086/1990 Cm 1329

Multilateral agreement

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
Adopted at New York (UN) on 10 December 1984
Signed at New York on 4 February 1985
Definitive date of entry into force on 26 June 1987
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations (UN)
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 012/1985 Cmnd 9593
Treaty Series/Command No. 107/1991 Cm 1775

Multilateral agreement

European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment [ETS No. 126]
Signed at Strasbourg on 26 November 1987
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 February 1989
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Misc. No. 005/1988 Cmnd 339
Treaty Series/Command No. 054/1991 Cmnd 1634

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Rights of the Child
Adopted at New York (UNGA) on 20 November 1989
Definitive date of entry into force on 2 September 1990
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations
Published text: Misc. Series 017/1991 Cmnd 1668
Treaty Series/Command No. 044/1992 Cmnd 1976

Multilateral agreement

Protocol No. 8 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950
Signed at Vienna on 19 March 1985
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 January [illegible]
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Misc. No. 009/1985 Cmnd 955[illegible]
Treaty Series/Command No. 051/1990 Cmnd [illegible]36

Multilateral agreement

Protocol amending the European Social Charter
Signed at Turin on 21 October 1991 closed on 22 October 1991
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Misc. Series 005/1992 Cmnd 1940

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level
Signed at Strasbourg on 5 February 1992
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Misc. Series No. 008/1992 Cmnd 1964

Multilateral agreement

Protocol No. 10 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Signed at Strasbourg on 25 March 1992
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Council of Europe
Published text: Misc. Series No. 012/1992 Cmnd 2031

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the treaties Her Majesty's Government either ratified or signed since 1962 published with the side heading "Disarmament".

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Treaties under the side heading "Disarmament" either signed or ratified by Her Majesty's Government since 1 January 1962 are listed. Command Paper references are given for ease of reference.

DISARMAMENT

Multilateral agreement

Treaty banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water

Signed at Moscow on 5 August 1963
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 003/1964 Cmnd 2245

Multilateral agreement

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Signed at London on 1 July 1968
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 088/1970 Cmnd 4474

Multilateral agreement

Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof

Signed at London on 11 February 1971
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 013/1973 Cmnd 5266

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction

Signed at London on 10 April 1972
Definitive date of entry into force on 26 March 1975
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Kingdom [Multidepositary]
Published text: Miscellaneous No. 025/1972 Cmnd 5053
Treaty Series/Command No. 011/1976 Cmnd 6397

Multilateral agreement

Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water

Signed at Moscow on 5 August 1963
Definitive date of entry into force on 10 September 1963
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Kingdom [Multidepositary]
Published text: Miscellaneous No. 010/1963 Cmnd 2118
Treaty Series/Command No. 003/1964 Cmnd 2245

Multilateral agreement

Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (With Final Recommendations of the Helsinki Consultations agreed on 8 June 1973)

Signed at Helsinki on 1 August 1975
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Government of Finland
Published text: Prime Minister Cmnd 6198

Multilateral agreement

Convention on the Prohibition of Military or any other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (ENMOD)

Signed at Geneva on 18 May 1977
Closed on 31 May 1977
Definitive date of entry into force on 5 September 1978
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 021/1977 Cmnd 6985
Treaty Series/Command No. 024/1979 Cmnd 7469

Multilateral agreement

Agreement among the United States of America and the Kingdom of Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Italy, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland regarding Inspections relating to the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles

Signed at Brussels on 11 December 1987
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 June 1988
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United States of America
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 004/1988 Cm 312
Treaty Series/Command No. 031/1991 Cm 1535

Bilateral agreement with Soviet Union

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Inspection Rights relating to the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles

Signed at London on 21 December 1987
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 June 1988
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text: Soviet Union No. 001/1988 Cm 311
Treaty Series/Command No. 030/1991 Cm 1534

Multilateral agreement

Charter of Paris for a New Europe (with Joint Declaration of Twenty-Two States)

Signed at Paris on 21 November 1990
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Government of the French Republic
Treaty Series/Command No. Cmnd 1464

Multilateral agreement

Treaty on Open Skies

Signed at Helsinki on 24 March 1992
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Governments of Canada and Hungary
Published text: Misc. Series No. 013/1992 Cmnd 2067

Multilateral agreement

Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects

Approved at Geneva on 10 October 1980
Signed at New York on 10 April 1981
closed on 10 April 1982
Definitive date of entry into force on 2 December 1983
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 23/1981 Cmnd 8370

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the treaties which Her Majesty's Government have either ratified or signed since 1962 published with the side heading "Pollution".

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Treaties under the side heading "Pollution" either signed or ratified by Her Majesty's Government since 1 January 1962 are listed. Command Paper references are given for ease of reference.

POLLUTION

Multilateral agreement
Amendments to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil, 1954
Signed at London on 21 October 1969
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 021/1978 Cmnd 7094

Multilateral agreement
International Convention relating to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties
Signed at Brussels on 29 November 1969 and 31 December 1970
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series Command No. 077/1975 Cmnd 6056

Multilateral agreement
International Convention on the establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage
Signed at Brussels on 18 December 1971
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text:
Treaty Series/Command No. 095/1978 Cmnd 7383

Multilateral agreement
Protocol of 1978 relating to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973
Signed at London on 1 June 1978 and 31 May 1979
UK Signatory? Yes
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 027/1978 Cmnd 7347

Multilateral agreement
Agreement for Co-operation in dealing with Pollution of the North Sea by Oil.
Signed at Bonn on 9 june 1969
Definitive date of entry into force on 9 August 1969
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Federal Republic of Germany
Treaty Series/Command No. 078 (1969) Cmnd 4205

Multilateral agreement
International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage
Signed at Brussels on 29 November 1969
closed on 31 December 1970
Definitive date of entry into force on 19 June 1975
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: IMCO
Published text: Misc. No. 8 (1970) Cmnd 4403
Treaty Series/Command No. 106 (1975) Cmnd 6183

Multilateral agreement
Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft
Signed at Oslo on 15 February 1972
closed on 15 August 1972
Definitive date of entry into force on 7 April 1974
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Norwegian Government
Published text: 021/1972 Cmnd 4984
Treaty Series/Command No. 119/1975 Cmnd 6228

Multilateral agreement
Final Act of the Inter-governmental Conference on the Convention on the Dumping of Wastes at Sea
Adopted at London on 13 November 1972
Signed at
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Kingdom [Multidepositary]
Published text: Misc. No. 054/1972 Cmnd 5169

Multilateral agreement
Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter
Adopted at London on 13 November 1972
Signed at London on 29 December 1972
closed on 31 December 1973
Definitive date of entry into force on 30 August 1975
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Kingdom [Multidepositary]
Published text: Miscellaneous No. 054/1972 Cmnd 5169
Treaty Series/Command No. 043/1976 Cmnd 6486

Multilateral agreement
Resolution to amend Articles XI, XIV and XV of the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter of 29 December 1972 (adopted by the Third Consultative Meeting of Contracting Parties at London on 12 December 1978)
Adopted at London on 12 October 1978
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: International Maritime Consultative Organisation (IMCO)
Published text: Misc. No. 011/1979 Cmnd 7570

Multilateral agreement
Amendments to Annexes I and II to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter (concerning Incineration at Sea)
Approved at London on 12 October 1978
Definitive date of entry into force on 11 March 1979
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositories: IMCO
Treaty Series/Command No. 071/1979 Cmnd 7656

Multilateral agreement
Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution on Long-Term Financing of the Co-operative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-Range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP)
Adopted at Geneva on 28 September 1984
Open for signing on
Definitive date of entry into force on 28 January 1985
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations (UN)
Published text: Miscellaneous No. 008/1985 Cmnd 9537
Treaty Series/Command No. 075/1988 Cmnd 521

Multilateral agreement
Amendments to Annexes I and II to the Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft, done at Oslo on 15 February 1972
Adopted at Mariehamn on 13 June 1985
Definitive date of entry into force on 11 May 1990
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Government of Norway
Treaty Series/Command No. 081/1990 Cmnd 1315

Multilateral agreement
Decision concerning amendments to the Agreement for Co-operation in dealing with Pollution of the North Sea by Oil and other Harmful Substances, 1983
Adopted at BONN on 22 September 1989
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Government of the Federal German Republic

Multilateral agreement
Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer done at Montreal 16 September 1987
Adopted at LONDON on 29 June 1990
Definitive date of entry into force on 10 August 1992
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: UNITED NATIONS
Terminated? No
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 012/1991 Cmnd. 1567

Multilateral agreement
Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary air Pollution concerning the Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds or their Transboundary Fluxes

Adopted at GENEVA on 18 November 1991
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: UNITED NATIONS
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 010/1992 Cmnd 1970

Multilateral agreement
Final Act of the International Conference on Marine Pollution 1973 including International Convention for The Prevention of Pollution by Substances other than Oil, 1973 and Resolutions of the Conference.
Signed at London on 8 October 1973
closed on 2 November 1973
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: IMCO
Published text: Misc. Series 026 (1974) Cmnd. 5748

Multilateral agreement
Protocol relating to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Pollution by Substances other than Oil, 1973
Signed at London on 2 November 1973
closed on 31 December 1974
Definitive date of entry into force on 30 March 1983
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: IMCO
Published text: Misc Series 012/1975 Cmnd. 6038
Treaty Series/Command No: 027/1983 Cmnd. 8924

Multilateral agreement
International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 with Final Act of the Conference (MARPOL)
Adopted at London on 2 November 1973
Signed at London on 14 January 1974
closed on 31 December 1974
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: IMO
Published text: Misc 026/1974 Cmnd. 5748

Bilateral agreement with Soviet Union
Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Co-operation in the Field of Environmental Protection
Signed at London on 21 May 1974
Definitive date of entry into force on 21 May 1974
UK Signatory? Yes
Treaty Series/Command No. 058/1974 Cmnd. 5778

Multilateral agreement
Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-Based Sources
Signed at Paris on 4 June 1974
closed on 30 June 1975
Definitive date of entry into force on 6 May 1978
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: French Government
Published text: Misc Series 001/1975 Cmnd. 5803
Treaty Series/Command No. 064/1978 Cmnd. 7251

Multilateral agreement
Protocol to the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage, 1969, with Final Act of the Conference.
Signed at London on 19 November 1976
Definitive date of entry into force on 8 April 1981
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: IMCO
Published text: Misc. Series No. 026/1977 Cmnd. 7028
Treaty Series/Command No. 026/1981 Cmnd. 8238

Multilateral agreement
Protocol to the International Convention on the Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, 1971
Adopted at London on 19 November 1976
Signed at London on 1 February 1977
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: IMO
Published text: Misc. No. 027/1977 Cmnd 7029

Multilateral agreement
Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage resulting from Exploration for and Exploitation of Seabed Mineral Resources (with Final Act of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage from Offshore Operations 20-31 October 1975 and 13-17 December 1976)
Signed at London on 1 May 1977, closed on 30 April 1978
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Kingdom
Published text:
Misc. Series No. 008/1977 Cmnd 6791

Multilateral agreement
Optional Annex V to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto
Signed at London on 1 June 1978, closed on 31 May 1979
Definitive date of entry into force on 31 December 1988
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: IMO
Published text:
Misc. Series No. 027/1978 Cmnd 7347

Multilateral agreement
Protocol of 1978 relating to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 (MARPROT: XIX 1069)
Signed at London on 1 June 1978, closed on 31 May 1979
Definitive date of entry into force on 2 October 1983
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: IMCO
Published text: Misc. Series No. 027/1978 Cmnd 7347

Multilateral agreement
Optional Annex III to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto.
Signed at London on 1 June 1978, closed on 31 May 1979
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 July 1992
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: IMO
Published text: Misc. Series No. 027/1978 Cmnd 7347

Multilateral agreement
Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.
Adopted at Espoo (Finland) on 25 February 1991
Signed at Espoo/New York on 25 February 1991, closed on 2 September 1991
UK Signatory? Yes

Multilateral agreement
Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution
Signed at Geneva on 13 November 1979
closed on 16 November 1979
Definitive date of entry into force on 16 March on 1983
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 010/1980 Cmnd 7885
Treaty Series/Command No. 057/1983 Cmnd 9034

Multilateral agreement
Amendments to Annexes I and II to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter concerning Lists of Subetances
Approved at London on 24 September 1980
Signed at Approved at London on 24 September 1980
Definitive date of entry into force on 11 March 1981
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: IMCO
Treaty Series/Command No. 20 (1982) Cmnd 8555

Multilateral agreement

Agreement for Co-operation in dealing with Pollution of the North Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances
Signed at Bonn on 13 September 1983
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Government of the Federal Republic of Germany
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 026/1983 Cmnd 9104

Multilateral agreement
Protocol Amending the Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft
Signed at Oslo on 2 March 1983
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 September 1989
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Norwegian Government
Published text: Miscellaneous No. 12/1983 Cmnd 8942
Treaty Series/Command No. 059/1989 Cm 889

Multilateral agreement
Protocol of 1984 to amend the International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, 1971
Adopted at London on 25 May 1984
Signed at London on 1 December 1984
closed on 30 November 1985
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: International Maritime Organisation (IMO)
Published text: Miscellaneous No. 007/1986, Cmnd 9926

Multilateral agreement
Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer
Adopted at Vienna on 22 March 1985
Signed at Vienna and New York on 22 March 1985
closed on 21 March 1986
Definitive date of entry into force on 22 September 1988
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations (UN)
Published text: Miscellaneous No. 013/1985 Cmnd 9652
Treaty Series/Command No. 001/1990 Cm 910

Multilateral agreement
Protocol of 1984 to amend the International Conventaion on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage, 1969
Adopted at London on 25 May 1985
Signed at London on 1 December 1985
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: International Maritime Organisation (IMO)
Published text: Miscellaneous No. 008/1986, Cmnd 9927

Multilateral agreement
Protocol Amending the Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-Based Sources
Signed at Paris on 26 March 1986
closed on 30 June 1986
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: French Government
Published text: Misc No. 003/1987 Cm 87

Multilateral agreement
Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer
Adopted at Montreal on 16 September 1987
Signed at Montreal on 16 September 1987
Definitive date of entry into force on 1 January 1989
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 001/1988 Cm 283
Treaty Series/Command No. 019/1990 Cm 977

Multilateral agreement
Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal
Adopted at Basel on 22 March 1989
Signed at Berne/New York on 23 March 1989
closed on 22 March 1990
Definitive date of entry into force on 5 May 1992
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 004/1990 Cm 984

Multilateral agreement
Protocol [further] amending the Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft, done at Oslo on 15 February 1972
Signed at Oslo on 5 December 1989
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: Government of Norway
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 010/1990 Cm 1039

Multilateral agreement
Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution concerning the Control of Emissions of Nitrogen Oxides or their Transboundary Fluxes
Signed at Sofia/New York on 31 October 1988
closed on 5 March 1989
Definitive date of entry into force on 14 February 1991
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: United Nations
Published text: Miscellaneous Series 016/1989 Cm 885Treaty Series/Command No. 001/1992 Cm 1787

Multilateral agreement
Optional Annex V to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto
Signed at London on 1 June 1978
closed 31 May 1979
Definitive date of entry into force on 31 December 1988
UK Signatory? Yes
Depositaries: International Maritime Organisation (IMO)
Published text: Miscellaneous Series No. 027/1978 Cmnd 7347

Dependent Territories

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he intends to put forward for the future government of the dependent territories; and when they will be implemented.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) to his question of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 793, which referred to the Caribbean dependent territories. Implementation of these changes has already started. No other changes are planned.

Ahmadi Muslims

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the persecution of the Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have on several occasions expressed to the Pakistani Government our concerns about discrimination against Ahmadis. In 1984 a presidential ordinance made it a criminal offence for an Ahmadi to call himself a Muslim or to preach and propagate his faith. Members of the Ahmadi community have individually suffered from discrimination, although many in the community have prospered in business and the professions. We believe that a recent decision by the Pakistani Government that a citizen's identity card should indicate his religion could make discrimination against Ahmadis and other minority religious groups easier. We have expressed our concern to the Pakistani Government.

Iran

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps in concert with Her Majesty's Government and their partners in the EC to include on the agenda of the current session of the United Nations General Assembly proposals for concrete measures to exert pressure on the Iranian Government to improve human rights.

Mr. Hurd: In my speech of 22 September at the United Nations General Assembly on behalf of the European Community and its member states, I made it clear that Iran's human rights record will affect the extent to which closer relations with and confidence in Iran can be developed. The United Nations Secretary-General's special representative on human rights in Iran, Mr. Galindo-Pohl, will present a report to the United Nations General Assembly later this month. Together with our EC partners, we will work to ensure that his report's findings are fully reflected in any resolution adopted at the General Assembly.

Abu Dhabi

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact he or his Department has had with the head of the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi's private office.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our ambassador in Abu Dhabi had a meeting with the chairman of Sheikh Zayed's private department on 30 January 1992.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi concerning the 17 British citizens who have been detained there concerning the Bank of Credit and Commerce International issue; and if he will make a statement on the conditions under which they are currently being held.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made numerous representations to senior officials in Abu Dhabi asking for the detainees to be charged or released. Eight detainees entered Abu Dhabi on British passports. There are a further two dual United Kingdom/Pakistan citizens and one Canadian citizen whom we are helping. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised their case with the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates on 16 May 1992.

They are being held at the police club, which is comfortable and air-conditioned. They are housed two to a room and have the run of one wing. Food is brought in daily from a nearby hotel. The detainees are visited regularly by a doctor.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what Her Majesty's Government are doing to urge the Azerbaijani authorities to agree to a negotiated settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: When he met President Elchibei during his recent visit to Baku, the President of the Board of Trade expressed British support for a general ceasefire which would enable the Rome talks to reconvene. He gave President Elchibei a letter from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister which also made this point. Separately, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has been in touch with the Turkish Foreign Minister to suggest that Turkey use its influence in the region to help bring about a peaceful settlement.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what Her Majesty's Government are doing to alleviate the suffering caused by the continuing dispute in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government are concerned at the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh where humanitarian needs during the forthcoming winter will be considerable. The Government therefore are contributing £250,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross which has representatives in Nagorno-Karabakh and is distributing aid there. This money will be used to help Armenian and Azeri victims of the conflict alike.

Indian Ocean

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's security interests in the Indian ocean outside the Gulf.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, we have a general interest in peace and security in the Indian ocean region. More specifically, we retain sovereignty over British Indian ocean territory in which military facilities are located in Diego Garcia.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Robert Jackson: About 140 items are on loan to the Cabinet Office and Cabinet Office (OPSS) under the provision of the Public Records Act 1958, section 4(6) of which gives Government Departments a statutory right to retrieve records temporarily from the Public Record Office for their own administrative use. This number changes from day to day as records are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list, for each local authority area in south Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Office of Public Service and Science does not own any residential properties in south Yorkshire.

Charter Marks

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he has taken to encourage public organisations to apply for the charter mark awards.

Mr. Waldegrave: The charter mark scheme was publicised in both the local and the national press following its launch in January this year. Interested organisations were invited to contact a freefone number to obtain further details of the scheme. Additionally, the scheme was brought to the attention of the relevant bodies by Departments.

We are currently conducting a review of all aspects of the charter mark scheme, and have commissioned some research which will, amongst other things, identify the best ways of publicising the scheme in future years.

Science Budget

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the text of his letter to Sir David Phillips, chairman of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, seeking the board's advice on the allocation of the science budget in 1993-94 and later years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following is the text of my letter:

Sir David Phillips KBE FRS
Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils
PROVISION FOR SCIENCE 1993-94 to 1995-96

I am writing to let you know the outcome of this years' Public Expenditure survey, and to seek the Board's help in allocating the funds now available for the science budget for 1993-94 and later years.

As you know, this has been an exceptionally difficult survey. All existing plans for public expenditure have been reviewed to ensure that we meet our over-riding economic objectives. The resulting provision for the science budget will be £1,164·6m in 1993-94, £1,231·5m in 1994-95 and £1,264·7m in 1995-96.

These figures are lower than the previous planning figures announced last November. They take account of the reduction since then in the expected level of inflation, as measured by the reduction in the GDP deflator. After allowing for the dual support transfer, the revised figures provide for at least level funding in real terms throughout the planning period. In the circumstances, I believe that they represent a good settlement for science.

I nevertheless recognise that the lower level of provision now available will require a reassessment of priorities as compared with previous plans. There have also been changes since the Board's advice was submitted last May which affect the position of individual funded bodies.

Before deciding on the distribution of the funds available for 1993-94 and later years, I would find it most helpful to have the Board's assessment of the impact of such changes on individual funded bodies, and its judgment of what our priorities should now be. I am asking the Chief Scientific Adviser, as my representative on the Board, and my officials in the Office of Public Service and Science to work with you to this end.

Since the Science Budget is a matter of considerable Parliamentary and public interest, I propose to follow precedent by publishing the text of this letter in the form of a Parliamentary Answer.

Office of Public Service and Science

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what expenditure will be incurred by the Office of Public Service and Science in the period 1993-94 to 1995-96.

Mr. Waldegrave: Spending on the areas covered by the new Office of Public Service and Science (OPSS) will rise in real terms next year. The programme totals will be £1,255 million in 1993-94, £1,321 million in 1994-95 and £1,349 million in 1995-96.

Planned expenditure on public service functions is £85 million in 1993-94, £84 million in 1994-95 and £78 million in 1995-96.

Provision for science, including expenditure financed by EC receipts, is £1,170 million in 1993-94, £1,237 million in 1994-95 and £1,271 million in 1995-96.

These figures include sums transferred from higher education funding of £125 million, £154 million and £157 million respectively, to cover the additional responsibilities of the research councils for the projects which they support in higher education institutions.

Within these totals, the sums available for distribution on the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils will be £1,165 million, £1,231 million and £1,265 million. Total science provision for each year will be 3·7 per cent., 7·5 per cent. and 10·5 per cent. higher in cash terms than the estimated outturn in 1992-93, excluding the sums transferred.

I am inviting the Advisory Board for the Research Councils to work with the chief scientific adviser and my officials to consider how these sums should be distributed so as to achieve the best value from the resources available.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has to change the 1992-93 cash limit or running costs limit for the Office of Public Service and Science.

Mr. Waldegrave: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the cash limit for the Office of Public Service and Science (class XIX, vote 1) will be increased by £3,293,000 from £38,459,000 to £41,752,000. The Department's running costs limit will be increased by £15,046,000 from £49,098,000 to £64,144,000.

A total of £2,774,000 of the increase in cash limit is required to take forward the work of the citizens charter and £519,000 is required to meet certain costs arising from the creation of the new Department. The additional running costs reflect the transfer of certain functions from HM Treasury (class XVIII, vote 1) to the Office of Public Service and Science and, also, covers additional provision for the transfer of functions which resulted from the machinery of government changes announced after the general election. All the changes are within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cash Limits

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes he intends to make to his Department's cash limits for 1992-93.

Mr. Gummer: The cash limit for class III vote 4 (agricultural, food and fishing services) will be reduced by £18,200,000 from £368,256,000 to £350,056,000. Within this limit expenditure will be reduced by £16,871,000 on agricultural schemes and by £600,000 on sea fishery support. These reductions reflect a predicted decrease in demand and delay in implementation in further areas of these schemes. Expenditure on civil defence will be reduced by £529,000 reflecting a further reduction in the size of the emergency food stockpile. The remaining reduction (£200,000) reflects two transfers of funds to other Government Departments, to ODA £150,000 as part of the United Kingdom Aid to the St. Petersburg seed potato project and to the Cabinet Office £50,000 as part of the United Kingdom support for science in the CIS.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of cases of birds, by species, whose cause of death was from ingesting grain which had been treated with pesticides in each year since 1985.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested, based on confirmed incidents in England and Wales reported through the wildlife incident investigation scheme is as follows:

	Cases
Feral pigeon	
1985	3
1986	4
1987	2
1988	4
1989	3
1990	4
1991	5
Wood pigeon	
1986	2
1987	3
1988	1
1990	1
1991	1
Collared Dove	
1986	1
Pheasant	
1986	3
1987	1
1988	1
1989	2
1990	2
1991	2
Red-legged Partridge	
1986	1
Mallard	
1986	1
1987	1
1989	3
1990	1
Greylag Goose	
1986	1
Bewick's Swan	
1985	1
Moorhen	
1989	1
Magpie	
1985	1
1987	1
Jay	
1986	1
1991	1
Jackdaw	
1985	1
1986	1
1990	1
Rook	
1986	1
1990	4
Blackbird	
1986	2
1987	1
1989	1
Robin	
1986	1
1987	1
Blue Tit	
1988	1
House Sparrow	
1986	3
1987	1
1989	1
Greenfinch	
1987	1
Chaffinch	
1988	1
Corn Bunting	
1986	1
Yellowhammer	
1986	1
1988	1
Domestic Fowl	
1986	1
1988	1

HEALTH

Dewsbury Health Authority

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many executive directors and non-executive directors will be paid, and at what remuneration, as members of the Dewsbury health authority for the year 1993-94; and if she will specify their precise responsibilities.

Dr. Mawhinney: All district health authorities comprise a chairman and up to five non-executive members and five executive members. The non-executive members currently receive annual remuneration of £5,000. Details of the remuneration of executive members and the precise responsibilities of both executive and non-executive members are matters for the health authority itself.

Staff Relocation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what costs will be incurred by her Department from the relocation of staff working for the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, Sheffield, to Victory house, London, including *(a)* the additional salary costs and *(b)* additional business rate payments;

(2) what plans she has to move national health service staff from regional locations to Victory house, Tottenham Court road, London; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: No costs would be incurred by the Department. The proposals are being considered by the English national board as part of a cost savings programme and would involve only employees of the ENB.

Dentists, Coventry

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists in the Coventry family health services authority have withdrawn from NHS services for adults and for children.

Dr. Mawhinney: No dentists in the Coventry family health services authority's (FHSA's) area have asked for their name to be removed from the FHSA's dental list.

Hospital Waiting Lists, York

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how long on average a patient in the York health authority area has to wait from the date of referral to the date of being seen by a hospital specialist in each specialty at *(a)* the latest date for which figures are available and *(b)* 12 months earlier.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 29 October 1992 at column *848*.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many patients in the York health authority area had been waiting for an ordinary admission in each specialty for 0 to 11 months, for one to two years, and for more than two years at *(a)* the latest date for which figures are available and *(b)* 12 months earlier;

(2) how many patients in the York health authority area had been waiting for day surgery in each specialty for 0 to 11 months, for one to two years, and for more than two years at *(a)* the latest date for which figures are available and *(b)* 12 months earlier.

Mr. Sackville: Waiting time information by district health authority is published in "Hospital Waiting List, In-patients and Day Cases", copies of which are available in the Library. Day case figures were first published in September 1991.

Homeless People (Psychiatric Treatment)

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many homeless people, including street homeless in London, have received psychiatric treatment within each of the last five years; and what proportion this represented in each year of the total population of homeless people in London.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is not available centrally.

Child Psychotherapy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many child psychotherapists are in practice in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: At 30 September 1991, 198·06 whole-time equivalent child psychotherapists were employed within the national health service in England. Information about the number of child psychotherapists in practice outside the national health service is not collected centrally. Information relating to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

NHS Waiting Lists

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were on national health service waiting lists in March 1990; and what is the current figure.

Mr. Sackville: Provisional figures for September 1992 show that there was a total of 939,846 people on national health service waiting lists compared with 958,976 in March 1990, a reduction of 2 per cent. More significantly, the number of patients waiting 12 months or more fell by more than 80,000 to 7·5 per cent. over the same period.

Departmental Spending

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes will be made to the cash limits and running cost limit of her Department in 1992-93.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The cash limit for class XIII vote 1 (hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, England) will be reduced by £54,991,000 (from £18,564,499,000 to £18,509,508,000). This decrease allows for transfers to class XIII, vote 4 (family health services (part) and national health service trusts external financing etc., England) of £37,399,000 reflecting an increase in the NHS trusts' aggregate external financing limit and £18,492,000 for the unallocated element of the original estimate of GP fundholders' drug budget requirements. These reductions are partly offset by a transfer from class XIII, vote 2 (family health (part) and other services, England) of £900,000 for the safe disposal of drugs. The cash limit for class XIII, vote 3 (Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England) will be reduced by £958,000 (from £822,481,000 to £821,523,000). This reduction allows for a transfer of £735,000 to class XI, vote 2 (Department for Education higher and further education) and £223,000 to class XI, vote 3 (Department of Education student awards, loans and compensation payments) for the conversion of social work training courses.

Pay Review Body

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will be presenting evidence to the pay review body for nurses, midwives and health visitors.

Mr. Sackville: Written evidence was submitted on 18 September.

West Midlands Health Authority

Mr. Barden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *185*, on meetings with the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority, which other members of her ministerial team met Sir James Ackers on 28 October; and what matters were discussed.

Dr. Mawhinney: A meeting of the NHS policy board was held on 28 October, at which a wide range of matters concerning the NHS were discussed. The meeting was attended by, amongst others, the Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State for Health my hon. Friends the Members for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) and for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville).

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what restrictions have been made in the funding of voluntary overtime offered by the crews of the London ambulance service *(a)* from January to October and *(b)* since 1 November last.

Mr. Sackville: The London ambulance service (LAS) must provide its services within the resources agreed with the South West Thames regional health authority. In common with all ambulance services the LAS manages staff expenditure including overtime within their annual budget. The LAS have therefore established a unit to co-ordinate overtime against expected demand on a pan-London basis.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what powers she has to instruct the South West Thames regional health authority to cease budget capping of emergency ambulance crews of the London ambulance service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The London ambulance service (LAS) must provide its services within the resources agreed with the South West Thames regional health authority. In common with all ambulance services the LAS manages staff expenditure including overtime within their annual budget. The emergency service which is provided by the LAS must be managed from within the total budget available to the service. My relationship to the management of the LAS is no different than with any other directly managed unit within the NHS. We have asked the chairman of the South West Thames regional health authority, the accountable management authority, to take immediate action on a number of matters to improve the performance of the LAS.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue guidelines on the parity of access to hospital treatment for waiting list surgery between fund holding and non-fund holding general practices; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: In June last year, the national health service management executive and the joint consultants committee of the British Medical Association issued guidance on GP fundholding in EL(91)84, a copy of which is available in the Library. This sets out the criteria for acceptable contracts to be agreed between GP fundholders and all NHS hospitals. It clearly states that hospitals should not offer contracts to fundholders which would disadvantage patients of other purchasers.

Victory House, London

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much office space for which her Department is responsible was empty in Victory house, Tottenham Court road, London on 31 October.

Mr. Sackville: None. Victory house is occupied solely by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting—a non-departmental public body.

Audit Commission Reports

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what powers she holds to require a regional health authority to publish the reports it has commissioned into a district health authority;

(2) what powers she holds to require a regional health authority to publish reports it has commissioned from the Audit Commission.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has power to give directions to regional health authorities concerning the functions that they discharge on her behalf. This would include the power to direct the publication of a report commissioned by an authority into its exercise of those functions.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 5 November, *Official Report,* column *348,* to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield, if she will list the major reports commissioned from the Audit Commission or outside consultants in respect of the West Midlands health authority or its constituent districts which have *(a)* been completed and *(b)* been received in draft.

Dr. Mawhinney: West Midlands regional health authority referred the matter of its regional supplies organisation to its independent statutory auditor who reported in July 1992 under section 15 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982. The findings were published on 10 September 1992. The statutory auditor has also decided to carry out audits of West Midlands RHA on Healthtrac and the maangement buy-out of the Management Information Services Division by Qa Business Services. The timetable for completion of this work is a matter for the Audit Commission. Details of reports carried out by outside consultants on behalf of West Midlands RHA or its constituent districts are a matter for the RHA and the hon. Member may wish to contact Sir James Ackers, the chairman of West Midlands RHA, For details.

ENVIRONMENT

Endangered Species

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make it his policy to seek the amendment of article 3 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species' regulations so that species are included in annex B in instances when trade is deemed incompatible with species survival;

(2) if he will make it his policy to seek the amendment of article 4 of the CITES regulations to allow imports only when benefits to conservation have been proven.

Mr. Maclean: Good progress is being made under the United Kingdom presidency in discussion of the proposed EC CITES regulation. One of our key objectives is to strengthen protection for species in which any trade would be incompatible with their survival. Our policy is that such species should be listed in annex A so that they can be given the highest level of protection. Annex B, which affords less protection, should, however, include species whose survival would be threatened only in certain places or by trade at particular levels.

Imports of annex A specimens should be allowed only in exceptional circumstances, generally when they would be of conservation benefit. Such strict restrictions would not be appropriate for species listed on other annexes in which trade is not incompatible with their survival.

The general approach of the Government to this proposal was set out by my noble friend the Lord Strathclyde in his letter of 14 September to the Lord Moran. The letter is available in the Library of the House together with copies of representations received by the Department in response to a consultation exercise carried out earlier this year.

Right-to-Buy Scheme

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on how many of those homes repossessed because of mortgage arrears in the last three years were bought under the right-to-buy scheme.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not collect this information.

Housing Waiting Lists

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people in England and Wales are at present on council waiting lists for housing.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities in England report the number of households on their council housing waiting lists in their annual housing investment programme (HIP1) returns.

The figures, as at 1 April 1992, are in column B5 of the "1992 HIP1 All Items Print", a copy of which is in the Library.

For information about Wales, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Housing Associations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the research report commissioned by the Housing Corporation into the level of rehabilitation activity by housing associations.

Mr. Baldry: The research in question was commissioned by the Department of the Environment. The report is due to be published next month, and copies will be placed in the Library at that time.

Local Government Pensions

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to reply to the hon. Member for Swansea, West's request for a meeting about pensions for retired local government officers.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend will write to the hon. Member shortly.

"Competing for Quality in Housing"

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses have been received by his Department to the consultation paper "Competing for Quality in Housing"; and how many were *(a)* against and *(b)* in favour of proposals to amend section 105 of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Baldry: A total of 431 responses have now been received to the consultation paper "Competing for Quality in Housing". The majority of those which referred to the proposal to amend section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 were not in favour. However, that was before respondents had the opportunity to consider the detailed provisions now included in the Housing and Urban Development Bill, which give tenants enhanced powers to influence practically and constructively the ways in which their houses are managed.

Council House Sales

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the number of former council properties that have been re-sold following purchase under the right-to-buy legislation.

Mr. Baldry: An estimated 200,000 households owned different accommodation in 1991 having previously bought a dwelling from a local authority as sitting tenants, whether through voluntary sales by the local authority or under the right-to-buy legislation. Purchasers from a local authority who were no longer owner occupiers are not covered by this estimate.

This figure is the most recently available and is from the 1991 Labour Force Survey housing trailer. The LFS is a sample survey and so the estimate is subject to sampling error.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats have been sold by councils under the right-to-buy legislation in each London borough, in each year since 1980.

Mr. Baldry: Tables showing the available information on total right-to-buy sales for each English local authority for every financial year since 1980 and a cumulative total to June 1992 were recently placed in the Library. In addition, the tables give data on total sales and on the number of flats sold.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the level of finance available for those seeking to purchase their council properties;

(2) what meetings officials from his Department have had with representatives of lenders and lending institutions concerning lending practices with regard to former council property;

(3) what information he has concerning the availability of mortgage finance for the purchase of former council property in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Council tenants exercising their right to buy have at present the right to a mortgage from the landlord. Most tenants, however, prefer to take out a private loan. Currently only 4 per cent. of sales by value are financed through a mortgage from the landlord.

When a right-to-buy property is resold, subsequent buyers do not have the right to a mortgage from the landlord but must obtain private finance. Following reports that some prospective purchasers of ex-council flats were having difficulty obtaining mortgages, I met representatives of the Council of Mortgage Lenders and some of the major building societies. They assure me that it is their policy to consider every mortgage application, including those for former council properties, on its merits.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of former council properties awaiting sale.

Mr. Baldry: No information is held by the Department on the number of former council properties awaiting sale.

Stockton-on-Tees

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet considered Stockton-on-Tees borough council's response to the notice served on the authority on 12 August under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend has given careful consideration to the response which Stockton-on-Tees borough council has made to the notice served on the authority on 12 August 1992, and has today given a direction under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 in respect of refuse collection work. The direction requires the council to retender the contract and to seek the Secretary of State's consent before awarding the work to its direct service organisation.

Housing Revenue Account

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce his proposals for housing revenue account subsidy entitlement for 1993-94.

Sir George Young: My Department is tomorrow consulting local authorities about my proposal for the management and maintenance allowances and rent guidelines to be used in calculating authorities' entitlement to housing revenue account subsidy next year. I will place the consultation papers in the Library with a list of proposed guidelines and allowances for each authority.

I propose an average increase in guideline rents of £2·12 a week within a range of £1·50 to £3·00, giving a new average guideline rent of £29·40 a week; at 5 per cent. above inflation, this is a smaller increase in cash terms than for 1992-93.

On management and maintenance, I propose an overall increase of 1 per cent. above inflation, enabling further progress to be made towards targeting allowances according to relative need. For 1994-95 and 1995-96, I am proposing further increases in guideline rents of 5 per cent. above the underlying rate of inflation in each year, and in the overall national management and maintenance allowance of 1 per cent. above the underlying rate of inflation in each year. I will review these guidelines and allowances each year after taking into account the relevant matters known to me at the time.

2 Marsham Street

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to vacate 2 Marsham street; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: On 2 June I announced that the Government proposed to relocate some 2,000 staff of the Department of the Environment to docklands. I did so in the light of advice that exceptional value for money was available there. I made it clear that I intended to secure fully commercial terms giving value for money to the taxpayer. I fully expected to be able to do so.

Subsequently, it emerged that rents elsewhere in London were falling rapidly and sharply. In pursuit of value for money my Department commissioned a further study to look at other locations, including the future availability of sites on the existing Government estate. Steps were also taken to establish the feasibility of remaining in Marsham street beyond the end of 1993 and precisely how much it would cost.

The further work led us to conclude that taking account of falling rents and the considerable and continuing staff related costs involved in a move to docklands, such a move did not now represent best value for money for the Department. Nor, given the present severe constraints on public spending, could I now justify the substantial one-off costs of a move in 1993-94. The study of 2 Marsham street has shown that it is both safe and affordable to remain there for a period although the building will, in due course, have to be pulled down.

The Government has therefore decided that the Department of the Environment should remain in Marsham street for about three years, and use the intervening period to find the most suitable accommodation at the best value for money for the taxpayer.

Poll Tax Arrears

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the current poll tax arrears for each local authority in England.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer given on 6 November to the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones), *Official Report*, column *370*.

Street Lighting

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines are currently provided for the improvement of street lighting in the interests of safety for women.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* I have been asked to reply.

Road lighting is generally installed to conform with British Standard codes of practice. Earlier this year the BS published BS 5489: Part 3: 1992 code of practice for lighting subsidiary roads and associated pedestrian areas. This code requires an assessment to be made whether the crime risk is high, average or low. The recommended lighting design is then related to the crime risk.

Public Record Office

95. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. Howard: Government Departments have a statutory right under the Public Record Acts to retrieve records temporarily from the Public Record Office for their own administrative use. My Department currently has 28 records out on loan, as listed. Some of these are with the Department of National Heritage, for whom my Department continues to provide a records management service. Records are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed.

File Titles of Records temporarily withdrawn from Public Record Office

1. Caravan sites; Certificates of exemptions; policy.
2. Interdepartmental committee on atomic health and safety.
3. Stanton Drew: Acquisition or preservation.
4. St. John's Lodge: Proposals for future use.
5. St. John's Lodge: Lease of Bedford College.
6. Duck Island Lodge: Works.
7. Longford River: Diversion.
8. Temporary Cenotaph: Disposal of original model.
9. Scope of Metropolitan Statues Act.
10. Green Park: Three plans by Barry.
11. Procedure in the event of death of Sir Winston Churchill.
12. St. Just, Cornwall.
13. Silchester, Hampshire.
14. Dewsbury, Yorks: Moot Hall.
15. Tower of London: Crown Jewels (two records).
16. Tower of London: Jewel House Site.
17. Aycliffe Development Corporation.
18. Hatfield: Town Centre revised development proposals.
19. Dawley (Telford DC) Development Corporation: Appointment of members.
20. Letchworth Garden City Development Corporation: Appointment of members.
21. Water Undertakings: Welsh National Water Development Authority.
22. Town and Country Planning Act 1947: Mineral Regulations (two records).
23. Dolomite: Doncaster.
24. Extension of existing spoil heaps.
25. Wellington museum (two records).

Tree Preservation Orders

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the current statutes and regulations governing tree preservation orders in England and the dates on which they took effect.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is as follows:

	Came into force
Primary legislation	
Town and Country Planning Act 1990	24 August 1990
Planning and Compensation Act 1991, section 23	6 January 1992
Regulations	
Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order) Regulations 1969	10 February 1969
Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order) (Amendment) and (Trees in Conservation Areas) (Exempted Cases) Regulations 1975	12 March 1975
Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order) (Amendment) Regulations 1981	13 January 1981
Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order) (Amendment) Regulations 1988	30 June 1988

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for each local authority area in South Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. Howard: None.

Cash Limits

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to change his Department's cash limits and running costs limit for 1992-93.

Mr. Howard: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

(i) the cash limit for class VIII, vote 2 (miscellaneous housing administration and grants) will be reduced by £11,090,000 from £285,894,000 to £274,804,000. This decrease reflects a reduced requirement for expenditure on Housing Action Trusts (HATs) as a result of delays in the programmes for the four prospective HATs (Liverpool, Birmingham, Brent and Tower Hamlets) and slippage and economies in the programmes of the two established HATs (North Hull and Waltham Forest).

(ii) the cash limit for class VIII, vote 5 (central environmental services etc.) will be increased by £1,855,000 from £315,272,000 to £317,127,000. The increase includes provision for the new UK Ecolabelling Board; additional grant-in-aid to the Countryside Commission resulting from the partial take up of the end year flexibility entitlement, as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992 (*Official Report*, columns 698-702); additional grant-in-aid to English Nature; increased expenditure on international contributions; and increased grant for water supply and sewerage in assisted areas. These increases are partially offset by reductions made elsewhere on the vote. The cash limit change also reflects certain other minor adjustments to subheads within the Vote and makes provision for transfers to class VIII, vote 4 and the Overseas Development Administration to fund African elephant conservation projects.

(iii) the cash limit for class VIII, vote 8 (Department of the Environment: administration) will be reduced by £600,000 from £211,622,000 to £211,022,000 and the Department's running costs limit will be increased by £283,000 from £201,616,000 to £201,899,000. The changes include various inter-departmental transfers; the start-up costs of the relocation unit which is being funded from within existing provision; savings resulting from the dissolution of the Local Government Boundary Commission and reduced receipts from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. It is the Department's intention to seek Parliamentary approval for these changes in a spring Supplementary Estimate for class VIII, vote 8.

(iv) the cash limit for class VIII, vote 9 (revenue support grant, payment of non-domestic rates, valuation office rating services, etc., England) will be decreased by £7,037,000 from £29,530,333,000 to £29,523,296,000. The decrease reflects a change in the timing of payments of the council tax preparation grant; 66 per cent. will now be paid in 1992-93 with the balance paid in 1993-94.

(v) The DoE/UA non-voted cash limit will be increased by £28,354,000 from £989,095,000 to £1,017,449,000. This includes an increase of £12,100,000 for Olympic preparations; it also includes increased grant-in-aid of £15,555,000 to the London Docklands development corporation for work on extensions to the Docklands light railway and associated administration costs. This will be offset in part by a reduction of £1,900,000 in the

Department of Transport's cash limit for class VII, vote 2. A further £14,190,000 is required for the Bristol spine road, land purchase in Leeds, reclamation and workspace provision in Merseyside and to increase the resources for local authority sector derelict land grant. £3,800,000 is being made available for assistance following colliery closures. There have been savings of £11,391,000 from city grant and derelict land grant as well as a £4,000,000 increase in derelict land grant receipts.

(vi) the Doe/HC non-voted cash limit will be increased by £700,000 from £1,706,500,000 to £1,707,200,000. This increase results from the full take-up of end year flexibility entitlement as announced by the Chief Secretary on 15 July 1992 (*Official Report*, cols *698-702*).

(vii) the DoE/LACAP non-voted cash limit will be increased by £6,540,000 from £2,908,289,000 to £2,914,829,000. This increase reflects the transfer to the Estate Action programme of £6,294,000 of the savings on Housing Action Trusts; £1,403,000 full take-up of end year flexibility entitlement as announced by the Chief Secretary on 15 July 1992 (*Official Report*, cols. *698-702*); and an increase of £310,000 in estate action grant. It also reflects savings of £1,467,000 in the revenue element of slum clearance and renovation grants.

(viii) the DoE/OES non-voted cash limit will be reduced by £40,117,000 from £149,133,000 to £109,016,000. The reduction reflects lower than expected take-up by local authorities of supplementary credit approvals for certain waste initiatives and takes account of an increase in payments on class VIII, vote 4.

(ix) the national loans fund cash limit for housing action trusts (HATs) will be reduced by £2,004,000 from £2,004,000 to zero. This decrease reflects a reduced requirement on HATs as a result of delays in the programmes for the four prospective HATs (Liverpool, Birmingham, Brent and Tower Hamlets) and slippage and economies in the programmes of the two established HATs (North Hull and Waltham Forest).

These changes are reflected in the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

Property Services Agency

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to make to the cash limit on the Property Services Agency services vote in 1992-93.

Mr. Redwood: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limt for class VIII, vote 12 will be increased by £55,109,000 from £128,885,000 to £183,994,000. The increase will not constitute a claim on the Reserve as it will be netted of the proceeds from the Government's privatisation programme.

The estimate is sought to secure provision, mainly for the subscription of shares, so that the sale of PSA Projects may proceed as planned in December 1992. The cash asset reflects the currently estimated net liabilities of PSA Projects at end November 1992. These are £5,331,000 greater than those on which all prospective purchasers based their bids in the knowledge that, in the event of any under-or over-estimation, the sale consideration would be adjusted pound for pound. The impact is to increase the negative consideration payable at completion to £55,109,000. A completion statement will be prepared to quantify the actual liabilities at the date of sale and the sale consideration will be subject to further adjustment for any difference between the estimated and actual net liabilities whether in favour of the vendor or purchaser. Parliament will be advised of the final position at that time.

The consideration will also be subject to adjustment depending on the number of transferred staff in the business a year after the sale.

Expenditure on advisors fees incurred in preparing for the BM sales and in completing the Projects sale may be subject to revision in a spring supplementary estimate depending on progress of work and bills tendered.

The increase in this cash limit is within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his proposals for the appropriate level of aggregate local authority spending in 1993-94; and what is the level of central support for that spending.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue the consultation paper on the Government proposals for revenue support grant for 1993-94.

Mr. Howard: I propose that total standard spending for 1993-94 should be £41·142 billion for England. This represents an increase of £1·224 billion (3·1 per cent.) compared with this year's figure after adjustments for changes in local authority functions, including the transfer of most responsibilities for further education from authorities to the Further Education Funding Council on 1 April 1993. The total also includes the amount of £539 million for the transitional community care special grant announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 2 October.

This is a realistic increase when account is taken of falling inflation, public sector pay restraint in line with the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor today, and the extensive opportunities which authorities have to improve efficiency and value for money.

I propose that the level of aggregate external finance distributed to local authorities in 1993-94 should be £33·518 billion. This represents an increase of £1·167 billion (3·7 per cent.) after allowing for functional changes. It also includes the special grant for community care. This level of aggregate external finance means that the amount which authorities need to raise from local taxpayers in 1993-94 should be less in real terms than is being raised by the community charge this year.

I also propose that the national non-domestic rate multiplier for 1993-94 in England should rise by 3·5 per cent. to 0·416, in line with the rate of inflation. This will ensure that once again businesses will benefit from the Government's success in reducing inflation.

I shall announce proposals for the distribution of Government grants in 1993-94 later this month. At the same time, I intend to announce my capping proposals. I shall also set out my proposals for a scheme of transitional assistance to those households which face a significant increase in their local tax bills following the introduction of the council tax.

In the present difficult economic climate, both central and local government need to play their part in restraining expenditure to a level that the country can afford. Against that background, these proposals for total standard spending, aggregate external finance and the national non-domestic rate multiplier provide a sound framework for the funding of local authority services in 1993-94. Provided that authorities act responsibly, this settlement should allow them to maintain the services they provide next year.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Inspectorate

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend the consultation period for the vehicle inspectorate beyond 30 November and extend the list of organisations consulted to include all those concerned with road safety and traffic-related environmental issues.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. The consultation paper on options for the future of the vehicle inspectorate (VI) allowed ample time—11 weeks—for comment, and was sent to a broad range of road safety and environmental interests.

Okehampton Bypass

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many acres of land have been obtained, and at what cost, as public open space to compensate the loss to the public of open space as a result of the compulsory purchase order and the building of the Okehampton bypass.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A total of 5·2 acres of land is being acquired under compulsory purchase powers in exchange for open space land at Bluebell Woods taken for the construction of the bypass. The purchase price is confidential between the Department and the vendor.

My Department has also used its best endeavours to make other purchases of land in mitigation of the effects of the bypass, but has no compulsory powers to do this; 6·2 acres of land have been purchased from British Rail, near Okehampton station; this land is now known as Station Wood and is available to the public. Negotiations with another landowner concerning land near Okehampton castle have proved unsuccessful.

2 Marsham Street

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes that his Department should vacate 2 Marsham street; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacGregor: I have decided on value for money grounds that my Department will remain in 2 Marsham street for around the next three years. This decision follows a study of the options for relocation conducted during the summer.

My decision takes account both of the constraints on public expenditure and the results of a study by consultants which concluded that 2 Marsham street could continue to provide affordable and safe working conditions for several more years.

In the longer term, the building will have to be demolished and my Department will therefore be seeking suitable accommodation when a move becomes necessary.

Clapham Junction Accident

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the recommendations in the Hidden report into the rail accident at Clapham junction have now been implemented.

Mr. Freeman: All the recommendations for British Rail and the British Transport Police have either been or are being implemented. The board's 1992 safety plan demonstrates the current safety initiatives underway, and the considerable resources BR is devoting to maintaining and improving its good safety record. Copies of the safety plan are available in the Library of the House.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Sheerby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current external financing limit for the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Norris: The CAA's EFL for 1992-93 has been reduced by £1·1 million to £65·6 million. This is a technical adjustment reflecting the receipt of a European regional development fund (ERDF) grant for £1·1 million. The funds available to the CAA for investment will not be affected by this change.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider making an exemption from toll charges of disabled drivers crossing the Severn bridge.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Section 8(5) of the Severn Bridges Act 1992 already exempts from tolls at the Severn bridge vehicles registered for use by disabled persons and exempt from vehicle excise duty, and vehicles being driven by disabled persons, or being used for their carriage, on which a current orange badge is displayed.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the factors affecting the permitted increase in the Severn bridge tolls from 1 January 1993; and what is their relationship to the retail prices index.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Section 9 of the Severn Bridges Act 1992 sets out the method by which the tolls at the Severn bridge are to be fixed, including the adjustments to be made in respect of changes in the retail prices index.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had in relation to the increase in the level of tolls on the Severn bridge from 1 January 1993.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the companies that have expressed an interest in his rail privatisation proposals; and if he will make a statement on the extent of private sector interest in his proposals.

Mr. Freeman: Before the issue of the consultation document on 12 October we had received expressions of interest about running franchised passenger railway services from around 50 companies. These approaches and subsequent ones arising from the consultation document are being treated as confidential. It would be inappropriate for me to list the companies or indicate the extent of their specific interests at this stage.

Chelsea-Hackney Railway Line

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the route of the Chelsea-Hackney line has been safeguarded; and when progress will be made on building it.

Mr. Norris: Safeguarding directions for the line were issued by the Secretary of State for Transport in exercise of the powers conferred by articles 14(1), 18(3) and 30 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988. Initial directions were issued on 7 February 1991 and revised directions issued on 12 November 1991.

I cannot say when the line will be built. Decisions will be taken in the context of future public expenditure rounds.

Jubilee Line

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the proposed Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

London Transport

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on changes to the capital programmes of London Transport following the 1992 autumn statement.

Mr. Norris: London Transport will have to reassess its investment plans in the light of the funding announced in the autumn statement. Subject to that, I believe the settlement is sufficient to allow London Transport to invest £1·75 billion in the existing bus and underground system over the coming three years. This is some £0·5 billion higher, in real terms, than investment over the past three years. The funding is also sufficient to allow preparatory work on Crossrail to continue. And provision has been made for the Jubilee line extension, so that it can go ahead if the administrators of Olympia and York can meet our conditions on the provision of private finance by them.

Cash Limits

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he proposes to make to the cash limit and running costs limit for his Department for 1992-93.

Mr. MacGregor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limits in class VII will be changed as follows:

Class and Vote	*Current Cash Limit*	*Changes*	*Revised Cash Limit*
VII, 1	2,124,258,000	[1,2]1,000	2,124,259,000
2	211,882,000	[1,3]3,323,000	215,205,000
4	171,657,000	[4]112,000	171,769,000
5	438,781,000	[1]1,070,000	439,851,000

[1] Take up of entitlement under the end year flexibility arrangements announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992 *(Official Report, columns 698-702)*.

[2] Increases of £914,000 in respect of certain customer budgets from class VII, vote 2, £180,000 from property holdings (class VIII, vote 7) for repayment services and an additional £2,819,000 for the design and building costs of motorway service areas. These increases are offset by the transfer of £817,000 to class VII, vote 2 in relation to some running cost functions and transfer of additional maintenance costs and by the transfer of £4,000,000 to the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Crown Prosecution service to facilitate the implementation of the Road Traffic Act (£1,750,000 to class X, vote 1, £750,000 to class X, vote 2, £320,000 to class X, vote 5 and £1,180,000 to class X, vote 6). The running cost limit has been increased by £600,000 to allow my Department to bring in house certain consultancy work on the design and build of motorways and trunk roads.

[3] Increases of £220,000 in respect of repayment services from property holdings (class VIII, vote 7), £196,000 from Department of Environment (class VIII, vote 8) and £350,000 in respect of the privatisation of British Rail, partially offset by reductions following the transfer of small ships register responsibilities to class VII, vote 4 (£38,000) and of Docklands light railway sponsorship to Department of Enviroment class VIII, vote 8 (£26,000).

[4] Including an increase of £74,000 arising from the transfer of repayment services from property holdings (class VIII, vote 7).

My Department's gross running costs limit has been increased by £2,381,000 from £391,077,000 to £393,458,000.

All the increases are within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

14. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the level of public sector borrowing for the current financial year.

22. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the public sector borrowing requirement in the current year.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be giving a new forecast in his autumn statement later today.

Autumn Statement

16. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what preparations he has made for bringing together the autumn statement with the Budget for 1993.

Mr. Dorrell: Preparations for the first unified Budget in December 1993 are well in hand. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will make further announcements on this important change in his spring Budget statement.

Whisky

17. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of duty on British whisky in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other EC countries; and how much it has gone up in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other EC countries since 1988.

Sir John Cope: In seven states the duty has remained nearly static, in four states, including the UK, the duty has gone up at around the rate of inflation, Greece has put up duty more substantially.

Current EC whisky duty rates and percentage change since 1988[1]

	Pence per 70cl bottle at 40 per cent. abv[2] [3]	*Percentage change since 1988*
Belgium	337	12·1
Denmark	1,036	1·2
France	250	0·2
Germany	278	15·2
Greece	35	[4]533·0
Ireland	574	2·8
Italy	44	−1·7
Luxembourg	202	0·1
Netherlands	309	0·1
Portugal	62	43·1
Spain	89	−0·2
United Kingdom	554	25·6

[1] Rescaled from 75cl bottle (EC regulations no longer permit the use of 75cl bottles).

[2] Rates of exchange as at 10.10.92.

[3] abv-alcohol by volume.

[4] A range of taxes is applied to spirits in Greece. This increase relates to the excise duty element only and the VAT element has been significantly reduced to offset this.

Economic Policy

18. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes there have been in economic policy since 20 October in the current year.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Menzies Campbell).

Financial Services

19. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to consider reforms in the area of financial services compliance in the short or medium-term future.

Mr. Dorrell: I have no plans to reform the current system of professional regulation within a statutory framework, with a strong practitioner input.

Pound Sterling

20. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what review he has undertaken of the effectiveness of measures to protect the pound by intervention in the financial markets.

Mr. Dorrell: The effectiveness of market operations is kept under review.

Pit Closures

21. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings he has had, and what studies he has commissioned, to evaluate the full cost-benefit financial effects to the United Kingdom economy of closing coal mines.

Mr. Portillo: I have had a number of meetings with ministerial colleagues to discuss a wide range of issues relating to the future of the coal industry.

Unit Wage Costs

23. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the rate of unit wage cost growth in the United Kingdom; and what is the corresponding information on Japan and Germany.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1992 Q2 unit wage costs in manufacturing in the United Kingdom were only 1·4 per cent. higher than a year earlier. The corresponding figures for Japan and Germany are 8·6 per cent. and 3·8 per cent. respectively.

Mortgage Interest

24. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the financial effect on a household with a typical mortgage of the changes in mortgage interest rates over the last two years.

Sir John Cope: When the latest base rate cut feeds through to mortgage rates on 1 December, interest payments on an average £33,000 mortgage will have fallen by over £110 a month, compared with payments two years ago, and by over £130 a month compared with the mid-1990 peak.

Social Security Payments

25. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received calling for protection of social security payments in the current public expenditure round; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of such representations.

Fixed Capital Formation

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table showing gross domestic fixed capital formation by region on *(a)* vehicles, ships and aircraft, *(b)* plant and machinery, *(c)* dwellings, *(d)* other new building work and *(e)* in total, for each year from 1989 at 1989 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest information available relates to 1989, and was published in the November 1991 issue of *Economic Trends,* which is available in the House of Commons Library. Estimates for 1990 on a current price basis, together with any revisions for 1989, will be published in the December 1992 issue of *Economic Trends.*

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table showing United Kingdom gross domestic fixed capital formation on *(a)* vehicles, ships and aircraft, *(b)* plant and machinery and *(c)* in total for each year from 1989 at 1989 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: The series requested are available at constant (1985) prices, or at current prices, but not at 1989 prices. The latest estimates are available on the CSO database which may be accessed by the House of Commons Library. The relevant database identifiers are:

	Constant (1985) prices	*Current prices*
(a) Vehicles, ships and aircraft	DFEH	DFEJ
(b) Plant and Machinery	DFCY	DFCX
(c) Total[1]	DFDM	DFDC

[1] Total gross domestic fixed capital formation includes expenditure on new dwellings and other new buildings and works.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total trade deficit in manufactured goods since May 1979 at current prices.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on the balance for manufactured goods is published regularly in the Central Statistical Office's "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and is available on a monthly basis since 1980, and on a quarterly basis for 1979 on the Central Statistical Office databank which may be accessed through the Library of the House.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table showing annual growth in gross domestic product for *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the European Community and *(c)* the OECD for each year since 1989.

Mr. Dorrell: Volume index numbers of gross domestic product, from which these growth rates can be derived, are available on page 11 of the October edition of "Main Economic Indicators" published by OECD.

Copies of this publication are available in the House of Commons Library.

Retail Financial Services

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the introduction of statutory regulation for retail financial services.

Mr. Dorrell: The Financial Services Act 1986 provides a statutory framework for the regulation of retail and other financial services.

Personal Investment Authority

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations he has received from the clearing banks concerning the proposed formation of the personal investment authority;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the formation of the proposed personal investment authority.

Mr. Nelson: The recognition of self-regulating organisations under the Financial Services Act is primarily a matter for the Securities and Investments Board.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what plans he has to give the Securities and Investments Board the power to exact civil penalties as an alternative to criminal prosecutions;

(2) what plans he has to modify the powers of the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Nelson: None. A wide range of powers has been transferred to the Securities and Investments Board under the Financial Services Act. These include powers to institute civil proceedings where appropriate.

IMF and World Bank

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that the voting records of the United Kingdom directors of the International Monetary Fund and the World bank are made publicly available.

Sir John Cope: The proceedings of the IMF and the World bank are confidential so as not to inhibit full and frank discussion. Within this constraint, the United Kingdom welcomes the greater openness recently shown by these institutions.

Company Car Tax

Mr. Madel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of responses to his consultation paper on reforming company car tax were broadly in favour of the Government's proposed price banding system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The consultation period does not end until 13 November and a detailed analysis of the representations is therefore not yet available.

Treasury

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proposals he has for changes in the running costs limits of the Treasury in 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury's running costs limit for 1992-93 is being reduced by £11,312,000 from £92,203,000 to £80,891,000 following the transfer of CCTA—the Government centre for information systems—and Chessington computer centre to the Office of Public Service and Science. The change will be reflected in a token supplementary estimate which will be presented for parliamentary approval in due course.

Cash Limits

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for changes in the cash limit and running costs limit for 1992-93 for the Department for National Savings.

Mr. Nelson: Subject to Parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVIII, vote 10 (expenditure of the Department for National Savings on administration, publicity costs and certain other expenses) will be increased by £2,611,000 from £195,066,000 to £197,677,000. The increase comprises of £1,616,000 take-up under the end-year flexibility arrangements for capital expenditure, £814,000 take-up of end-year flexibility for running costs (as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992 (*Official Report* columns 698-702)), and £181,000 for sums payable to the Department of the Environment (Property Holdings) in respect of buildings maintenance.

As a result of these changes, the running costs limit for the Department for National Savings will be increased by £995,000 from £184,714,000 to £185,709,000.

The increase is within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for changes in the cash limit and running costs limit for Customs and Excise for 1992-93.

Sir John Cope: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVIII, vote 5 will be increased by £6,856,000 from £815,159,000 to £822,015,000 and the running cost limit by £2,458,000 from £697,352,000 to £699,810,000. The increase is within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

The increase in the running cost limit arises from the full take-up of entitlement to end-year flexibility as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992 *Official Report*, columns *698-702*, and additional maintenance provision transferred from Property Holdings. The increase in the cash limit also includes the full take-up of end-year flexibility entitlement on capital expenditure.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for changes in the cash limit and running costs limit for 1992-93 for the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Dorrell: The cash limit for class XVIII, vote 6 (Inland Revenue administration) is being reduced by £43,300,000 from £1,615,071,000 to £1,571,771,000. The running cost limit is also being reduced by £25,300,000 from £1,526,077,000 to £1,500,777,000. The reduction is being made to reflect a lower expectation of the number of repayment claims following the abolition of composite rate tax, reduced provision for pay and slippage on some capital projects. The reductions are partially offset by extra work arising from the 1992 Finance Act and take up of end-year flexibility for running costs.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Government were first informed of the costs of the liquidation of BCCI.

Mr. Nelson: I was first informed of the costs of the liquidation on 5 November.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Economic Secretary to the Treasury last met Mr. Brian Smouha of the liquidator of BCCI; and what was the purpose of the meeting.

Mr. Nelson: I met Mr. Smouha on 5 November. The purpose of the meeting was to acquaint myself with developments on the liquidation of BCCI in advance of the debate in the House on 6 November, *Official Report*, columns *523-94*.

National Savings

Mr. Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to change the minimum deposit or purchase for national savings products.

Mr. Nelson: Small value transactions are expensive to administer so we regularly review the minimum deposit or purchase levels. As part of the survey of public expenditure priorities for the next three years I have decided that the following changes should be made:

Ordinary account minimum for each deposit—from £5 to £10.

Investment account minimum for each deposit—from £5 to £20.

Premium bond minimum purchase for children under 16—from £10 to £100.

Amendments to regulations to effect these changes will be brought before Parliament shortly.

I propose that these changes will come into effect from 1 February 1993.

The changes are expected to produce running cost savings on the Department for National Savings budget of just under £5 million in a full year.

Investors' Compensation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer(1) what action he will take to help those persons who receive compensation from the investors compensation scheme in cases where this compensation does not meet the debts incurred from interest rates and legal cost, following the quantification date; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what additional assistance he can offer to clients of Fisher Prew-Smith Ltd. who have not received compensation under the Financial Services Act 1986 sufficient to cover their mortgage debts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* The rules of the investors compensation scheme are a matter for the Securities and Investment Board.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that the clients of Fisher Prew-Smith Ltd. do not lose their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* Borrowers should contact their building society to discuss interest and repayment arrangements as the societies have made clear that they want to enable borrowers to stay in their homes.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will investigate the involvement of the West Bromwich Building Society in the affairs of Fisher Prew-Smith Ltd.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* The prudential supervision of building societies is a matter for the Building Societies Commission.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will undertake an investigation into the conduct of Fisher Prew-Smith Ltd.; what action he will take to assist persons who have lost money as a result of home income plans; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will investigate the conduct of Ruben Walter Investment Management Ltd. in their handling of investments following the collapse of Fisher Prew-Smith Ltd.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 10 November 1992]:* The regulation of investment businesses is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board and the recognised bodies under the Financial Services Act. Where the investors compensation scheme has declared firms in default, private investors may be eligible for compensation in respect of their losses arising from investment business conducted by the firm.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Coal

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much financial support Her Majesty's Government have given to the coal industry in each year since 1979, indicating what proportion in each year was to fund assistance for redundancies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Grant aid made available to the coal industry from 1979-80 to 1991-92 inclusive is set out in the table which follows. All payments under the RMPS and about 90 per cent. of restructuring grant payments can be classified as assistance with redundancies.

£ millions

Financial Year	*RMPS*[1]	*Restructuring grant*	*Other grants*	*Total grants*
1979-80	15		251	266
1980-81	15		254	269
1981-82	48		575	623
1982-83	80		520	600
1983-84	190		1,145	1,335
1984-85	200		2,414	2,614
1985-86	563		563	1,126
1986-87	610		882	1,492
1987-88	295	435	242	972
1988-89	171	255	42	468
1989-90	128	619	6,624	7,371
1990-91	93	141	0	234
1991-92	69	457	0	526
TOTAL	2,477	1,907	13,512	17,896

[1] Redundant mineworkers payments scheme.

In addition to Government financial support, British Coal has been benefiting from the high margins, over and above world market prices, that the electricity generators pay for their coal supplies from the corporation. Under present contracts, which have been operating since April 1990, this assistance amounts to about £1 billion annually.

Pit Closures

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what will be Lord Walker's salary for administering assistance measures to areas affected by colliery closures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements have been made for the remuneration of Lord Walker for his work in connection with pit closures; and what are the full terms and conditions of Lord Walker's contract.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his statement on 21 October, if he will announce the terms and conditions of the appointment of Lord Walker to assist and advise on the creation of alternative job creation in pit closure areas; and what relationship it will have with his appointment, and the terms and conditions thereof, as chairman-elect of the urban regeneration agency.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will indicate the relevant experience and qualities of Lord Walker leading to his appointment as the person to lead the review of the impact on the mining communities of the proposed pit closures.

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what terms, including salary, he has appointed Lord Walker to co-ordinate action to regenerate areas where coal mines are to be closed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his statement of 19 October, *Official Report*, column 207, if Lord Walker's post as adviser to his Department is to be remunerated.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what salary will be paid to Lord Walker for his work in overseeing the Government's proposed aid to the coal mining areas.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what salary, per diem, or other emoluments Lord Walker will receive whilst fulfilling his duties in respect of assistance to the communities affected by coal closures.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answers 22, 23 and 29 October 1992]*: The Government intend to see that measures of assistance for coal closure areas are effectively targeted and that any wasteful duplication is avoided. Lord Walker will be an adviser to me and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. I see his role as being wide-ranging and will want him to look at any issues relating to the facilitation and co-ordination of the regeneration of the coalfield areas. In addition I have asked him to advise me on the broader implications of this for the delivery of my Department's regional policy and inward investment measures. He will liaise closely with bodies promoting regeneration and will advise me and my right hon. Friend on any measures which could be taken to promote economic revival of the areas. Lord Walker will carry out his work on coalfield regeneration in addition to his role as chairman designate of the urban regeneration agency. He will do this work without remuneration.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what office staff and transport facilities will be provided for Lord Walker for his duties as co-ordinator for the coal fields; and what is the estimated annual cost of staff and office costs for this purpose.

Mr. Heseltine: *[holding answer 23 October 1992]*: My Department and the Welsh Office will provide all the back-up support which Lord Walker may need. Other Departments concerned will also be closely involved in this work. This support will be provided from within existing resources.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now introduce legislation to reverse the Caparo judgment.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: We have no plans to do so.

Cash Limits

Mr. Milligan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes will be made to his Department's cash limits and running costs limit for 1992-93.

Mr. Heseltine: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class IV, vote 2 (support for industry, international trade, statutory and regulatory work, consumer protection and administration) will be increased by £25,707,000 from £778,524,000 to £804,231,100. The cash limit for class V, vote 3 (administration) will be reduced by £23,789,000 from £43,295,000 to £19,506,000. Following a transfer from Property Holdings for building maintenance, the running costs limit for the Department of Trade and Industry is being increased by £311,000 from £305,362,000 to £305,673,000.

The supplementary estimate for £25,707,000 on class IV, vote 2 includes an increase of £1,657,000 in departmental and research establishments' capital expenditure as a result of take-up under the end-year flexibility arrangements announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 July 1992, *Official Report*, columns *698-702*.

A transfer of administrative expenditure and receipts totalling £23,789,000 from class V, vote 3 is being made, mainly following amalgamation of central divisions previously on that vote. The remaining net adjustments include the £311,000 property holdings transfer referred to above and a transfer to the Office of Science and Technology of £50,000 as a contribution to the Royal Society's programme of support for CIS scientists.

There is a rise of £3,173,000 in gross provision for consumer and investor protection, reflecting increased expenditure on company investigations and £1,900,000 in gross provision for the consultancy initiatives as a result of higher than expected demand for the scheme. These increases are wholly offset by reductions in gross provision and increases in appropriations in aid elsewhere on the Vote. There are adjustments to inter-departmental payments following machinery of government changes to the Department of Environment (class VIII, vote 8), HM Treasury (class XVIII, vote V) and Department of National Heritage (class XII, vote 5).

There are some other changes in the allocation of provision. These include adjustments made between measurement and technolgoy support and the National Physical laboratory in respect of depreciation policy and Warren Spring laboratory for repositioning. All the changes are within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement today.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to meet a delegation of creditors and ex-employees to discuss BCCI.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 10 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *734*.

Office of Gas Supply

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what changes are proposed in the 1992-93 cash limit and running costs limit for the Office of Gas Supply.

Mr. Heseltine: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the cash limit on the office of Gas Supply vote (class V vote 8) will be increased by £262,000 to £3,203,000. The increase provides for the estimated additional costs incurred by the Office in overseeing the development and implementation of a new gas transportation and storage regime, in the referral of British Gas to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and in the urgent relocation of the Office of Gas Supply to larger premises. In addition receipts under section 8 of the Gas Act 1986 have been reclassified from appropriations in aid to extra receipts payable to the Consolidated Fund. As a consequence of this the running costs limit has increased by £88,000 to £2,783,000. These increases are within the forecast outturn for the planning total included in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

EC Coal Subsidy

Ms. Quin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if, in his capacity as President of the EC Industry Council, he intends to initiate a Council discussion on differing levels of coal subsidy in the EC.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 November 1992]:* I expect there to be a discussion at the next meeting of the Energy Council on 30 of this month of the coal industry throughout the Community.

Home Equity Share Losses

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action is being taken by his Department to speed up the payment of compensation by insurance companies in respect of home equity share losses.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply. The regulation of investment business carried on by life insurance companies is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board and the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation. They and the other bodies helping to obtain appropriate redress for clients of unsuitable home income schemes are aware of the need to deal with cases as quickly as they can.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 13 November 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list, for each local authority area in south Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department does not own any residential property in south Yorkshire.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Government Departments have a statutory right to retrieve records temporarily from the Public Record Office for their own administrative use. The Lord Chancellor's Department currently has 45 records out on loan. They will be returned when the current administrative need to keep them is over. I will write to the hon. Gentleman with details of their titles.

TRANSPORT

Agencies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the health and safety policy of each of the agencies within his Department.

Mr. Norris: A copy of the health and safety policy of each of the Department's agencies has been placed in the Library today.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what costs have been incurred as a result of the delay in announcing the building of the Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Norris: About £10 million.

Rail Station, Ashford

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made towards the building of an international passenger station at Ashford.

Mr. Freeman: Outline planning consent has been obtained for the new station at Ashford. I am pleased to say that British Rail has confirmed to me that it is now able to progress the first stage of the project which is the track and signalling work necessary before the station itself can be built.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evaluation his Department has carried out of set-aside policy.

Mr. Gummer: In accordance with my Department's standard practice, studies of both the five-year and one-year set-aside schemes were commissioned from independent bodies. I have today placed in the Library of this House a copy of the report by Reading university of its socio-economic study of the first year of the five-year scheme in England, which my Department commissioned in 1989. A copy of the report of a similar evaluation of the scheme in Scotland by the Scottish agricultural colleges was recently placed in the Library by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. I am also placing in the Library today a copy of the report by Wye college, university of London, of its socio-economic evaluation of the one-year set-aside scheme in England, also commissioned by my Department. In addition, I have placed in the Library a summary of the report of monitoring of the public access provisions of the countryside premium scheme, carried out for my Department by independent consultants. I have given all these studies careful consideration, although clearly the European Community's set-aside policy has developed significantly since they were carried out.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime, North Yorkshire

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes of *(a)* violence against the person, *(b)* burglary, *(c)* theft or handling stolen goods and *(d)* criminal damage, and how many crimes in total, were reported to the North Yorkshire police in the 12-month period July 1978 to June 1979, and in the 12-month period July 1991 to June 1992.

Mr. Jack: The available information is for the number of offences recorded by the police in north Yorkshire and is contained in the following table:

Notifiable Offences Recorded by the Police in North Yorkshire

North Yorkshire	*Number of offences*	
Offence group	*July 1978 to June 1979*	*July 1991 to June 1992*
Violence against the person	873	2,115
Burglary	4,873	13,804
Theft and handling goods	12,061	30,453
Criminal damage	2,486	5,726
Other offences	1,635	1,975
Total	21,928	54,073

Wolds Remand Centre

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of each racial incident leading to disciplinary action at the Wolds remand centre since it opened; and if he will outline what action he intends to take to tackle racial tension at the Wolds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There have been no racial incidents leading to disciplinary action at Wolds remand prison since it opened. Tackling issues based on race, including racial tension, is the responsibility of all staff and they receive appropriate training. In addition, a race relations committee and a race relations officer are specifically charged with the task of ensuring that attention is paid to racial matters.

Female Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests for places in mother and baby units in prisons in England and Wales are currently outstanding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Applications for a place on a mother and baby unit are considered by a multi-disciplinary team at a case conference. At present the units have no outstanding applications awaiting consideration.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many mother and baby unit places were available *(a)* at 1 January and *(b)* at 1 November; how many further places are planned for, in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On both 1 January and 1 November there were 38 places available in prison mother and baby units.

At Styal, a further house is being converted to create 10 additional places and will be available before the end of the year. Work will commence over the winter months on a new unit at New Hall, which will provide a further nine places.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many pregnant female prisoners are currently on remand or sentenced in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 11 November there were 38 pregnant women currently on remand or sentenced in England and Wales.

Insurance Fraud

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home department how many firms have been prosecuted for submitting fraudulent insurance claims for fire-damaged property for each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack: Information as to whether prosecutions for fraud offences specifically related to fraudulent insurance claims for fire damaged property is not collected centrally.

Police Funding

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to discuss with police authorities the report by Richard Kornicki on the future of police funding before any decision is taken on its conclusions.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mr. Kornicki's review of police funding is a working document offering internal advice to Ministers. Further work has since been commissioned. No conclusions have yet been reached, but when Ministers have proposals to put forward, we intend that the local authority associations should be among those who are consulted.

Colin Wallace

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of state for the Home Department if he will refer back to the Court of Appeal the conviction of Colin Wallace for manslaughter following new forensic evidence submitted by Professor Bernard Knight.

Mr. Jack: No representations have yet been received containing any such evidence.

Party Conferences

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the additional policing costs arising out of *(a)* the Liberal Democrat party conference, *(b)* the Labour party conference and *(c)* the Conservative party conference in 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the chief officers of the forces concerned that the estimated additional costs are:

(a)	Liberal Democrat	(North Yorkshire)	Nil
(b)	Labour	(Lancashire)	£110,000
(c)	Conservative	(Sussex)	£2,200,000

Women

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those crime prevention initiatives and publicity campaigns which have been directly targeted at women in the last five years.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 9 November 1992]:* Effective action against crime is of benefit to all citizens, men and women alike. But we know that matters such as personal safety can be of particular concern to women. A range of actions has been taken in recent years to enhance the response of the police and other agencies to rape and domestic violence, and there are a number of crime prevention initiatives specifically directed at improving women's safety. These include more than 200 schemes in the safer cities programme and three innovative projects aimed at tackling domestic violence in Islington, Leeds and Merseyside. These are being developed and evaluated by the Home Office. Most police forces produce material giving information and advice for the victims of domestic violence. In addition the Home Office's crime prevention handbook, "Practical Ways to Crack Crime" deals in detail with aspects of personal safety for women.

Broadcasting

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for extending the moratorium on takeovers of ITV companies until the BBC charter is renewed.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

None.

ENVIRONMENT

Community Care

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he will issue to housing authorities on their role in providing community care services from April 1993.

Mr. Baldry: My Department and the Department of Health jointly issued guidance to local authorities about their role under the new arrangements in circular 10/92, "Housing and Community Care", on 24 September. A copy of the circular was placed in the Library.

Hedgerows

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the change in the number of kilometres of hedgerow in Great Britain since 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 November 1992]:* The survey carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology as part of my Department's 1990 countryside survey indicates that in 1984 there was an estimated total length of 549,000 km of hedgerow in Great Britain. By 1990 there had been a net loss of some 121,000 km. This figure includes losses due to poor management as well as deliberate removal.

The Government are firmly committed to measures that will safeguard hedgerows. Under the Ministry of Agriculture's farm and conservation grant scheme an estimated 2,000 km of hedgerow were planted or improved in 1991. In July we launched the hedgerow incentive scheme with a budget of £3·5 million over three years to promote improved hedgerow management. Furthermore, although pressure on the parliamentary programme for this Session prevented a place being found for a Government Bill on hedgerow protection, we welcome and support the introduction of a Bill with similar objectives by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth).

Council Tax

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates his Department has made of the effect of the introduction of the council tax on house prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 12 November 1992]:* I have made no such estimates.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each county council in England the total amount of unapplied capital receipts.

Mr. Robin Squire *[pursuant to his reply, 5 November 1992, c. 371]:* The total usable receipts for each county council in England as at 31 March 1992 are shown in the table.

	£000s
Avon	9,488
Bedfordshire	204
Berkshire	566
Buckinghamshire	1,765
Cambridgeshire	296
Cheshire	0
Cleveland	13
Cornwall	0
Cumbria	822
Derbyshire	6,930
Devon	0
Dorset	0
Durham	139
East Sussex	3,096
Essex	726
Gloucestershire	240
Hampshire	52
Hereford and Worcester	1,318
Hertfordshire	853
Humberside	5,369
Isle of Wight	0
Kent	4,432
Lancashire	1,961
Leicestershire	2,519
Lincolnshire	0
Norfolk	2,409
North Yorkshire	651
Northamptonshire	11,829
Northumberland	496
Nottinghamshire	358
Oxfordshire	0
Shropshire	1,029
Somerset	240
Staffordshire	125
Suffolk	386
Surrey	605
Warwickshire	963
West Sussex	0
Wiltshire	350

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each housing authority in England and the amount of unapplied capital receipts from *(a)* housing sales and *(b)* other capital sales.

Mr. Robin Squire *[pursuant to his reply, 5 November 1992, c. 371]:* I have arranged for the revised information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Separate figures for housing receipts and other capital receipts are not available.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Charterline

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in the creation of the charterline telephone advice service.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have today appointed consultants Price Waterhouse to develop a pilot charterline service. The pilot will be launched early in 1993; if successful, it will be extended to cover all public services nationwide.

Our market research shows strong public demand for charterline. People often find it difficult to make complaints, or seek information, about public services. They need up-to-date and reliable information on the services available, and on how to complain if things go wrong. Charterline will provide details of the citizens charter and published statements of service standards; contact numbers to help people find out more about public services; and contact numbers for making complaints.

Charterline will also link in with existing telephone helplines, and other sources of help such as the ombudsmen.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates that they will be returned.

The Attorney-General: The Law Officers' Departments occasionally exercise their statutory right to retrieve records temporarily from the Public Record Office for their own administrative use. Neither the legal secretariat to the Law Officers nor the Serious Fraud Office has any records out on loan. The Crown prosecution service has 14 records on loan and the Treasury Solicitor's Department one record on loan. All these records will be returned as soon as departmental action has been completed. I will write to the hon. Member about the titles.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list for each local authority area in south Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department or the Crown prosecution service; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use.

The Attorney-General: None of the Departments for which I am responsible own any residential property in south Yorkshire. One house is currently being administered by the Treasury Solicitor's Department pursuant to a grant of letters of administration.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Olner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the textile industry, the clothing industry and the mining industry in the west midlands in 1980 and for each subsequent year to date.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information on regional employment for the industries requested is from the censuses of employment taken in 1981, 1984, 1987, and 1989. Data for the west midlands can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library, subject to the confidentiality restrictions of the Statistics of Trade Act 1947.

Minimum Wage Legislation

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions by the wages inspectorate for breaches of the minimum wage rates legislation have been undertaken in *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* Lancashire, *(c)* the north west region and *(d)* the United Kingdom for each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information held is for Great Britain, not the United Kingdom, and is detailed in the following table:

The number of prosecutions by the wages inspectorate for breaches under part 2 of the Wages Act 1986

Year	*Pendle*	*Lancashire*	*North west division*	*Great Britain*
1979	0	0	0	12
1980	0	0	1	8
1981	0	0	1	10
1982	0	0	1	7
1983	0	0	0	2
1984	0	0	0	2
1985	0	0	0	2
1986	0	0	0	3
1987	0	1	2	8
1988	0	0	2	11
1989	0	0	0	10
1990	0	0	1	9
1991	0	0	1	17
[1]1992	0	0	0	11

[1] To date.

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of 6 November, *Official Report*, column *432*, what was the lowest rate of actual payment found by inspectors in 1991-92.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will place in the Library *(a)* the responses to the 1988 consultative paper on the future of wages councils and *(b)* representations, including notes of oral or telephone representations, received since 1988 on the future of wages councils which were taken into account in the drafting of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. We treat responses to consultation exercises, as with other representations, on the basis that they have been offered "in confidence".

EDUCATION

Class Sizes

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many children in each English education authority were in classes of 41 pupils or more in each year since 1988;

(2) if he will list, for each year since 1988, the English education authorities in which no children were in classes of 41 pupils or more.

Mr. Forth: The information requested for classes taught by one teacher is given in the table for maintained primary and secondary schools for each year up to 1991. Information is not collected centrally on class sizes in either maintained nursery or maintained special schools. The information is derived from a census of schools on one day in January of each year, and may not be representative of classes over the whole academic year.

Numbers of pupils in classes of 41 and over in Maintained Primary, Middle and Secondary Schools (including Grant-maintained) in England—Position as at January each year

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
City	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
Camden	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
Greenwich	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
Hackney	n/a	n/a	n/a	44
Hammersmith	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
Islington	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
Kensington and Chelsea	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
Lambeth	n/a	n/a	n/a	48
Lewisham	n/a	n/a	n/a	108
Southwark	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
Tower Hamlets	n/a	n/a	n/a	51
Wandsworth	n/a	n/a	n/a	106
Westminster	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
ILEA	97	—	86	n/a
Barking	—	48	—	—
Barnet	—	—	—	54
Bexley	—	—	—	46
Brent	—	—	41	—
Bromley	—	—	—	—
Croydon	—	—	—	—
Ealing	—	58	47	—
Enfield	—	—	41	—
Haringey	46	—	47	93
Harrow	—	—	—	—
Havering	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	43	41	—	—
Hounslow	72	41	—	—
Kingston upon Thames	—	—	—	—
Merton	—	177	—	41
Newham	48	106	288	214
Redbridge	—	139	—	—
Richmond upon Thames	—	—	—	—
Sutton	79	197	—	—
Waltham Forest	112	60	—	44
Birmingham	94	141	145	43
Coventry	118	102	45	135
Dudley	281	180	246	354
Sandwell	—	41	143	53
Solihull	—	—	—	90
Walsall	—	—	89	44
Wolverhampton	101	83	85	—
Knowsley	42	—	—	50
Liverpool	118	169	160	250
St. Helens	41	—	—	—
Sefton	—	82	—	89
Wirral	49	—	73	52
Bolton	403	349	366	479
Bury	85	—	99	—
Manchester	739	639	791	862
Oldham	—	149	95	133
Rochdale	97	—	—	41
Salford	102	141	151	183
Stockport	42	84	—	—
Tameside	41	89	—	—
Trafford	—	—	44	52
Wigan	—	57	45	45
Barnsley	41	—	45	45
Doncaster	—	—	—	—
Rotherham	—	—	—	121
Sheffield	87	43	41	46
Bradford	—	106	121	—
Calderdale	—	—	—	—
Kirklees	131	157	172	132
Leeds	87	135	285	620
Wakefield	93	211	56	42
Gateshead	—	—	58	60
Newcastle upon Tyne	—	—	52	69
North Tyneside	—	—	—	—
South Tyneside	—	57	—	—
Sunderland	—	44	—	43
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—
Avon	124	97	175	101
Bedfordshire	208	344	280	478
Berkshire	67	218	93	95
Buckinghamshire	52	137	149	349
Cambridgeshire	—	49	—	43
Cheshire	167	311	319	184
Cleveland	93	—	90	312
Cornwall	—	—	88	—
Cumbria	94	128	48	111
Derbyshire	49	129	210	61
Devon	208	206	88	455
Dorset	209	51	127	—
Durham	82	86	42	135
East Sussex	—	—	41	—
Essex	42	—	—	189
Gloucestershire	41	—	—	—
Hampshire	197	150	91	85
Hereford and Worcester	86	—	—	43
Hertfordshire	47	—	105	143
Humberside	585	605	676	560
Isle of Wight	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	45	171	103
Lancashire	347	221	256	272
Leicestershire	498	319	410	692
Lincolnshire	42	125	93	—
Norfolk	42	—	62	—
North Yorkshire	46	48	132	99
Northamptonshire	43	49	148	241
Northumberland	—	43	—	146
Nottinghamshire	390	371	170	124
Oxfordshire	97	131	87	222
Shropshire	50	149	106	135
Somerset	—	45	—	41
Staffordshire	313	192	135	99
Suffolk	47	110	—	50
Surrey	—	—	—	191
Warwickshire	41	88	127	—
West Sussex	140	53	47	42
Wiltshire	170	—	44	—
ENGLAND	7,906	8,426	8,567	10,783

Teachers' Pensions Agency

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library a copy of the Teachers' Pensions Agency's health and safety policy.

Mr. Forth: Responsibility for health and safety policy has been delegated to the Teachers' Pensions Agency under its chief executive Mrs. Denyse Metcalfe. I have asked her to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Denyse Metcalfe to Mr. John McAllion, dated 11 November:

The Secretary of State for Education has asked me to supply an answer to the following question you tabled about the Teachers' Pensions Agency's health and safety policy:—

"To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will place in the Library a copy of the Teachers' Pensions Agency's health and safety policy."

The Agency is committed to complying with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The Agency occupies premises on the same site as the Department for Education in Darlington, and the Darlington Site Controller has oversight of health and safety matters for the site.

The provision of health and safety advice and compliance with the Act is covered in our service level agreement with the Department. The Department's written policy is still in draft form at the moment.

Post-16 Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to set a target date for achieving an 80 per cent. participation rate in post-16 education.

Mr. Forman: The Government's expenditure plans for further education are intended to lift this country towards the top of the international league table in staying-on rates for 16-19 year olds within the next three years.

Technology

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what efforts are currently undertaken to ensure a progression in content between technology courses in the national curriculum and similar courses in higher education.

Mr. Forman: National curriculum technology provides knowledge, skills and understanding which offer a general basis for further study or employment. Post-16 the Government are committed to securing a range of high quality study options leading to well regarded qualifications and further progression, including to higher education. It expects vocational qualifications and A level and AS examinations to build on national curriculum technology. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are now becoming available in most areas of employment, including those which build on a good basis in technology. The introduction from this year of general NVQs will strengthen still further the vocational route to higher education in technology and related subjects such as engineering and design.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Footpaths

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when plans were first made by the Department of Environment Northern Ireland roads service to provide a footpath on the south side of Upper Greensland road, Carrickfergus between Downview Park and Goldenview Park; and what is the likely start date for a minor works scheme to provide this footpath.

Mr. Atkins: There have been no minor works proposals for the construction of a footpath on the southern side of this section of road. A major works scheme which will involve the construction of this section of road and the provision of footpaths on both sides will be undertaken when the necessary funds become available.

Drugs

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to establish local drugs prevention teams in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: There are no plans at present to establish local drug prevention teams in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what support is available to district councils for anti-drug or drug awareness campaigns.

Mr. Hanley: In Northern Ireland health education on drugs including anti-drug and drug awareness campaigns is a matter for health and social services and education authorities.

HEALTH

Health Service, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the annual cost improvement programme in Doncaster health authority for each of the last five financial years.

Mr. Sackville: This in[illegible]rmation is not collected centrally. The regional health authority is responsible for monitoring cost improvements of individual districts. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Michael Carlisle, chairman of the Trent regional health authority, for details.

General Practitioners

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average number of applicants for vacancies for general practitioner posts in the United Kingdom every year since 1989.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available is shown in the table. The figures are based on records kept by the Medical Practices Committee only in relation to general practitioner vacancies advertised by family health services authorities, which are 11 per cent. of the total. They are not comprehensive for England as a whole. Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Da[illegible]	*Average number of applicants for each vacancy*
30 October 1989	32
30 October 1990	33
30 October 1991	25

Tomlinson Report

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from St. Bartholomew's hospital about the North East Thames regional health authority's attitude to the implementation of the Tomlinson Report; and what actionm she will take to prevent North East Thames regional health authority from telling purchasers, providers or anyone else in the NHS that decisions have already been taken on Tomlinson and that the negotiations are a mere formality.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have made it clear to everyone in the national health service and to the House the decisions on recommendations in the Tomlinson report will be made only following careful evaluation. I will be visiting the institutions most affected by the report and I will listen carefully to their views.

Residential Homes

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the registered private and voluntary sector residential homes in Pendle; and what information she has on the fees charged per week in each case.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Nursing Care

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps the Government are taking to ascertain the number of national health service continuing care beds likely to be needed per 1,000 population aged 75 years to 85 years and 85 years plus;

(2) what steps the Government are taking to ascertain the numbers of elderly people likely to require continuous nursing care per 1,000 population aged 75 years to 85 years and 85 years plus;

(3) what steps the Government are taking to ensure that adequate provision of national health service continuous nursing care is available in each health authority area.

Mr. Yeo: It is the responsibility of local health authorities to assess the health needs of their resident population and to plan their purchasing strategies accordingly. We have made it clear to health authorities that their duty to provide continuing residential health care for those highly dependent people who need it remains unchanged, and that no adjustment to the level of such care should be made except as part of an agreed strategy with the relevant local authorities.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the report of the inter-departmental inquiry chaired by Dr. John Reed on mentally disordered offenders; and what are the plans for implementation of the report.

Mr. Yeo: The report will be published shortly.

Community Care

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to make available the additional information on the transfer of resources from the Department of Social Security to local authorities for community care, as indicated in paragraph 8 of her Department's memorandum issued on 2 October.

Mr. Yeo: A further memorandum on the social security transfer has been sent today to the local authority associations. A copy has also been placed in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Soley: To ask the Prime Minister when the ministers concerned signed public interest immunity certificates in the Matrix Churchill case; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The relevant certificates were signed by the Home Secretary on 16 June 1992 and 29 September 1992, by the President of the Board of Trade on 11 and 26 September 1992, by the Secretary of State for Defence on 7 September 1992 and by the Minister of State (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) on 3 and 23 September 1992. I explained the basis for issuing these certificates to the House on 12 November.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister on what date it was first brought to his attention that Matrix Churchill exports had been used for military purposes by Iraq.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Prime Minister when he first knew that Matrix Churchill exports to Iraq had been sanctioned.

The Prime Minister: I shall write to the hon. Members as soon as all the relevant records have been checked.

WALES

Job Creation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of jobs created in the past 12 months as a result of his Department's efforts.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office operates a range of programmes and activities which contribute to economic development, many of which cannot be quantified accurately in terms of direct jobs created. But some can: for example, during the past 12 months offers of regional selective assistance accepted by companies in Wales are planned to create nearly 7,300 new jobs as well as safeguarding nearly 4,300 others.

Public Record Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many papers his Department has currently withdrawn from the Public Record Office; if he will list their titles; and when he estimates they will be returned.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has 65 records out on loan. It is estimated that they will be returned by 31 December 1992. The records concerned are:

1. Caernarvon Castle:
   Acquisition (including land adjoining).
2. Neath-Abergavenny Trunk Road: Heads of the Valleys Road:
   Section 1 Brynmawr to Abergavenny: letting of contract: contractor's request for financial assistance (Pt 1).
3. Section 1 Brynmawr to Abergavenny: letting of contract: contractor's request for financial assistance (Pt 2).
4. Claims in respect of additional costs made by contractor.
5. Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services:
   Treatment of cases of abortion (Vol. 1 Pt C).
6. Tuberculosis Services—Hospital Waiting Lists:
   Inquiry into irregular use of prescription form EC10(HP).
7. Glamorgan:
   Commons Act 1899 and Law of Property Act 1925: acquisition of parts of Coity Anglia and Cefn Hirgoed Commons for hospital building.
8. Conferences of Heads of Government Departments in Wales: Minutes and Papers 1962.
9. Cultural Affairs—Welsh Language Panel:
   Welsh in Agriculture, Industry and Commerce.
10. Use of Welsh in Local Government; minutes; notes of meetings; correspondence; questionnaire; summary of replies.
11. Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings—Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire Works (Pt 4).
12. Finds (Pt 1).
13. Works (Pt 1).
14. Works (Pt 2).
15. Works (Pt 3).
16. Acquisition (Pt 1).
17. Local Authorities—Emergency Water Service Zonal Mutual Arrangements under Civil Defence Act 1948:
    Civil Defence: details of schemes for maintenance of water supplies during an emergency.
18. Civil Defence: details of schemes for maintenance of water supplies during an emergency (plan cover).
19. Radiological Hazards to Hospital Patients and Staff: General Correspondence (Vol. 1).
20. Deputation from Ystradgynlais Rural District Council about closure of Gellinudd and Adelina Patti Hospitals.

21. Paediatric Services—Smallpox.
22. Arrangements on modification of outbreaks (1961-62 Vol. 2).
23. Arrangements on modification of outbreaks (1962 Vol. 2 Pt 1).
24. Outbreak in South Wales (1966).
25. Outbreak of smallpox in South Wales (1962-63).
26. Smallpox outbreak in Rhondda Valley.
27. Hydatid Disease survey: incidence of disease in persons resident in Wales (plan cover).
28. Local Authorities: Mid Glamorgan Water Board:
    Danger to water supply from radioactive waste from REME Camp, Litchard Cross.
29. Danger to water supply from radioactive waste from REME Camp, Litchard Cross (plan Cover).
30. Local Authorities: Coast protection and sea defence:
    Schemes: determination of charges under the Coast Protection Act 1949, section 7(6).
31. National Library of Wales:
    Representations against proposal by the Treasury to downgrade the status of the Library from 'intermediate' to 'provincial'.
32. Status of Monmouthshire: questions as to whether the county is in England or Wales for legal or administrative purposes.
33. Appointment of Minister for Welsh Affairs.
34. Function of Minister for Welsh Affairs.
35. Cultural Affairs—Welsh Language Panel:
    The Place of Welsh in the schools: Welsh Joint Education Committee Language Survey 1961.
36. The Place of Welsh in the schools: Study in Depth; Report prepared by HM Inspectors, Welsh Department, Ministry of Education.
37. Welsh in religious worship; correspondence with churches; questionnaire and summary of evidence submitted.
38. Bilingualism.
39. Use of Welsh in Government Departments: correspondence and summary of evidence.
40. Minutes; notes of meetings; correspondence; memoranda and evidence submitted; summary of evidence; Paper on use of Welsh in Primary and Secondary Schools.
41. Correspondence with General Register Office about 1961 census. Census 1961; Report on the Welsh Speaking Population.
42. Procedure for the use of Welsh in Courts; correspondence with the Home Office, Clerks of the Peace and County Councils.
43. Statutory provisions relating to the Welsh language.
44. Minutes; notes of meetings; general correspondence; notes on Welsh in local government.
45. Nomination of Lord Snowdon to the University Court and Council of the University of Wales.
46. Carmarthenshire—Cwmamman UDC: Compulsory Purchase Orders.
47. Local Government Staff Commission for Wales:
    Establishment.
48. Winding up.
49. Draft report on work.
50. Appointments to new county councils: Powys.
51. Appointments to new county councils: removal of restrictions.
52. Appeals procedure (Part 1).
53. Appeals procedure (Part 2).
54. Transfer Schemes and Transfer Orders; correspondence with local authorities and individuals.
55. Circulars and Bulletins.
56. Circulated papers (File 1).
57. Circulated papers (File 2).
58. Minutes of meetings.
59. Appeals.
60. Penybont Rural District Council—Public Footpath Diversion and Extinguishment Orders.
61. Snowdonia National Park:
    Designation order.
62. Designation order—plans (Pouch 1).
63. Designation order—plans (Pouch 2).
64. Designation order—correspondence and papers.
65. Designation order—plans (Pouch).

Foreign Companies

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimates of the number of *(a)* Japanese, *(b)* American and *(c)* German companies in (i) Clwyd and (ii) Wales; and how many people are employed by each of these companies.

Mr. David Hunt: The latest estimates are as follows:

(i) Clwyd: Japan, 9 companies, 2,000 employees; North American, 29 companies, 6,000 employees; Germany, 10 companies, 500 employees;

(ii) Wales: Japan, 44 companies, 12,000 employees; North America, 130 companies, 32,000 employees; Germany, 50 companies, 5,000 employees.

Employment figures for individual companies are commercially confidential.

River Dee Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he plans to have with Clwyd county council concerning the new River Dee crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no plans for such discussions, although there have been discussions at official level. The scheme has received some £2·75 million Government support to date. Decisions about future provisions for transport grant schemes will be taken in the context of this year's public expenditure survey.

School Governors

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many school governors in Wales came to the end of their term in office at the end of the 1992 summer term; how many did not seek reappointment; and how many school governor positions remain unfilled in each local education authority area.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Returns from local education authorities indicate that between 12,000 and 13,000 governors completed their term of appointment this summer. Information on the number who sought re-appointment and the number of positions still vacant is not available but I am not aware of any authorities who have experienced difficulties in recruiting adequate numbers.

Children (Special Needs)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many copies of "Children With Special Needs", the guide produced by his Department, have been distributed to date.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Almost 150,000 copies of the guide have been distributed to local education authorities, schools, interested organisations and in response to enquiries to the Welsh Office.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the likely effect on inward investment of the introduction of contaminated land registers in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The introduction of registers of contaminated land should help remove a possible source of uncertainty for developers and would be unlikely to have a significantly adverse effect on the very high levels of inward investment in Wales.

Clinical Scientists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to ensure the maintenance of the role and number of clinical scientists following the establishment of the hospital trusts.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: NHS trusts are required to follow Government policy on employing appropriately qualified staff in delivering health care services and the importance of clinical scientists is well recognised. It is intended that future training activity in this and other groups should be related to forecast service requirements.

Education White Paper

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received supporting his White Paper on the "Future of Education in Wales".

Sir Wyn Roberts: Some 300 responses were received on the proposals contained in the White Paper "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools" (Cm. 2021). It is not possible to break these down as requested, since many of those consulted welcomed certain of our proposals but were opposed to others.

British Aerospace

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to meet the chairman of British Aerospace.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall be meeting Mr. John Cahill, chairman of British Aerospace plc shortly.

Mencap

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the projected governmental expenditure on Mencap in Wales for the year 1992-93.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the all-Wales mental handicap strategy in 1992-93, £82,736 has been allocated to Mencap in Wales.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the projected Government funding of Mencap for the year 1992-93 which is allotted to Clwyd; and what are the figures for earlier years since funding was started.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total Government funding for Mencap in Wales in each year since such funding was started.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the all-Wales mental handicap strategy a total of £654,544·09 has been allocated direct to Mencap in Wales, since funding started. Details as follows:

	£
1983-84	27,038
1984-85	46,788
1985-86	46,961
1986-87	63,931·99
1987-88	75,220·10
1988-89	68,554
1989-90	81,050
1991-92	77,655
1992-93	82,736

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the real increase in Mencap funding since the all-Wales strategy was introduced.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: An allocation of £27,038 was first given to Mencap in Wales direct from the all-Wales mental handicap strategy in 1983-84. Using the GDP deflator, this equates to £45,083 in 1992-93 prices. The equivalent allocation in 1992-93 is £82,736, which represents an 84 per cent. increase in real terms since 1983-84.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of Mencap funding in Wales is supplied directly from Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1992-93, the direct allocation to Mencap in Wales from the all-Wales mental handicap strategy is £82,736. Figures for the total Mencap in Wales funding are not kept centrally.

Mental Health

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what efforts are being taken to improve mental health facilities in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The all-Wales mental illness strategy was launched in 1989 to provide local, accessible and non-stigmatising services and so end reliance on traditional, large hospitals, many built up to 150 years ago. Health authorities, social services departments and the voluntary sector are jointly planning integrated services, with the increasing participation of service users and their carers.

Once a comprehensive pattern of services has been decided in each of the eight county-based planning units, and the costs identified, the costs will be met from a combination of local investment, reinvestment and Welsh Office funding. However, the Welsh Office is making £6·3 million available this year towards the development of new services.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken in Wales to ensure that women have regular check-ups for cervical cancer.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The report of the all-Wales advisory group on cervical screening was submitted to my right hon. Friend in January. After consulting those involved in the programme the report's recommendations have been adopted and guidance is in the process of being issued. A number of improvements to the co-ordination and management of the programme are proposed as well as developments aimed at increasing the number of women who accept the invitation to attend for a test, including the preparation of a common set of letters and leaflets by the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

Quangos

Mr. Sheerby: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many quasi-autonomous non-governmental bodies there are in the Principality; what the comparable number was on (a) 1 January 1980 and (b) 1 January 1990; and what proposals he has for reducing the number of such bodies.

Mr. David Hunt: There are currently 21 executive non-departmental public bodies in Wales. There were 17 executive non-departmental public bodies in 1982 (the first year that this information was collected) and 19 in 1990. In addition, there are nine district health authorities and eight family health services authorities (previously known as family practitioner committees). This number has remained constant.

The Welsh Office has a policy of financial management and planning reviews. Executive non-departmental public bodies are subject to such a review every five years when the justification for the contiued existence of each of these bodies is considered.

Nursing Qualifications

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated cost in Wales of training a nurse to reach state-registered nursing qualifications.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The current cost of training a state registered nurse in Wales is estimated at £41,000.

Fluoride

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the fluoride levels in drinking water for each district health authority area in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on drinking water quality in water supply zones is contained in "Drinking Water 1991" the second annual report by the chief inspector of the drinking water inspectorate, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. This shows that of the samples taken of water supplied for domestic purposes in Wales in 1991, only one determination exceeded the concentration for fluoride prescribed by the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989 No. 1147).

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what account is taken of party-political affiliation or membership by his Department in considering the appointment of chairmen of hospital trusts in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each health authority in Wales the money allocated for extra-contractual referrals by *(a)* non-fund holding general practitioners and *(b)* hospital consultants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Health authorities in Wales do not receive specific allocations for extra contractual referrals. It is for each health authority to decide the level of funding to be set aside for this purpose from within its overall revenue allocation in the light of local circumstances. Information relating to the planned level of spending on extra contractual referrals is given in health authorities' annual financial plans, but these budgets may be subject to revision during the course of the financial year.

On the basis of the latest information available, the following table identifies the reserves which health authorities in Wales currently have set aside for extra contractual referrals:

	£ million
Clwyd	1·8
East Dyfed	1·6
Gwent	1·6
Gwynedd	1·1
Mid Glamorgan	1·9
Pembrokeshire	0·8
Powys	1·0
South Glamorgan	2·0
West Glamorgan	1·6

Source of information: Latest available in-year income and expenditure monitoring returns from health authorities in Wales.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Countryside Council for Wales regarding the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill *(a)* generally, *(b)* concerning the proposed pumping of fresh water from the Severn tunnel into the irrigation works lagoon at Redwick, Gwent, and *(c)* concerning the dimensions of the lagoon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have discussed the relevant aspects of the Cardiff Bay barrage proposals with the chairman of the Countryside Council, and my officials are in regular contact with officers of the council on both the Bill and the proposed bird reserve on the Gwent levels. The council is represented on the steering group overseeing the feasibility study of the creation of the reserve. Design of the reserve is still under consideration; the proposals will be published when they are complete.

Home Fire Fatalities

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the grant awarded to the Cardiff institute of higher education housing studies department in relation to the numbers of home fire fatalities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A grant of £27,000 has been awarded to the Cardiff institute of higher education under the Welsh Office's housing options Wales small grants scheme which will enable a fire risk and safety assessment project to be undertaken. The project aims to produce a model which can be used by public sector housing managers, in particular, to assist them in assessing the fire risks in dwellings and thus to target resources appropriately.

Valuation Tribunal Offices

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the proposal to close three valuation tribunal offices in Wales and to reduce the number of staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received 33 representations in response to my consultation paper "Review of Valuation Tribunal Offices". I am considering these and I will announce my decision in due course.

Housing Revenue Account

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce his proposals for housing revenue account subsidy for 1993-94; and what proposals he will be making.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office is today consulting local authorities and other bodies on our proposals for the rent guidelines and management and maintenance allowances to be used in calculating next year's entitlement to housing revenue account subsidy. I shall be placing the consultation papers in the Library of the House with a list of the estimated guidelines and allowances for each authority. Our proposals are for an average guideline rent increase of £1·84 per week (a smaller cash increase than the average of £2·14 for 1992-93) with a range of increases for individual authorities from £1·25 to £2·75 per week. The new average weekly guideline rent would be £29·17. For management and maintenance, we are proposing to increase allowances by an average of £28 per annum per dwelling over the 1992-93 level.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to announce his review of tourism.

Mr. Brooke: The conclusions of the review are reflected in the announcement I made in the context of the autumn statement. They are as follows:

> The British Tourist Authority's (BTA) role in promoting Britain abroad is an important one in an increasingly competitive environment. It is vital that BTA continues to secure the maximum possible industry contribution to its work and that it applies taxpayers' money in the most effective and efficient way. I shall expect the board to make proposals for improving its use of resources in its next corporate plan.
>
> The case is now much less strong for central Government funding of the promotion of tourism in England. The English Tourist Board (ETB) has done a great deal over the years to raise standards, to improve access to information, and to show the industry how their products can be developed and marketed. As the industry matures, and the regional tourist boards develop, it is appropriate for other bodies to carry on many of the ETB's central activities.
>
> However I also believe that central Government support for the regional tourist boards should continue. I believe that this support should be targeted much more closely than at present on areas of need where tourism might be an instrument of economic regeneration.

The allocations of Exchequer grant for tourism which I announced in connection with my right hon. Friend's autumn statement reflect these priorities. They are as follows:

	1993-94 £ million	1994-95 (planned) £ million	1995-96 (planned) £ million
British Tourist Authority	32·0	32·7	33·5
English Tourist Board	13·9	10·8	9·0
S4[1]	0·3	0·0	0·0

[1] Residual liabilities under the S4 capital grants scheme, now wound up.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Tribunals

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether appellants at social security tribunal hearings are able to make a tape recording of all or part of the proceedings.

Mr. Burt: The tape-recording of tribunal hearings is not normally permitted. However, in exceptional cases tape-recording may be permitted at the discretion of the tribunal chairman.

Invalidity Benefit

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for the future level and taxation of invalidity benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have given details of invalidity benefit for next year in the reply of 12 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones). The question of taxation is a matter for my hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Income Support

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were in receipt of income support in Pendle for each year since 1987.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 12 November 1992.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many people were in receipt of Income Support in Pendle for each year since 1987.

The complete range of information is not available except at a disproportionate cost. This is because statistics of a local nature are destroyed at regular intervals in accordance with standing instructions and the information which is available provides only a snapshot rather than the number of customers in a given period.

I have listed below the information which is available. The figures quoted are from offices in Burnley and Rossendale which make up the Agency's Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale District. The District boundaries do not, however, correspond with those of the Pendle constituency and it is not possible to break these figures down further. The figures have been supplied by the Income Support Management Information System.

Current Income Support Claims (year ending)

	Numbers
August 1989	18,679
August 1990	19,158
August 1991	20,888
August 1992	22,654

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to raise morale in the Benefits Agency.

Mr. Burt: The question of morale in the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 12 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning morale in the Benefits Agency.

I am sure you will know that one of the Benefits Agency's core values is "caring for staff" and, earlier this year, in order to give new meaning to this, we published our Staff Charter. This sets out in detail what staff have a right to expect of the Agency, and we are committed to producing an Action Update twice a year so that staff can see what progress is being made.

In producing the first Summer 1992 Action Update recently to all our staff we noted that there are perhaps three major areas in which we have been able to make progress in the first half of this year—the involvement of our staff, equal opportunities, and a new staff appraisal system.

The Benefits Agency Management Team has particularly welcomed the increased involvement of staff through the use of a half hour set aside in very many Districts for staff discussions, and through other imaginative ways in which staff participation is encouraged. We have provided an additional £1m to support the introduction of our new equal opportunities package—that package (and the money) are evidence of our determination to make progress on this front. We have also introduced a new and, we believe, a much better personal appraisal system throughout the Agency.

In some areas progress has not been as rapid as we would have wished. We are well aware of the fact that staff are expecting much more of us by way of development and training opportunities, and we will be paying particularly close attention to this in the second half of the year. But whether it be in the major areas mentioned above, or in the relatively minor developments such as the start of long service awards and the continued health screening programme, we remain fully committed to supporting, valuing and involving our staff, whatever their grade.

During the spring of 1992 a Staff Attitudes Survey was conducted throughout the Department of Social Security and its executive agencies. 4,694 questionnaires were completed and returned by Benefits Agency staff spread across a representative sample of grade levels and areas of work. The final results of the survey have only very recently been passed to agencies by the Institute of Manpower Studies (IMS), and we are in the process of analysing them to decide what action needs to be taken. At this early stage of our analysis it is nevertheless worth noting from the overall summary provided to us by the IMS that staff were reasonably satisfied with some aspects of work. Job security was a source of satisfaction, along with a friendly working atmosphere, flexible hours and an approachable line manager. We will be considering further those areas where less satisfaction was expressed—such as promotion opportunities and opportunities for training and development.

I would be the first to admit that we have a lot to do to help improve the morale of our staff, but the evidence received so far suggests that our staff do appreciate what we are trying to do for them. All our units, including Districts, Benefits Directorates and Central Services, will be carrying out their own staff perception surveys as part of their own commitment to caring for their staff. I can assure you that this has equal importance within the Agency with our other core values of customer service, value for money, and bias for action.

I hope you will find this report helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Social Fund

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people from the Birmingham, Yardley constituency, in the last two years for which figures are available, appealed against a Benefits Agency decision not to award a social fund grant; and how many appeals were upheld;

(2) how many people from the Birmingham, Yardley constituency have been refused social fund payments in the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Ms. Estelle Morris, dated 12 November 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Social Fund appeals and refusals in the Birmingham, Yardley constituency.

Applicants who are not satisfied with the Social Fund Officer's decision can apply to have the decision reviewed; there is no right of appeal against Social Fund community care grant (CCG) decisions. Decisions are firstly reviewed within the local office and, if the applicant is still dissatisfied with the decision, by a Social Fund Inspector who is independent of the Department.

The attached annex gives the number of requests for review against Social Fund CCG decisions and also the number of CCG decisions that were changed, firstly at District level and secondly, by the Social Fund Inspectors. Decisions changed at District level, if not changed wholly in the applicant's favour, may also have been changed by the Social Fund Inspector.

Details are held by Benefits Agency District, the boundaries of which are not coterminous with Parliamentary constituencies. I have therefore provided figures for the Districts of Birmingham Chamberlain, Birmingham Heartlands and Birmingham South East, each of which deals with some part of your constituency.

Figures for CCG refusals are given for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92. The information is collated according to the number of applications rather than the number of applicants.

Figures on social fund refusals by district are in the Library.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Social Fund Community Care Grant Review—1990-91, 1991-92

	Birmingham Chamberlain	*Birmingham Heartlands*	*Birmingham South East*
1990-91			
Number of review applications	551	496	288
Revised in District	227	188	101
Revised by SF Inspector	33	31	18
1991-92			
Number of review applications	997	1,103	490
Revised in District	340	273	139
Revised by SF Inspector	53	38	17

Benefits

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the delay in processing the benefits claim of the claimant about which the hon. Member for Woolwich wrote to the Minister of State on 18 September, national insurance number YP205065D.

Mr. Scott: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief-executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. John Austin-Walker, dated 12 November 1992.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the delay in processing the claim for your constituent, National Insurance Number YP 205065 D.

I should explain that we asked your constituent's representative for a signed request for review for the Community Care Grant to which you refer, and are unable to arrange a review until this is received. I am sorry that your constituent's Income Support claim was not handled as efficiently as it should have been, and offer my sincere apologies for this. I replied on 10 November to your letter of 18 September to the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People and this explains the position in greater detail.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Drugs

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what quantities of drugs destined for Northern Ireland have been seized by customs officers in each of the last five years.

Sir John Cope: The following show the figures of drugs seized in Northern Ireland:

Fiscal year ended March (kilos)

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Cannabis	30·254	0·283	0·667	0·121	1·207
Cocaine	0·010	—	—	—	5·152

Note: Figures do not include LSD or amphetamine, seizures of which were negligible during the period. There were no seizures of heroin.

However there is no reliable information on areas of intended final destination.

EC Budget

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect on the United Kingdom net budget contribution to the EC of the accession of Sweden, Finland and Austria to the European Community.

Sir John Cope: Preliminary forecasts suggest that each country is likely to be a net contributor to the EC budget upon accession. If this were to be the case, their accession would tend to reduce the United Kingdom's net contribution to the EC budget.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations were held by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise about *(a)* the prosecution of Matrix Churchill and *(b)* the withdrawal of the prosecution.

Sir John Cope: The commissioners of Customs and Excise, in the exercise of their independent prosecuting authority took the decision to initiate criminal proceedings in the Matrix Churchill case following advice of counsel on the sufficiency of evidence. They subsequently agreed with the conclusion of prosecuting counsel, following the evidence given by Mr. Alan Clark, that it would be wrong to continue with the prosecution. Ministers were informed of developments at various stages of the case.

Pay Review Bodies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the future work of the pay review bodies.

Mr. Lamont: As I announced yesterday in the autumn statement, public sector pay settlements in the coming year will be restricted to between 0-1½ per cent. to keep the growth in public sector pay bills as low as possible. This policy will apply to the whole of the public sector and related bodies, including those groups whose pay is settled by reference to the recommendations of a review body.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has written to each of the review body chairmen and asked all except the School Teachers' Review Body (because of its statutory basis) not to recommend basic pay increases for 1993. However, the review bodies have been invited to continue their important work on performance pay and other specific issues as appropriate to their remit groups.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has also written to the chairman of the School Teachers' Review

Body explaining the Government's policy, and the Secretary of State for Education has directed it to have regard to the Government's general policy that increases in public sector pay should be restricted to between 0-1½ per cent. in the coming year.

The Government intend that groups covered by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body, the Nurses Pay Review Body and the Armed Forces Pay Review Body should receive an increase in pay of 1½ per cent. from 1 April 1993. In common with ministerial salaries, Top Salary Review Body groups will receive no pay increase for 1993.

For TSRB groups, the Government intend to honour the second stage of the 1992 award, under which these groups will receive an increase of 2·9 per cent. from 1 April 1993.

The Government see a continuing role for the review bodies, whose advice it has greatly valued, although there must be changes from time to time to reflect developments in their remit groups. Policy on public sector pay for future years will depend on a wide range of economic and other factors, including the development of performance pay and more decentralised arrangements. The Government could not accept that a year of pay restraint should be followed by a series of catching-up settlements which would dissipate the benefits achieved.

EC Declarations

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what penalties will arise for *(a)* late completion and *(b)* incorrect completion of (i) the EC sales list and (ii) the intra EC trade statistics: supplementary declaration; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: Failure to submit, or failure to complete correctly, EC sales lists and supplementary statistical declarations under Intrastat will render the trader liable to penalties approved by Parliament in the Finance Act 1992.

The penalty regime for EC sales lists will be a civil penalty regime, with penalties up to £100 for misdeclarations and up to £500 for failure to submit.

For Intrastat there will be a criminal penalty regime. Where enforcement becomes necessary Customs intend to take full advantage of the powers to compound which avoids criminalising administrative error, unless the trader rejects the offer to compound. Provided guilty knowledge or recklessness is not involved, the Commissioners will have regard to the seriousness of the error and the length of time it has remained unreported but in no case will the offer exceed the £2,500 maximum penalty provided for in the legislation.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to require British Nuclear Fuels plc to install krypton 85 retention filters on the new thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: British Nuclear Fuels plc (BNFL) has made an application under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to discharge increased levels of krypton 85 from its Sellafield site to take account of the operation of its thermal oxide reprocessing plant. The company's view is that a krypton removal system suitable for a full scale reprocessing plant is not currently available and that the environmental benefits of installing such a system would not justify its likely cost. BNFL has however given a commitment to keep the development of such a system under review and fit one should it become available and prove to be cost effective when set against the likely environmental benefits. The application is currently under consideration by the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and my right hon. Friend, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Car Market

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 19 June, *Official Report*, column *720*, when the Government will decide whether the United Kingdom should be a restricted car market from 1 January 1993.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement on this matter shortly.

Iraq (Defence Equipment)

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the use of accounts held in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International by British companies for the export of equipment to Iraq which could be used for defence purposes betwee 1987 and 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I am not aware of my Department holding such information.

British Waterways

Mr. Gould: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the reasons for the postponement of the review by the Monopolies and Mergers Commissioin of the running of British Waterways.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am considering a possible reference in the near future of the British Waterways Board to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under section 11 of the 1980 Competition Act.

Offshore Hydrocarbons Unit

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the functions of the offshore hydrocarbons unit and the British Geological Survey core store and their significance to the national interest.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 November 1992]*: The British Geological Survey's hydrocarbons unit undertakes studies at the direction of my Department on the hydrocarbon potential of the United Kingdom continental shelf. It also manages the storage of data obtained from licence activity on the shelf in premises which I own at Gilmerton in Edinburgh. These activities assist my Department in its objective of promoting the economic exploration and development of the nation's oil and gas resources.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to dispose of *(a)* the offshore hydrocarbons unit or *(b)* the British Geological Survey core store; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 November 1992]*: I have no plans to dispose of the core store which I own at Gilmerton in Edinburgh. I am considering what future contracting arrangements might be appropriate for activities currently carried out for my Department by the British Geological Survey's hydrocarbons unit.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions his Department has had with Messrs Simon Robertson about the future of *(a)* the offshore hydrocarbons unit and *(b)* the British Geological Survey core store; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 November 1992]*: None. As part of the evaluation of the Department's future contracting arrangements in this area, my officials have held some preliminary discussions with the British Geological Survey and other organisations which might be capable of undertaking such work.

Launch Aid

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what conditions attach to grants under the launch aid schemes; and on what statutory basis such conditions are imposed.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 11 November 1992]*: Launch aid is granted under section 1(1) of the Civil Aviation Act 1982.

The specific conditions attach to any launch aid grant vary from case to case and are contained in a contract negotiated between the Government and the recipient company. The terms of such contracts are confidential, but generally include conditions setting out the work programme and percentage of costs to be covered, the repayment terms and arrangements for monitoring the commercial and technical progress of the project.

DEFENCE

Departmental Properties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list, for each local authority area in south Yorkshire, how many residential properties are currently owned by his Department; and if he will list, by location, those residential properties which are empty, giving the type of accommodation available, the length of time each property has been vacant, and its intended future use;

(2) if he will set out the numbers and locations of empty service married housing quarters in south Yorkshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, MoD owned the following service married quarters in each local authority area in south Yorkshire:

	Number
Barnsley metropolitan district council	2
Doncaster metropolitan district council	446
Rotherham district council	0
Sheffield city council	22

The following properties were vacant:

	Location	
	Sheffield	*Finningley*
Total Vacant	2	144
Vacant under one year	1	94
Vacant one to two years	1	20
Vacant over two years	0	30

Ninety-seven of the quarters at Finningley were being considered for disposal, while the majority of the remainder at Finningley and those at Sheffield were undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work to enable them to be re-occupied by service families. The vacant properties were houses with either two or three bedrooms.

In addition, negotiations were in hand to dispose of 119 properties at Finningley to a housing association at a discount, in return for nomination rights for personnel leaving the services over the next few years.

Isle of Rona

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 20 October, *Official Report*, column *248*, what plans he has for the future of his Department's Defence Research Agency's facilities on the Isle of Rona after the island is sold.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letters from Mr. John Chisholm to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 12 November 1992:

In today's written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed you that I would be replying directly to your question concerning the future of Defence Research Agency facilities on the Isle of Rona.

The DRA has recently purchased 140 acres at the northern tip of the island, where its main facilities are located. The sale of the remainder of the island will not affect our activities, which will continue as before.

I hope you will find this information useful.

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report* column *159*, in what form information is held, in respect of low flying by helicopters and complaints received in Eastern Command; and if he will publish such information as is available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information is held by name of complainant not by region or by Army command district. Any complaint about low flying received within eastern district would be passed to the appropriate MOD branch. For Army aircraft this would be HQ staff at Wilton, Salisbury, who assumed this responsibility in April. Since then two complaints have been received about a single incident in the Derby area on 10 June 1992.

Decompression Chambers

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the location of diving decompression chambers in the United Kingdom controlled by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Diving recompression chambers are situated as follows:

Port Diving Groups: Pembroke Dock: Devonport: Portsmouth: Rosyth: Greenock.

Marine Services Diving School, Rosyth.

HMS Cochrane, Rosyth.

HMS Neptune, Clyde Submarine Base.

HMS Nelson, Portsmouth

HMS Osprey, Portland.

HMS Drake, Plymouth.

HMS Dolphin, (Submarine Escape Training Tank) Gosport.

Defence Research Agency, Alverstoke.

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many individuals were given emergency decompression or re-compression in each of his Department's decompression chambers in each of the past five years; and how many of those were civilian contractors, leisure divers, military divers or victims of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the total numbers of service and civilian divers, and victims of carbon monoxide poisoning, treated over the last five years.

Chamber	*Diving Civilian*	*Diving Service*	*CM Poisoning Civilian*	*Total*
Pembroke Dock	17	1	1	19
Devonport	0	0	0	0
Portsmouth	0	0	0	0
Rosyth	11	1	5	17
Greenock	0	0	0	0
HMS Cochrane	25	6	1	32
HMS Nelson	104	10	14	128
HMS Osprey	1	2	0	3
HMS Drake	1	1	0	2
HMS Dolphin	(Submarine Escape Tank Training Accidents only)			21
DRA Alverstoke	80	12	26	118

Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the ground speed and wind conditions used in the United Kingdom civil rescue helicopter coverage working group report 1986 to calculate the response times to incidents 40 nautical miles from a search-and-rescue base during daylight.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The working group assumed still air conditions and air and ground speeds of 105 knots for a Sea King and S61N helicopter and 90 knots for a Wessex helicopter.

Royal Naval Reserve

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role he envisages for the future of the Royal Naval Reserve in general; whether the volunteer reserves will retain a seagoing role; and what assessment he has made of whether adequate steps have been taken to maintain the morale and motivation of the Royal Naval Reserve volunteers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Navy's reserve forces, including the Royal Naval Reserve, will continue to have an important role in our defence plans. My right hon. Friend the hon. Member for Bridgewater (Mr. King) the then Secretary of State for Defence published in March 1992 an open government document "The Future of Britain's Reserve Forces" which described proposals for fundamental changes in the management and deployment of reserve forces both in peacetime and on military operations. As part of this process, the future use of the Navy's volunteer and ex-regular reserves is being examined, including investigation into the future seagoing opportunities of the Royal Naval Reserve, with the aim of establishing enduring and worthwhile tasks to support the Royal Navy in the very different international climate that now exists. It is, however, too early to predict the outcome of these studies.

I am satisfied that adequate steps are being taken to keep the Volunteer reservists fully informed of developments. The assistant chief of naval staff signalled Royal Naval Reserve personnel in June 1992 reassuring them that work relating to the open government document was continuing. In addition, he holds regular meetings with senior members of the Royal Naval Reserve to inform them about the future direction of Royal Naval Reserve policy.

Fishing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place with representatives of the Clyde Fishermen's Association anent fishing vessels being allowed to fish in the exemption area of Loch Long; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Discussions have taken place with local fishermen and the Clyde Fishermen's Association following a number of incidents in which fishing vessels entered the prohibited area of Loch Long and as a result proposals have been put to the Clyde Fishermen's Association to allow a limited number of local fishing vessels to enter the prohibited area when turning with fishing gear extended.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to abrogate the Dockyard Port of Holy Loch Order 1967 in order to allow members of the Clyde Fishermen's Association to commence fishing in the loch; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Action is in hand to revoke the Dockyard Port of Holy Loch Order 1967. This will be completed as soon as possible.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions have taken place with the United States Navy anent the rules regulating the maintenance of a specified distance between foreign submarines, operating in United Kingdom waters under the operational control of the Royal Navy and fishing vessels shooting, towing and hauling their gear; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All foreign submarines visiting United Kingdom waters, including those belonging to the United States Navy, are briefed on the operating procedures to be complied with when in the vicinity of fishing vessels. Discussions have taken place with the United States Navy following the incident involving the USS Sturgeon on 16 September and further discussions will take place once they have completed their report on the incident.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to commission a research project into the feasibility of commercial and recreational fishing in the Holy Loch; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Iraq

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the use of accounts held in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International for the supply of British-made equipment to Iraq which could be used for defence purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department holds no such information.

Carver Barracks

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of Carver barracks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I hope to be able to announce our proposals for the future of Carver barracks shortly.

SCOTLAND

Unemployment

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the percentage rates of *(a)* male unemployment and *(b)* female unemployment in (i) the Greenock travel-to-work area and (ii) Strathclyde were for each year since 1987.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 10 November 1992]*: The information requested is set out in the table:

	Greenock travel-to-work area		*Strathclyde region*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
1987	25·9	14·8	20·7	11·6
1988	24·7	12·2	18·1	9·6
1989	20·3	8·4	15·3	7·1
1990	18·0	6·7	13·6	5·9
1991	18·9	6·8	14·6	5·9
[1]1992	19·1	6·4	15·8	6·0

[1] September.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters in regard to enhancing nuclear non-proliferation controls have been introduced by *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other community member states, to the European Foreign Affairs Council during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No specific proposals on nuclear non-proliferation have been discussed by the Foreign Affairs Council during the United Kingdom presidency. However European political co-operation has continued to work on non-proliferation issues and is taking forward a United Kingdom proposal to strengthen IAEA safeguards. This concerns voluntary reporting of information to the IAEA on exports of certain nuclear materials, equipment and specialised non-nuclear materials.

Iran

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information Her Majesty's Government possess on the purpose of the nuclear centre at Moallem Kalayen in Iran; and if he will make a statement on the Government's assessment of the Iranian nuclear programme and its military aspects.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An IAEA inspection team which visited Iran in February (including the site at Moallem Kalayen) reported that they had found nothing inconsistent with the peaceful application of nuclear energy. Information about particular nuclear facilities which Iran is obliged to provide to the IAEA is held in confidence by the agency. We have noted Iran's statements that her nuclear programme is entirely for peaceful purposes. We are nevertheless concerned by allegations that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons programme. We have made clear the importance of Iran, and all other states parties to the NPT, abiding fully by their treaty obligations.

Leonard Peltier

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the case of Leonard Peltier; and if he will make representations to the United States Government about the human rights implications of the case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A member of the public wrote to the Prime Minister in July this year. Her Majesty's Government do not propose to make representations to the United States Government about this case.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his most recent assessment of the danger posed by military activity affecting the HAK plant at Tuzala in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As the HAK chemical plant at Tuzala in northern Bosnia is in an area of fierce fighting, it is not at present possible to gain access to the plant in order to make any assessment of the impact on it.

Russian Nuclear Industry

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his most recent estimates for each ex-Soviet state of the number of scientists with experience in building nuclear weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply. The number of scientists in the former Soviet Union with some knowledge of nuclear weapons production is about 10,000 to 15,000; the vast majority are Russians. Only 2,000 to 3,000 of these have access to the most sensitive information. Of the former Soviet republics only Russia has a nuclear weapons production capability.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his most recent estimate of the size of the ex-Soviet nuclear arsenal in terms of numbers of warheads in each republic of the former union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply. It is estimated that the former Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal consists of some 27,000 or more nuclear warheads. The vast majority are based in Russia but it is estimated that in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus there are about 1,500, 1,200 and 80 warheads respectively.

CAMBRIDGE REFERENCE LIBRARY

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the number of weapons that are no longer under the control of the KGB.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply. The internal functions of the former KGB are now the responsibility of the Russian Ministry of Security. The Ministry of Security controls no major armed forces formations or weapons systems; those formerly under the command of the KGB have been transferred to the Russian Ministry of Defence.

EC Officials

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many and what percentage of officials employed by the European Commission within each grade are Britons.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The figures for British nationals employed in the European Commission are as follows:

Grade	*British employees*	*Per cent*
Administrative	413	12
Executive	163	7
Clerical	233	5
Manual	7	1
Total:	816	7·3

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 213**

SESSION 1992–93

2nd November—13th November 1992

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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